SELF-LEADERSHIP AND MATURE

ADULTS PURSUING TERTIARY EDUCATION:

Five Singaporean Case Studies

ROBERT KHOO BOO HOR

Bachelor of Arts (Communications and Media Management) (South Australia)

Master in Organisational Leadership (Monash)

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
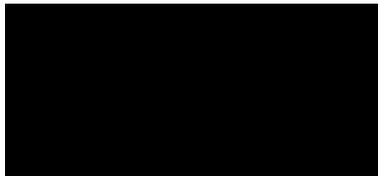
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Ethics

This research received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans project number CF10/3316 -2010001739

Acknowledgements

This doctoral journey can be regarded as extraordinary given the fact that I started pursuing my first tertiary education only at the age of 53. Although I had wanted to be a university graduate all my life, little had I expected that it would develop into such a passion that I would go all the way to a doctoral finishing line. This long journey which took a total of 10 years has been the journey of my life!

There are many people whom I would like to express my gratitude for. For without their encouragement and assistance, this journey would not have been possible.

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Abstract

This research is focused on the concept of self-leadership, and the way its influence over career successful mature Singaporean adults has resulted in their pursuit of a first tertiary qualification.

Singapore's historical past includes being a British Crown colony, being ruled by the Japanese during the Second World War, being merged to form what is Malaysia today and finally, becoming an independent country for the last five decades. This post-colonial setting has become the basis of my research.

Framed in post-colonial theory, this thesis was inspired by Chen's (2010) work, *Asia as Method* and is guided by his argument about seeking cultural and psychological identities for formerly colonized people. This theoretical frame has outlined my thinking and it is through this lens that I analysed the data.

Through a qualitative approach, this research was able to attain in-depth understandings of how a culturally varied concept like self-leadership is understood and interpreted by mature Singaporeans. What does the self-leadership concept mean to them and how it is being defined? Within an interpretive framework, this research generated five case studies which were based on semi-structured interviews and artefact analysis. A total of four strands bring together aspects of self-leadership in Singapore: the importance of leading and motivating, an emphasis on goal striving, narratives about the search for the self, and the idea of self-leadership in uniquely Singapore, supported by cultural insights on the self-leadership questionnaire. New findings on the construct self-leadership emerged as a result of this study in which eight Singapore-centric self-leadership qualities were identified through the interpretation of the data.

The study integrates the literature of four related topics, namely culture and education from a Singaporean perspective, the concept of self-leadership, self and identity and adult learning, thus providing a fresh perspective on self-leadership. Second, the research confirms the importance of the cultural context when self-leadership is examined in Singapore and contributes a new cultural perspective in the research on self-leadership.

This thesis therefore argues that the self-leadership theory as proposed by Western authors be re-framed to suit discussions in an Asian and in particular, a Singaporean context. This thesis also argues that the self-leadership concept need not be limited to or explained exclusively by a Western outlook. This study proposes that self-leadership qualities articulated directly or indirectly by the participants through their interpretation of the concept under a Singapore cultural context can be used in the reframing of self-leadership dimensions. This process involves adding categories to a self-leadership questionnaire or RSLQ (Houghton & Neck, 2002) in order to support the development of a Singaporean specific cultural extension to the RSLQ.

Copyright notices

Notice 1

Notice 2

Chapter 1: Introduction

The qualitative researcher may be described using multiple and gendered images:
scientist, naturalist, field-worker, journalist, social critic, artist, performer, jazz musician,
filmmaker, quilt maker, essayist. The many methodological
practices of qualitative research may be viewed as soft science, journalism,
ethnography, bricolage, quilt making, or montage.
(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5)

Overview

This research is about the concept of Self-leadership, (Manz, 1983, 1986,1992; Neck, Neck, Manz & Godwin, 1999; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Boss & Sims, 2008; Neck & Manz, 2013) a "process through which people influence themselves to achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to behave and perform in desirable ways" (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 672). However, self-leadership has been viewed and regarded as a Western conceptualization (Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009; Ho, Nesbit, Jepsen & Demirian, 2012). The reason is because "cross cultural theory development may result in propositions regarding culturally specific self-leadership practices" (Neubert & Wu, 2006, p. 396) and this may not have been taken into consideration in the conceptualization of self-leadership. According to Alves, Lovelace, Manz, Matsypura, Toyasaki and Ke (2006), self-leadership, while remaining a valid concept "its understanding and application is likely to differ across cultures" (p. 338). Alves et al.. (2006) suggested that the "high power distance raises the importance of the symbolic value of tasks and correspondent cover processes of self-leadership" (p. 338); high uncertainty avoidance "makes more explicit the importance of non-rational and intuition-based thought processes (p. 338); "collectivism shows the relevance of social relations" (p. 338); "femininity reiterates the importance of social relations and non-rational processes" (p. 338) and

lastly, "long-term orientation introduces the importance of making time an explicit element" (p. 338). These concerns have resulted in Alves et al., (2006) calling for further research on self-leadership that focuses on the roles of "social and cultural relations, communications and language, multilevel interdependencies, and ethics" (p. 338). These authors further suggested that "empirically there is need for developing a self-leadership instrument that is relevant and applicable across cultures" (p. 338). While this may or may not be possible, the idea of this thesis is a cultural response in relation to self-leadership.

This study explores the influences self-leadership has on career successful mature Singaporean adults in their pursuit of a tertiary education. It also probes into the way self-leadership is perceived and practiced in a Singapore cultural context taking into consideration the country's colonial past, post-colonial or neo-colonial influences, and unique political leadership. This thesis is influenced by Chen's (2010) insights into decolonization, de-cold war and deimperialization as presented in his book, *Asia as Method* and framed within the post-colonial theorization of Fanon (1967), Said (1979, 1993) and Spivak (1988). Chen's (2010) argument for the need to restore cultural identity for formerly colonized peoples through the rebuilding of lost cultural imaginary and subjectivity has provided the theoretical lenses, through which the data were analysed, defined the self-leadership construct, understood its importance and above all, worked towards its re-framing to suit a Singaporean cultural context and identity.

The Self-leadership Concept

According to Houghton and Neck (2002) self-leadership had its roots in three related theories – self-influence, including self-regulation; self-control and self-management. The researchers further suggested that self-leadership was linked to three other additional sets of cognitive-oriented strategies, namely intrinsic motivation theory, social cognitive theory and

positive cognitive psychology. Self-leadership has therefore adopted these theories which were "designed to shape individual performance outcome" (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 673).

Houghton and Neck (2002) also highlighted three strategies that support the self-leadership construct. These strategies are behaviour-focus strategies, natural reward strategies and constructive thought pattern strategies. Each one will be described as follows:

1. The behaviour-focus strategies focus on a person increasing his or her own self-awareness so as to manage his or her own behaviours involving difficult and unpleasant tasks (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Manz, 2013). These strategies include self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward and self-correcting feedback and practice (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

2. The natural reward strategies operate almost on the opposite end of behaviour-focus strategies. It emphasizes instead the motivation one would derive from doing pleasant tasks, thus increasing the incentives to perform better (Neck & Manz, 2013).

3. The constructive thought pattern strategies focus on a person creating and maintaining positive thinking (Neck & Manz, 2013); "challenging irrational beliefs and assumptions" (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 674) and having the mental imagery and self-talk to visualise and conceptualise successful future performances (Neck & Manz, 2013).

According to Neck and Houghton (2006), there has been a wealth of research concerning self-leadership studies over the last three decades. Data about self-empowerment, thought self-leadership, entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, performance, personality, goal striving, innovation, creativity and cross-cultural perspectives are just some of the knowledge created

across cultures, societies and communities. Neck and Houghton's (2006) historical overview on two decades of self-leadership theory and research, presented a "theoretical and conceptual explanation and differentiation of the self-leadership concept relative to other related motivational, personality, and self-influence constructs" (p. 270). However, their findings have revealed that while self-leadership research has generated a vast and impressive body of knowledge, it has been "under-investigated in some aspects, both empirically and conceptually" (p. 270). Neck and Houghton's (2006) suggestion that the "cultural dimensions framework to address the question of how self-leadership may be understood and practised in other cultures" (p. 286) became the motivation for this research.

The Singapore Tertiary Education Landscape

Since Singapore's independence in 1965, the "higher education sector has been the cornerstone of our [her] strategy for growth and nation-building" (Tan, 2011b, p. 21). The sector was first established more than 100 years ago with the formation of a college of medicine in the British tradition in 1905 (Tan, 2011b). However, Singapore's ability to provide tertiary education to aspiring young citizens was still inadequate by the time she gained independence in 1965. There were only two mainstream universities in the country then and according to Tan (2011b, p. 21) "by today's standard…access was limited".

Today, 49 years later, Singapore has four mainstream universities, with a fifth soon to be opened. These universities have over 50,000 students (Tan, 2011b). Students achieving entry into the mainstream universities for each cohort has grown from 5% in 1980 to 26% in 2010 with a promise from the government that it will be further increased to 30% by the year 2015 (Toh, 2011).

In addition to these mainstream universities, which are funded by the government, there are also privately owned tertiary institutions that serve as Singapore's branch campuses of foreign universities. On top of these, there are also an increasing number of private educational institutions that provide a wide range of tertiary education though distance learning.

The proposed increase in tertiary education opportunities was announced by Singapore's Prime Minister in his 2011 National Day rally speech. Unfortunately, despite positive government actions to increase learning opportunities across the board for all Singaporeans, of late, there has been an increase in resentment amongst Singaporeans about the growing numbers of new migrants coming into Singapore. Many Singaporeans feel compromised in terms of education and other opportunities. Despite government assurance of a 'Singaporeans first' but not 'Singaporeans only' policy (Tan, 2011b), the unhappiness was reflected strongly in votes during the last general election. The government's stance is that foreigners are able to create competition, raise standards and are able to expand Singaporeans' cross border networks as well as increase trade and business ties in the long term (Toh, 2011).

According to Singapore's Minister for Education, Mr. Heng Swee Keat (2011, p. 21) who commented on the education system:

> We do not have a perfect system, but it is a good system built on sound foundations. There is a shared belief that education is crucial in building up individual and collective capacity, and in strengthening the cohesiveness of our nation beyond knowledge and skills. Parents, universities, and employers appreciate the rigour and strength of our system. Internationally, our reputation is high.

Despite these assurances, however, the whole Singapore landscape has changed and the issue is no longer about internal competition alone. One external change is likely to come from the "shift in the centre of gravity of the world economy from US and Europe towards Asia" (Heng, 2011, p. 21). Heng (2011) reiterated that "China and India will be significant players and will open up many opportunities for us" (p. 21). However, he cautioned that Singaporeans will have to "compete with the 10 million graduates and the many skilled workers that they will be producing each year" (p. 21).

Over Emphasis on Grades

A dramatic change in the Singapore education landscape was the recent "shift from unhealthy focus on academic grades" (Thio, 2012, p. 10). While many Singaporeans still favour a "rigorous in-depth education" (p. 10), some are concerned with the over emphasis on examinations and grades. This means that students must "spend time or energy to develop other talents and skills" (p. 10).

A critique provided by Thio (2012) suggests that with a grade-focus education system is that it produces clones. Thio (2012, p. 10) reminisces on her experience doing job recruitment in Singapore:

There is "sameness" in the job applicants of today. Most come with strong technical credentials but lack people skills or independence of analysis. They have the same interest – travel, movies, spending time with friends. Contrast this with students we see from abroad, who have taken time off to build schools in Cambodia, trekked in the Amazon, started online businesses…the sheer volume of data that our students have to grapple with as part of their

schooling means that most have only the narrowest confines of interest and few are good at communicating with or engaging people. We are cheating them of a key area of development that is necessary for their future success in the working world.

According to Dr. Tony Tan (2011b), the President of Singapore –we must "remain an open society, even though it will face even more competition in the years ahead" (Tan, 2011b, p. 21). He proposes 3 principles that will guide the development of higher education in Singapore and they are:

Be comprehensive – "our institutions of higher learning must collectively, aspire to offer the widest range of programs to the widest range of people" (Tan, 2011b, p. 21). Tan (2011b) further suggested that the institutions of higher learning in Singapore must cater to the needs of the economy as well as the inclinations of the learners. For the individuals, the principle behind this comprehensiveness should mean the need to learn "widely even as one develops specialist skills" (p. 21).

Be flexible – we need a system that is flexible and "allows for a network of bridges and ladders that can link the various pathways" (Tan, 2011b, p. 21). He further claimed that:

In the past, higher education has often been linear. That is a very narrow view of education, and a very limited view of human potential. In the future, it will be untenable. People develop at different paces, and many will need or want to switch paths. In some cases, this might be seen as offering second chances. But more generally, we need to ensure that our learners are flexible and nimble, able to seize opportunities and capitalize on them (p. 21).

His third and final principle is Openness. Dr. Tan remarked:

> We must ensure that our institutions are not only of high-quality, but also open and connected to each other and to the world. In a world of tough competition and scarce resources, our institutions must leverage their local, regional and global networks to attract and retain the very best students and faculty, prepare local students for global careers and to be at the cutting edge of research (p. 21).

The Singapore education landscape described has resulted in new developments in the way the pursuit of tertiary education is perceived by Singaporeans. Firstly, the competitive nature of the Singapore society and the emphasis on academic qualifications by both public and private sectors has resulted in Singaporeans' increased anxiety to obtain tertiary education certification. This may be more profound in the older generation where the pursuit of a tertiary education was something to strive for instead of being part of an expected journey as in the case of many younger generation Singaporeans.

This research is therefore interested to understand what aspects of self-leadership support a mature adult to pursue his or her tertiary education, as against those who are not inspired to pursue study to this level.

My Research

My tertiary background is in the study of leadership and my inclination was to pursue an aspect of leadership. That was when I began to seriously consider how leadership, and in particular, the concept of self-leadership (Manz, 1990a, 1992a; Manz & Neck, 1991b; Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Godwin, Neck & Houghton, 1999) would bring meaning and context to this research concerning the pursuit of education for mature adults.

As my research progressed, I realised that the leadership focus may not have been the only perspective to this study. After all, the concept of self-leadership was not without criticisms. Earlier researchers (Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009) had suggested that the lack of generalizability for usage by people from non-western cultures through the Self-leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, Houghton & Neck, 2002) requires further research, enhancement and refinement. This insight gave me the suggestion that perhaps I should embark on my study using a different route and adopting a different approach – a qualitative alternative to capture something different, not based on "generalisation" but "to add situational examples to the readers' experience" (Stake, 2010, p. 23).

As my review of literature, outlined in Chapter 2, expanded in the course of time, other relevant perspectives began to surface. My second train of thought was therefore about the 'self' that Singaporeans are after. In a highly competitive capitalist society, has the 'self' become another commodity to be contented with or purchased? Are Singaporeans simply interested in 'buying' an education or does education truly hold a place or position in a meritocratic society? According to Dweck (2000), humans are capable of developing "representation or ideas about the self that have tremendous motivational power" (p. 138). All of us are endowed with a "belief system" (Dweck, 2000, p. 132) and what this system does is that it gives "structure to our world and meaning to our experience" (p. 132).

My third train of thought was about the cultural heritages and influences mature Singaporeans would have experienced, depending of course on the era in which he or she was born. Firstly, the experience of being migrants, coming from China, India, Indonesia or other parts of the world, in search of a better future; secondly, as subjects under the British colonial masters; thirdly, as an occupied people under the Japanese regime; fourthly, as citizens of a merged country and lastly, as proud citizens of independent Singapore. How have all these

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complexities and changes in cultural orientation moulded the minds of Singaporeans and perhaps other people in other parts of Asia? After all, we were part of a huge colonised region ruled by the British, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the French and even the Portuguese. How has colonialism or imperialism influenced our culture, our language, our beliefs or our thinking processes? These questions seem to have found answers in Chen's (2010) writing on *Asia as method, towards deimperialization.* Chen (2010, p. xv) suggested that in order to, "transform the existing knowledge structure in such a way that the projects of decolonization, deimperialization, and de-cold war can be better advanced", he proposes to put forward *Asia as method* as a critical proposition as follows (p. xv):

> …using Asia as an imaginary anchoring point can allow societies in Asia to become one another's reference points, so that the understanding of the self can be transformed and subjectivity rebuilt. Pushing the project one step further, it becomes possible to imagine that historical experiences and practices in Asia can be developed as an alternative horizon, prospective, or method for posing a different set of questions about world history.

This research's importance to education is that it seeks to provide "personal experiences, intuitions, and scepticism" (Stake, 2010, p. 11) into adult learning, motivation, capabilities and influences. It also acts as an inspiration for future mature students seeking similar educational pursuits. Most importantly, the findings of this research contribute to the reframing of the Self-leadership concept in the cultural context of Singapore.

This research seeks to add to the growing body of literature by investigating the beliefs and motivation of mature adults in a specific academic context and setting. This makes the aspects of the problem in which I am focusing on different from those discussed in other researches. Its contribution might not be in the form of policy making or practice improvement

but seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of those interested by providing a rich description that might foster action taking (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). These insights "can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base" (Merriam, 2009, p.51).

This research took the form of five case studies. The participants were mature Singaporeans who, despite career successes, had embarked on a journey to earn for themselves a tertiary education certification or degree. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews backed by document analysis of artefacts chosen and provided by the participants. A qualitative Case Study approach was used, which presented a new and deeper perspective on the experience of mature adults' re-entering the educational context. Case study calls for "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 38) data and the case studies presented here provides new insights into the unique experiences of the participants.

This background to the research questions formed the foundation on which the study was based on and in turn determined the nature of my methodological and data collection method. The overarching research question was:

How is the pursuit of a first degree tertiary education by career successful mature adults influenced by self-leadership in the Singapore context?

Related sub-questions were:

A. What is different about pursuing a tertiary education instead of staying on a successful career pathway with appropriate professional development?

B. How does tertiary education influence the future selves of mature adults and why do career successful adults choose tertiary education to change their future?

C. How does work experience and a successful professional life enhance (or not) the educational experience of mature students?

The research perspective for this study was based on an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted and sets the intent, motivation and expectations of this research (Creswell, 2007). This paradigm or worldview allows individuals to "seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 20). The interpretive paradigm does not begin with a theory but instead can "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) through the research process.

Data analysis was conducted using Yin's (2011) five phase method of analysing qualitative data - compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding. Through the fourth stage which is the interpreting process, categories begin to emerge from the data. These categories were further interpreted into higher levels of categorization. Eventually, some of the themes begin to emerge. A total of four themes were generated as a result: Leading and Motivating, Goal Striving, In search of the self, and Self-leadership in Uniquely Singapore - a cultural insight on the self-leadership questionnaire.

Organisation and Overview of the Thesis

This first chapter has introduced the concept of self-leadership and noted on why the concept is sometimes perceived as a Western form of leadership. It highlights the theoretical focus of the concept and the importance of conducting this research in a Singapore cultural setting. The chapter then provided an overview of the Singapore tertiary education landscape and discussed the research focus before introducing the research questions. A brief introduction to the research methodology and finally the organisation of the thesis has been presented.

Chapter 2 comprises a review of the literature that informed the study. The literature review is presented in four main topics or themes. These topics are culture and education – a Singapore perspective; concept of self-leadership; in search of the 'self' and lastly, adults as learners.

This is followed by Chapter 3, 'framing the research', which provides the theoretical framework on which this research is based. A discussion of notable theoreticians and critics of post-colonial theory, post-colonialism and Asia as Method (Chen, 2010) are made.

Chapter 4 introduces the methodology and method of this research. The purpose, aim and scope of the study are first defined. This is followed by the research design and a discussion about reflexivity. This chapter then talks about the recruitment criteria and make a formal introduction to the case study participants. It then goes on to present the data gathering methods, explains how the data is analysed and considers its validity and ethics. Chapter 5 to 8 then presents the themes of this thesis.

Chapter 5: Leading and motivating

This chapter discusses the link between the two concepts, leading and motivating. What motivates a mature adult to pursue his or her tertiary education and how has leadership played a role in this desire. This chapter brings the reader right into the Singapore story with narratives from two 'voices', one from Mr. Lee Kuan Yew (Lee, 1998; 2000; 2013), Singapore's founding father, describing his experiences of what Singapore was like before, during and after the 2nd World War and followed by independence; and the other from the participants describing their understanding of leadership and motivation. This chapter ended with a discussion on the cultural binaries behind Singaporeans' leadership styles. How did Singapore's multi-racial and multi-cultural society play a role in this? These factors suggested a trigger for reflexivity to closer examine how Singapore and other colonized countries in Asia pinpoint the cultural and psychological aftermath of colonization and imperialism (Chen, 2010).

Chapter 6: Goal Striving

This chapter discusses the effects of colonialism and the new dominant powers affecting Singaporeans culturally today. Singaporeans' never ending quest and aspirations to strive for goals has become part and parcel of their identity. However, mature students face a different set of challenges, having gone through life in the workplace, and having chosen the path to arrive at where they are today (Lassey & Lassey, 2001). Each mature adult is unique and likely to have experienced decades of intellectual, emotional, physical and social growth (Jarvis, 2001). This chapter also introduces the artefacts provided by the participants.

Chapter 7: In search of the self

This chapter first discusses the "enormity in mind-set shift" (Lee, 2013, p. 206) in young Singaporeans today. Born in a country that was already prosperous, the young often asked the

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question, "Where is the miracle?" Unlike the older generations who appreciate what they are enjoying today, having seen the country emerged from third to first world within the last five decades since independence.

The chapter goes on to discuss two important factors – social identity (Hogg, 2005) and social comparison (Wood & Wilson, 2005) as key motivating factors in the Singapore society and how these factors are related to leadership and aspirations. It then goes on to discuss the data through four factors relating to the 'self' topic. These are 'In search of the self, through the solving of challenges', 'In search of the self, through the practise of self-efficacy', 'In search of the self, through educational pursuits' and lastly, 'In search of the self, through cultural influences'.

Chapter 8: Self-leadership in Uniquely Singapore – a cultural insight on the self-leadership questionnaire.

This chapter focuses on self-leadership in the Singapore cultural context. It addresses the four research questions and validates this study's contribution to knowledge through the introduction of a country specific cultural extension to Houghton and Neck's (2002) revised self-leadership questionnaire or RSLQ.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: Self-leadership re-framed

This thesis, although a study of self-leadership, has made the influence of cultural identity and heritage of this construct visible and contributes to its theoretical, methodological, and empirical literatures. Framed within post-colonial theory, this thesis also positions self-leadership as an important leadership discourse and calls for future investigations through further

theorizing using innovative methodologies framed within cultural frameworks in a range of contexts.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarize the research questions, discuss the relationship and implications between self-leadership, adult pursuing education and post-colonialism. Overall findings, methodological implications, limitations and future research linked to this field of study will also be presented together. This thesis will end with my final reflection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Rather than determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among the population, we might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences
(Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

Introduction

Earning a tertiary education, regardless of age, has been a much sought after commodity in a meritocratic society like Singapore (Moore, 2000). This may have been the result of being in a highly competitive society (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011). While many young Singaporeans today take for granted the opportunities they have in the pursuit of education, it was not the case for mature adults when Singapore was undergoing stages of development while "moving towards nationhood" (Singh & Arasu, 1984, p. 186).

At the time of collating and writing this review, I had wanted to explore the magnitude of literature already written about Singapore's educational system, Singaporean culture, motivation and leadership. Differences in adult learning and the subject of 'self' identity that Singaporeans aspire to be were also investigated.

Eventually, four fields of literature, similar to those I had contemplated were gathered with the hope that they will be able to bring clarity and depth to the focus of this research. These fields include culture and education from a Singapore perspective; the self-leadership concept; in

search of the self, and adults as learners. Through the exploration of these works, it was hoped that the theoretical underpinnings for this study would emerge.

This review also looked at how these key fields of research were defined by other researchers and what were the aspects of their research that they found important. Their insights and the relevance of these studies to my research will be discussed, as will their modes of investigation, approaches, methods and analysis.

Section 1: Culture and Education – a Singapore Perspective

As a newly industrialized economy in South East Asia, Singapore stands out as a unique country in terms of culture and leadership style. This uniqueness can be attributed to the influences of both the East and West. (Li, Ngin & Teo, 2008, p.947)

Over the last three decades, Singapore, together with the rest of the emerging economies in Asia has seen rapid "globalization, growth and prosperity in history" (Sally, 2011, p. 22). This was a period where the West benefitted and the "rest came on board" (p. 22), describing the under-developed countries casting off their "post-colonial isolation" (p. 22).

Singapore was founded in the year 1819 (Liu, 2008), by an Englishman named Sir Stamford Raffles (Flower, 2007; Liu 2008) and became a British Crown Colony (Lawson, 2001; Li et al., 2008). During the Second World War, Britain surrendered Singapore to the Japanese, and the colony was under Japanese occupation for over three years (Liu, 2008). In 1945, when the war ended, Britain regained control of Singapore. In 1959, Singapore attained self-governance from Britain and four years later, in 1963 entered into a federation with Malaya,

Sabah and Sarawak to form Malaysia. Singapore however, left the federation after just two years, when ideological differences over racial status could not be reconciled (Lee, 1998). On August 9th, 1965, Singapore became an independent sovereign country (Lawson, 2001). Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first Prime Minister, took his oath on that momentous day. He declared:

> Whereas it is the inalienable right of a people to be free and independent, I, Lee Kuan Yew, prime minister of Singapore, do hereby proclaim and declare on behalf of the people and the government of Singapore that as from today, the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five, Singapore shall be forever a sovereign, democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society (Lee, 1998, p. 13)

Singapore is a tiny Southeast Asian country located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, surrounded by predominantly Malay-speaking neighbours (Chua, 2004). The size of Singapore's land mass is a mere 633 square kilometers (Lawson, 2001: Chua, 2004) and "is devoid of natural resources, and hence its population's skills and trade are the primary bases for its economic development" (Chua, 2004, p. 65).

Singapore's population is predominately Chinese, which constitutes about 76% (Lawson, 2001; Chua, 2004; Moore, 2000). The population also includes Malays with 15%, Indians, 6.5% and other nationalities, just 2% (Lawson, 2001; Chua, 2004; Moore, 2000). The Chinese have ancestral roots mainly from the Fujian and Guangdong provinces (Li et al., 2008) of China. About one fifth of the Chinese population speaks English as their preferred language (Li et al., 2008) with a further two-thirds speaking English adequately but prefer to communicate in Mandarin or other Chinese dialects.

Singapore is the only "Chinese-dominated multi-racial and multi-cultural society in Southeast Asia" (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011, p. 288). Culturally, as well as in leadership dominance, the Chinese generate a huge influence over the other races. In the early years, Chinese cultural values were found in the preaching of entrepreneurships and the setting up of family businesses (Hicks, 1993). In later years, it became the preaching of Confucianism (Li, et al., 2008).

> The economic hierarchy in Singapore can be characterized in terms of race, with the Chinese on the top, the Malays on the bottom, and the Indians straddled in the middle. This hierarchy is reflected in income, education, housing and virtually every other social and economic category (Moore, 2000, p. 341).

Li, et al.'s (2008) research also mentioned about the minority population of Singapore Chinese known as Peranakans or Straits born Chinese with "their unique culture" being "an eclecticism of Chinese, Malay, and English cultural elements" (p.950). The research also placed focus on two environmental factors that contributed to the development and leadership style in Singapore. Firstly the prominence of foreign companies in Singapore had meant a substantial influence of foreign culture (Li, et al., 2008) and secondly, the heavy government involvement in the country's social life meant that many aspects of Singaporean culture has been inculcated as a result of a top-down regime (Li, et al., 2008).

This sense of hopelessness was echoed by Chen Show Mao (Long, 2012), a newly elected member of Parliament, sitting in the opposition, "my greatest worry remains that Singaporeans feel powerless to change things in a meaningful way" (p. 31).

Culture's Consequences

Li, Ngin and Teo's (2008) research findings on societal culture in Singapore using the GLOBE survey (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, Gupta & Globe Associates, 2004) concluded that Singapore ranks 3rd amongst 61 countries on *Uncertainty Avoidance*, with only Switzerland and Sweden having higher scores. In fact, Singapore is the only Asian society amongst the top eight scorers on this cultural value. Singapore's data was collected from 217 managers working in the food, finance and banking industries, with 83 responding to the questionnaires on "society culture" (Li et al., 2008, p. 955) and the rest on "organizational culture" (p. 955). The mean age for this group of respondents was 36 years and consisted mainly of middle management with an average of 16 years working experience (Li et al., 2008).

The findings suggested that Singapore has "become very similar to these European welfare states" (Li et al., 2008, p. 956) and supports the researcher's argument that " the more a government gets involved in societal lives of its citizens, and the better this government takes care of its citizens, the higher the societal value of Uncertainty avoidance" (p. 956). On the contrary, other Asian societies like China, Taiwan and Hong Kong which were placed 9th, 19th and 20th positions respectively is "consistent with this argument" (p. 956). This study's other findings on cultural values also concluded that Singapore scored positively on gender egalitarianism as compared to other Asian societies, being a "much less male dominated" (Li et al., 2008, p. 956) society. Singapore however, scored 1st position for Future Orientation, suggesting that Singaporeans are very forward looking people. According to Li et al., (2008) this may be partially attributed to the "Singapore government's practice of making unpopular but far sighted decisions" (Li et al., 2008, p. 956).

On the societal value of *Power Distant,* Singaporeans scored high marks for this. What this suggests is that the Singapore society is high on their desire to see less "power stratification" (Li et al., 2008, p. 956) which according to Hofstede (2001, p. 79) is about "human inequality".

On the societal value and dimension of *Institutional Collectivism*, Singapore was ranked very high in 4th position just after Japan (3rd) and with China in 7th position. This is in contrast to the other Asian societies such as Taiwan and Hong Kong where the people subscribe more towards "western individualism" (Li et al., 2008, p. 957) than being collectivistic. Interestingly however, Singapore scored very low in the value of *Humane Orientation* (ranked 55 out of 61 countries) which seems to reflect and suggest that the "Singapore society has a high degree of control on individual behaviours" (p. 957).

Finally, Li et al.'s (2008) research discussed the findings on the societal value of *Performance Orientation.* Performance Orientation is a measurement of the level of importance people in a particular country placed on performance or achievement. Singapore scored very high on this by achieving 2nd position amongst the 61 countries surveyed. Hong Kong on the other hand also scored highly in this aspect, however, as the researchers pointed out that stressing on performance and achievements does not mean risk taking. Singaporeans having very low score on Uncertainty Avoidance seems to suggest that while they are performance and achievement oriented, they are not risk takers (Li et al., 2008). This finding is pertinent to my study as the taking up of tertiary education by older successful adults can be seen as a significant risk taking activity. I am interested in the fact that my study will focus on people who go against certain stereotypes, like the low risk taking orientation proposed in Li et al.'s (2008) study.

'Kiasuism' – Singapore's Unique Culture in Uncertainty Avoidance

According to Hofstede (2001, p. 146), "extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety, and the human society has developed ways to cope with the inherent uncertainty of living on the brink of an uncertain future". The author suggested that uncertainty is experienced in difference ways by different societies and this is because "ways of coping with uncertainties belong to the cultural heritages of society" (p. 146). These heritages can be non-rational and may be "reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society" (p. 146). In most cases, these values are "incomprehensible to members of other societies" (p.146).

One such collectively held value amongst Singaporeans is known as 'kiasuism' - the fear of failure or losing out to others (Ho, Ang, Loh & Ng, 1998; Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002; Li, et al., 2008; Ellis, 2014). The term 'kiasuism' comes from the word 'kiasu', which is a Chinese dialect word. This word is also associated to a person lacking in creativity or entrepreneurship (Li et al., 2008), someone uncomfortable with "uncertainty and risk" (p. 954) or even the lack of social graces (Goh, 2012). However, Hofstede (2001) pointed out that Uncertainty Avoidance is not to be confused with "risk avoidance" (p. 148) because while risk can be expressed in a percentage of probability, uncertainty is about fear and anxiety and are "diffuse feelings" (p. 148).

According to Chan (2012, p. 6), Singapore citizens and permanent residents perceive their society as "kiasu, competitive, self-centered and elitist". A good example of Singaporean young parents' 'Kiasuism' is in their display of over zealousness in wanting to provide their offspring with the 'best' of childhood education without due consideration of the child's ability to cope. Singaporean parents can also become very nervous and "kiasu" when it is about their children's Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) or even the "O" level examination.

Their "kiasuiam" to ensure that their children excel, and be enrolled to the best school or institution in the next lap, has gone to such an extent that the education Minister had to stress to Singaporean parents that examinations are not "the be-all and end-all…and it's not the last train that anyone can take" (Davie, 2011, p. 14).

A survey by Barrett Values Centre conducted on 2000 Singaporeans recently (Chan, 2012) revealed some of their values and behaviours. Not surprisingly, kiasuism was ranked first. Others include being competitive, self-centered, material needs, Kiasi [afraid to die, like kiasu, being afraid to lose out], deteriorating values, elitism, blame, uncertainty about the future and security.

Singaporeans' ungraciousness was highlighted by the Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day Rally speech (Goh, 2012; Wan, 2012; Feng, 2012; Phua, 2012) in August 2012. The Singapore leader stressed that Singaporeans' selfishness and rancor towards each other and foreigners speaks poorly of themselves and this could damage the country (Feng, 2012). These behaviours suggested a "…dog-eat-dog society, where each person has to look out for his best interest at the expense of other people" (p. 3). The speech prompted many Singaporeans to respond through the media.

A young Singaporean entrepreneur Adrianna Tan (Feng, 2012, p. 3) wrote:

As a homeward-bound twenty-something year old Singaporean, who has spent much of the last few years working abroad, what makes me smile was this newfound, genuine and heartfelt approach. I think this is us telling ourselves to now build, lovingly, the software that matters, to accompany the great hardware and infrastructure that we have spent almost five decades on, to now also turn our focus on the people themselves – ourselves …It is already immediately

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obvious that the Singapore of my childhood, one with a ruthless focus on results and pragmatism, is fading away. It's time to write a new chapter, and this time we will do it with a lot more inclusiveness and worldly knowledge, while still cherishing the lessons of our difficult past.

Another political writer, Phua Mei Pin (Feng, 2012, p. 5) wrote about the future Singaporean she wishes to see in the year 2032:

Meet the new Singaporean who is driven, hard-working, generous and self-aware. This new guy will still do those things that made his 2012 predecessor a darling of employers, such as work with dedication and to exacting standards.

The difference is, the success of others is not a threat to him. If he faces a setback, his instinct is not to blame others. When others flag in their pursuits, it is second nature for him to help. He is driven by his inspirations, not pressure to stay ahead of the pack.

That is where a sense of purpose comes in. The future Singaporean has reason to think he is not just a cog in the machine, going through the daily grind, but an active co-creator of his society.

Whether it is through coaching children in life skills, running animal shelters, campaigning for bicycle lanes or any number of worthy causes, he keeps himself involved in something bigger than his immediate self-interest.

However, the notion of a "kiasu" nation is not all bad (Durai, 2012), as some experts feel that "it reflects the fact that Singapore is a fast-paced, achievement–oriented city" (p. 6). A research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, commented that the terms selected by the respondents to the survey does not necessarily mean they view themselves negatively, because

being competitive, kiasu and self-centered may reflect deeper values such as achievement orientation.

Singapore's Education System

Amongst the extensive research made on Singapore's educational system, Woo (2008) found that the "tiny country of Singapore appears to have a model educational system" (p. 159). Through reform efforts made by the government as early as the eighties, Singapore citizens have progressively been prepared for the knowledge economy through a centralized national curriculum (Ravitch, 2006) and one that generates creativity and critical thinking (Hargreaves, 2003).

In Woo's (2008) research on Singapore's youth, she focused on the subject of 'temporalities' defined as "lived experiences of time that include, but are not restricted to, the recollection of pasts and projections of the future" (p. 160). Her research was based on Barbara Adam's 1990 theory that time in human experiences is constituted and interconnected by its multiple expressions. Woo's study cited the disproportionate allocation of time in the Singapore educational system between academic and leisure activities and that this has become the main target of "change and debate" (p. 160). Woo (2008) emphasized that too much time was spent on academic work and as a result students were not creative in their thinking.

According to Ng and Sreedharan (2012), the suggestion for a "teach less, learn more" (p. 4) policy was launched in 2004 with much excitement from both parents and teachers longing for "the prospect of a less pressurized education system" (p. 4). Disappointingly, the authors noted that except for a slight improvement on the engagement of students and the professionalism of teachers, schools were still, " a pressure cooker environment, no thanks to the

high-stakes exams and parents' expectations" (p. 4). This stalemate situation may have been compounded by two factors, the continuation of a "written exam only" (p. 4) assessment and parent's high expectation of their child's performance.

The early streaming process (Chua, 2004; Moore, 2000) which pre-determines whether a child goes with the elite group or the masses is another area of constant criticism by Singaporeans.   The constant reforms made to the education system had been driven by the economy based on a "pragmatic" approach, "without any adherence to fixed principles" (Woo, 2008, p. 161). These 'pragmatic' approaches include the "marketisation" of the school system (Woo, 2008, p. 161) by according independent status to some schools in order for them to pitch their customized "curriculum and operations" (p. 162) with higher school fees. The ranking of schools in the hope that it will "yield greater information on school performance" (p.162) have certainly not yielded the desired results it had been set out to do.

The data show that the participants define success by the categories which the educational system allocates them, even when these categories are extremely finely, even tenuously, differentiated (Woo, 2008, p.164).

However, Woo (2008) further defines the "culture of consumption" (p.166) as a vital aspect of Singaporeans' "social contract" (p. 166) with the government. Her research claims that people are willing to forego certain "democratic rights" (p. 166) in exchange for a "stable progress in material wealth" (p. 166). Singaporeans "broadly accept social control and state intervention in their lives" (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011, p. 289).

On the surface, the educational system is seen to be successful, having produced a "highly literate populace" (Woo, 2008, p. 166), yet the success is "equivocal, if not pyrrhic" (p.

172). Students have been known to beat the system through "reductive study strategies" (p. 172) on a standardized test deemed meritocratic in nature.

The educational system is the primary engine driving Singapore's meritocratic sorting process. The other fundamental national ideal, multiracialism, is also deeply imbedded in the system, since schooling is the means of establishing multilingualism and insuring that the appropriate "cultural ballast" is imparted to all citizens (Moore, 2000, p. 352).

Singapore's education Minister, Heng Swee Keat (Heng, 2011, p. 31) expressed his views on what he felt should be desired values of young Singaporeans:

We must put values and character development at the core of our education system. We need personal values to enable each of us to have the confidence and self-awareness, and the grit and determination to succeed.

We need moral values, such as respect, responsibility, care and appreciation towards others, to guide each of us to be a socially responsible person. In particular, for our multiracial, multi-cultured society, a sense of shared values and respect allows us to appreciate and celebrate our diversity, so that we stay cohesive and harmonious.

Singapore's Multiracialism and Meritocracy Policies

In Moore's (2000) study on Singapore's multiracialism and its impact on her meritocratic policies, he characterized the country's effort in handling the "persistent racial inequality in terms of the notion of fair meritocracy" (p. 339). Moore argued that while the same

rule being applied to all seems fair, in reality in a multiracial and multiethnic society like Singapore, this practice often yields unfair results. Moore (2000, p. 339) reiterated:

> Inherited wealth, educational advantages, nepotism, and benefits from discrimination against other groups, create a "cruel meritocracy" that does not truly reflect the talent and hard work of all individuals. To counter this meritocratic distortion, fair meritocracy dictates that societies should strive for "fair" equal opportunity in which inherited advantages or disadvantages are compensated for.

What this means is that the level playing field must be established before the competition begins. However, Moore (2000) realized that while this "approach is ideologically appealing" (p. 340) it has its challenges as removing "socially entrenched advantages of the privileged" (p. 340) is not something easily achievable. In the case of Singapore, Moore (2000) cited attempts by the government to provide fair meritocracy through its "strict adherence to the ideal of a procedurally equal meritocracy, while simultaneously promoting multiracialism as a fundamental national ideal" (p. 340). As such, Singapore can be described as "unique in actively seeking to achieve a fair meritocracy" (p.340) although a fair multiracial meritocracy is still something to look forward to.

According to Moore (2000), despite the government's effort to minimize the disparity in terms of educational levels and social status, the Malays are still "severely underrepresented" (p. 341) and enjoy a household income of only 74 percent of that of an average Chinese household and:

> The persistence of this economic hierarchy has led to strong social stigmas and stereotypes associated with race. There is a pervasive belief that the Chinese are

more intelligent, hardworking, and economically astute than other racial groups (Moore, 2000, p. 343).

In order to create a "conception of a Singapore nation" (p. 344) and to defuse ethnic tension, an emphasis on multiracialism and meritocracy was created.

Each racial group was cast as an equally important, distinct part of a nation that would strive to ensure that success came on the basis of merit, rather than racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural favoritism (Moore, 2000, p. 344).

The intention was to make Singapore into a multiracial society with multiracialism being the ideal in nationhood cultivation with certain degree of compromise being considered, thus creating a "the framework of fair equal opportunity" (Moore, 2000, p. 345). However, Moore (2000) argued that the Singapore education system continues to favour the rich, especially the Chinese as evidence have shown "overrepresentation in tertiary education" (p. 356). He claims that the greatest bias in Singapore education comes from the advantages available to the rich, even though he admits that this may be a universal social characteristic in many other countries as well. The advantages include the ability to provide their children with "high quality tuition" (p. 356) or sending them abroad to further their education since the number of places available each year in local universities is limited. According to Tan (2011), studies have shown that 58% of high income parents are able to pass on "economic advantage" (p. 2) to their children.

Moore (2000) concluded his study by mentioning that Singapore, in comparison with many countries has proven herself by taking concrete steps in dealing with multiracialism and meritocracy. These two ideals are closely related to how fair and good society is in "mitigating the disadvantage that low-income families pass on to their next generation in the form of poorer nutrition, inferior education and reduced job prospect" (Tan, 2011, p. 2).

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Views on the concept of meritocracy from a Singapore perspective was also shared by Tan (2008) who felt strongly that "inherent contradictions" (p. 7) is lightly to "lead to the unraveling of Singapore's political society" (p. 7). He maintained that there are already tensions "as the main contradiction between meritocracy's egalitarian and elitist strands is gradually being amplified by Singapore's deepening engagement with the forces of globalization." (p. 7). Tan (2008) also stressed that with Singaporeans gaining "access to alternative ideas in cyberspace, and observe a widening income gap, the old consensus on meritocracy will have to shift and adjust" (p. 7).

A Desire to Educate the Population to Meet Globalization Needs

Singapore, having adopted a "development state orientation" (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011, p. 287) policy with strong emphasis on educating the population in order to produce a high quality workforce, the government of Singapore then went on to promote globalization (e.g. Koh, 2011), in order to keep up with the "pace of economic growth and development around the world" (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011, p. 288). They include:

> Education and training, which is considered a core element in facilitating economic growth and development, is prized in Singapore as a key driver for improving the educational qualifications and skill levels of the workforce so as to maintain the competitive edge of the Singapore economy in a fiercely competitive global market (Gopinathan & Lee, p. 289).

Another notable Singapore effort in globalization was to attract the forging of "alliances and partnerships" (p. 290) between local and renown foreign universities. The corporatization of the two state-run universities, National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University was one of the earliest decisions towards this direction (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011) in

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line with the incorporation of a third university, Singapore Management University in 2006. This move allows the universities "greater flexibility and autonomy to recruit outstanding academics and students, manage their budgets and build a stronger sense of belonging among student, staff and alumni" (p. 289).

However, this trend in educational reforms in the developed world is questioned by Tan, Macdonald and Rossi (2009) in their research on Singapore's educational reforms to keep pace with the impact of globalization.

A neo-liberal economic philosophy favours an education marketplace, privatization in education services, greater devolution and less central control so that schools can be more responsive and corporate-like to suit changing preferences and needs (Tan et al., 2009, p. 357).

The authors cited the evolution of teachers becoming "managers and facilitators" (p. 357), students becoming "customers or clients" (p. 357) and learning turning into a "quantifiable and measurable commodity of exchange" (p. 357). Under such a "competitive and accountability" (p. 358) environment, schools "inevitably [gets] caught in a culture of performativity" (p. 358).

Against this backdrop of neo-liberalism , and with the recent surge in educational action researches within a neo-liberal agenda, the authors cited three possible tension areas arising. Firstly, researchers' "inclination towards a positivistic research paradigm – a technical interest in getting things done effectively" (p. 358); secondly, the "funnelling of research questions that narrow to simple proofs of managerial efficiencies or effectiveness" (p. 358), thus "limiting the emancipatory potential of practitioners to arrive at a critique of their educational work and work

settings" (p. 358). The third possible tension cited by Tan et al., (2009) was "critical reflexivity" (p. 358). Did the researchers question "one's biases, presupposition, and the acknowledgment of one's position within a social context"? (p. 358). The authors warned that the lack of such practices may "run against managerialistic expectations" (p. 358).

Tan et al., (2009) conclude by mentioning that it is not the intention of the authors to be "critical of the Singapore reform agenda" (p. 368) or "trivialised the efforts" (p. 368) contributed by the teacher-researchers "by suggesting that they were only actors within an omnipresent managerialist culture" (p. 368). They suggested three refinements to be made to the educational action research in Singapore. Firstly, not to limit the research to a positivistic paradigm; secondly, that the researchers should also focus on "issues of equity and social justice" (p. 368) and not simply base their research on academic outcomes; and thirdly, that the education Ministry encourages and supports these teacher-researchers " to critically question the boundaries of their action research" (p. 368). This is the background against which this research is set and the literature effects the direction of Singaporean education.

Section 2: The Concept of Self-leadership

The leadership construct often reveals multiple definitions and as a result, also reveals many complexities. According to Pierce and Newstrom (2006), some authors define leadership as a "psychological phenomenon" (p. 8) while others prefer to see it as a "social phenomenon" (p. 8). As a psychological phenomenon, a leader is often referred to as "a person who possesses certain desirable personalities and demographic traits" (p. 8) while in the case of social phenomenon, "the leader is the result of a confluence of a person, a group, and the needs arising from a situation faced by each" (p. 8).

Bass (1990) suggests that there are many approaches possible when defining the concept of leadership. These approaches include leadership as a focus of group processes, as personality and its effects, an act or behaviour, an instrument of goal achievement, as an emerging effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, the initiation of structure, the art of inducing compliance, the exercise of influence, a form of persuasion, and lastly, as a power relationship.

More recently, the leadership construct has also been conceptualised in other alternative ways and forms (Piece & Newstrom, 2006) and these include concepts of "self-leadership, co-leadership, strategic leadership, symbolic leadership, servant leadership and organisational leadership" (p. 10) amongst others. My focus here is on self-leadership.

Emergence of the Self-leadership Concept

The earliest literature on self-leadership emerged in the early eighties with Manz (1983) playing an early role in the articulation of this leadership concept. In his book, *The Art of Self-Leadership: Strategies for personal effectiveness in your life and work,* he stresses the difference between leadership and self-leadership. He cited self-leadership as "the ultimate source of behavioural control" (p. xii). According to the author, people often "focus on ways to influence others and neglect the more fundamental issue of how we [they] can better lead ourselves [themselves] toward our [their] personal goals and dreams" (p. xii). He further emphasised that failures are often due to people falling short of their set goals and dreams and believes that these failures "can be traced, as least in part, to shortcomings of their own self-leadership" (p. xiii).

Manz continued to author several journal articles and books, namely, *How to Become a Super Leader* (Manz, 1990), *The Art of Self-leadership* (Manz, 1990a), *Harness Your Mental Power* (Manz & Neck, 1991a) and *Self-leadership...the Heart of Empowerment* (Manz. 1992a).

In these writings, the author wanted the audience to differentiate between what is termed as "historical leadership" (Manz, 1990, p. 10) and "super-leadership" (p. 11). His vision of a super leader is one who is able to encourage followers to be "dynamic, creative and capable self-leaders" (p. 11). The author's belief is that these followers will in turn be committed "to perform out of a sense of ownership" (p. 11) rather than being a passive follower. The concept of super leadership was further discussed in Goel, Manz, Neck and Neck (1995) in their paper on "Beyond Traditional Leadership: leading others to lead themselves" (p. 81). The authors suggested that super-leadership is the "approach to foster these qualities in employee" (p. 92) and the "facilitation of employee self-leadership is perhaps the ultimate frontier to be explored in the pursuit of employee and organisational effectiveness" (p. 92).

In later work, Neck and Manz (2013) wrote about their belief that every person is capable of self-leadership. However, they emphasised that the degree to which this capability is demonstrated may largely depend on the individual as not everyone is effective in managing the transformational process. The authors stressed that for some people, "the process is very dysfunctional" (Neck & Manz, 2013, p.6) and can lead into "the wrong line of work and into the wrong job; even more lead themselves into unhappiness and discontentment with their lives" (p. 6). Neck and Manz (2013) propose two sets of strategies to be used by those keen to embrace self-leadership; they are "world-altering strategies" (p. 17), and "self-imposed strategies" (p. 20).

World-altering Strategies

These strategies require a person to make alterations in his or her "immediate worlds" (Neck & Manz, 2013, p. 17) by firstly, adopting a "reminder and attention focusers" (p. 17) strategy; secondly, using "removing negative cues" (p. 17) and thirdly, by "increasing positive cues" (p. 18).

The first strategy involves "the use of physical objects to remind us of what to focus our attention on, things we need to do" (p. 17). They suggest the second strategy involves the elimination of cues that will lead us to negative behaviours and the third strategy is to strengthen our cues on positive behaviours, for example, by setting up cues that "impact on very important matters – such as what kind of person we can become" (p. 18). Neck and Manz's (2013) work was a strong influence on understanding of self-leadership.

Self-imposed Strategies

Manz and Neck (1999) proposed four strategies within their self-imposed strategies. They are "Self-observation, Self-goal-setting, Self-reward and Self-punishment" (p. 21).

Self-observation. Self-observation is a strategy where a person is consciously aware of his or her own behaviour regardless of whether these behaviours are desirable or undesirable. This sense of self-awareness generates self-cueing or self-focus, which in turn can influence the behaviour and self-control of a person (Neck & Manz, 2013). Self-observation can also help a person to establish "when, why and under what conditions to use certain behaviours" (p. 20). Although self-observation can strengthen a person's behaviour management, the strategy is often used without a person's knowledge or in an ineffective manner.

Self-goal-setting. It is common for a person to wonder about his or her daily chores aimlessly without any focus or direction. Through self-leadership's self goal-setting strategy, one is able to plan towards long-term achievements through systematic and well thought through personal goals (Neck & Manz, 2013). According to Neck and Houghton (2006), many past researchers have indicated that the "process of setting challenging and specific goals can significantly increase individual performance levels" (p. 271).

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In order to achieve long range goals and pursuits, it may be necessary to look into short-range goals as well. These short range goals should be in line and consistent with the long range goals in order to be effective. The ability to achieve short range goals adds to the personal satisfaction of the pursuer and as a result may boost his or her morale to achieve higher goals (Neck & Neck, 2013).

Self-reward.   Developing a method for self-reward is described by Manz and Neck (1999, p.30) as "one of the most powerful methods we possess to lead ourselves to new achievements". Rewarding for one's own achievement after performing a desirable act or attaining a difficult goal can help elevate a person's level of self-esteem and further motivates him or her to strive for more achievements. The act of self-reward need not necessarily be just physical; it can also be a mental process of imagination whereby the reward is 'given' (Neck & Manz, 2013).

Self-punishment.   Almost similar to self-reward, self-punishment however implies that a person might also apply strategies that work in the opposite direction. Neck and Houghton (2006, p. 272) suggested that:

> Self-punishment or self-correcting feedback should consist of a positively framed and introspective examination of failures and undesirable behaviours leading to the reshaping of such behaviours.

However, self-punishment is negative in nature and may be harmful towards a person's "motivation and creativity" (Neck & Manz, 2013, p. 32). The act of self-punishment is an ineffective method of controlling one's behaviour as there will always be a strong tendency for a person to avoid these punishments when they are either difficult or unpleasant (Neck &

Houghton, 2006). On the other hand, "the excessive use of self-punishment involving self-criticism and guilt can be detrimental to performance and should be avoided" (p. 272).

Theoretical Underpinning of Self-leadership

The concept of self-leadership, according to Neck and Manz (2013) has its roots coming from many areas of psychology and these include social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1977a, 1986); and intrinsic motivation theory (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991).

Social cognitive theory. Neck and Manz (2013, p.5) suggested that social cognitive theory "recognises the adoption and change of human behaviour as a complex process with many parts". The process acknowledges that people are capable of influencing others as well as being influenced. Social cognitive theory stresses the importance of how we are capable of managing and controlling ourselves especially in difficult situations or having to cope with important tasks. It also recognises the human ability to learn and experience tasks. People also learn from observing others as well as through the use of their imagination. Finally, the theory also stresses the importance of our perception and our own effectiveness (Neck & Manz, 2013).

Bandura's social cognitive theory involves several key areas (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). These include, "the reciprocal nature of influence among personal, behavioural, and environmental factors" (p. 160); "the relation of learning to motivation" (p. 160) and "the enactive and vicarious sources of behavioural change" (p. 160). Bandura (1986, p.18) further elaborated on his framework built on a 'triadic reciprocality' platform in the following manner:

> In the social cognitive view, people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocality in which

behaviour, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other.

According to Manz (1986), self-leadership emphasises processes such as self-monitoring, self-adjustment and self-reactions. The main difference however is that self-regulation theory deals basically with the concept of discrepancy deduction, while self-leadership leans more towards social cognitive theory and suggests discrepancy production followed by reduction.

This is supported by Zimmerman & Schunk (2001), who suggest that Social Cognitive theory assumes that individuals have control over their own performance standards. A person will set goals based on past performance experience by creating or producing a discrepancy level between what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved. By having this set target, one is motivated to achieve the higher standard set and thus reducing the discrepancy. When all discrepancy has been done with, the process repeats itself.

Intrinsic Motivation theory. The other important area of knowledge contributing to Neck and Manz's (2013) concept of Self-leadership came from Intrinsic Motivational Theory. The author suggests that people are usually attracted by the potential rewards in what they do. This in turn influences their choice of deeds for the future. There will always be an inclination for people to do things that brings them good results and rewards as against doing things that do not attract success. Each person is different and possesses qualities that are unique. Self-leadership is not about just having the right attitudes or the right values but about the way we conceptualise ourselves and our contributions to the world around us (Neck & Manz, 2013).

A broad view of the concept of "behaviour" is needed to understand self-leadership. Behaviour is viewed as taking place at both an observable physical

and unobservable mental level. In fact the events that come before behaviour and the results of behaviour take place at both a physical and mental level. Thus a complex chain of behavioural influence takes place. (p. 9)

Self-leadership is also about the mental ability of self-control in doing things that we feel are right, and non-indulgence in doing things that are wrong. These two levels of influence will lead us to accomplish things that are desirable (Neck & Manz, 2013). In other words, Self-leadership is a terminology used in describing the influence a person is able to exert upon him or herself with the sole intention of controlling his or her own behaviours (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-leadership also includes expanded views such as self-influence and self-control and are both behavioural and cognitive perspectives of how individuals influence themselves (Sims & Manz, 1993). Self-leadership is therefore translated and defined as both "thoughts and actions that people use to influence themselves, and implies that people look within themselves for sources of motivation and control" (Yun, Cox & Sims, 2006, p.377). Manz (1983; 1986; 1991) as well as Prussia, Anderson & Manz (1998), defined self-leadership as a process that enables individuals to influence him or herself to control his or her own actions and thinking. In later work it was felt that individuals may apply self-leadership strategies in different ways and as such the end result in achieving goals may vary from person to person (Manz and Neck, 2004).

Research undertaken within the last few years has shown the emergence of two distinct types of motivational theory – that of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002). The main difference between the two is that, for intrinsic motivation, a person performs certain tasks because of interest or enjoyment whereas for extrinsic motivation it is carried out "to attain contingent outcomes" (p.37). Intrinsic motivation theory and its framework are derived from elements of Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991). They defined self-determination as a person's awareness of his or her own source of personal control. It

describes a person's ability to generate behaviour that is appropriate to the environment and to relate and assimilate events (O'Neil & Drillings, 1994). Deci and Ryan (1991) also describe the self as having at its core an energising component termed intrinsic or growth motivation.

> The "true self" is in operation when one's actions are endorsed by oneself, with integrity and cohesion. Authenticity is self-determination, with the person viewing him or herself as the focus of active development. The "I" is intrinsically motivated and actively engaged in knowing and directing itself at levels of functioning that lie outside the cognitive system. This higher order, meta-cognitive self is the originator and formulator of goals, intentions, and self-beliefs that underlie decisions, motivations, and self-regulated performance (O'Neil & Drillings, 1994, p. 51)

O'Neil & Drillings (1994) further emphasised that motivation is part of self-determination and is often found as an intrinsic part of human nature to want to excel. This is especially so in environments that are conducive to excellence or self-improvement in nature and that allows a person to seek higher order of personal goals, learning achievements and performance.

In one of the older pieces of work, Deci (1980), defines intrinsic motivation to be at best a superficial or "operational" (p. 31) definition as it has little real connection to the study of human needs and "the dynamics processes related to these needs" (p.31). As an operational definition, intrinsic motivation is readily "observable, verifiable and quantifiable' (p.31) and tend to lean towards experimental procedures.

According to Neck and Houghton (2006), the study of linkages between self-leadership strategies and the concept of intrinsic motivation was first undertaken by Manz (1986). Manz's study revealed that while the concept of self-management was based mainly on extrinsic rewards

such as "praise, recognition and self-reinforcement using external reward contingencies" (p.279), self-leadership goes far beyond this perspective. The concept of self-leadership primarily focuses on just natural rewards that were derived from the performance of the task itself. The concept extends into areas such as the feeling of competency while exercising self-control or self-determination. The level of self-leadership which in turn controls the level of task performance would be enhanced if the activity or task chosen required a higher level of competency and self-determination.

Neck and Houghton (2006) further elaborated that while natural reward strategies were the best solutions in terms of effectiveness, there were occasions where this could become ineffective. Under such circumstances, self-reward strategies using external reward contingencies may be more effective. This was especially so in tasks that was viewed as unpleasant or tedious. The mature student, maybe aware of intrinsic needs but the extrinsic reward of the task is always attractive.

Self-leadership Theory

According to Manz (1986, 1992), the self-leadership concept involves influencing oneself to be self-motivated and self-directed. This is through "particular behaviours and thought processes" (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, p. 121) designed to achieve positive outcomes. The self-leadership theory was drawn from "theories of self-regulation, self-control, self-management and cognition to arrive at a set of intra-individual strategies for behaviours, use of natural rewards and constructive thoughts" (Neubert & Wu, 2006, p. 360). There is therefore "three distinct but complimentary categories" (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, p. 121) of self-leadership strategies. These are behaviour focus strategy, natural rewards strategy and constructive thought pattern strategy (Manz, 1992).

The behaviour focus strategy, meant to promote effective behaviour and discourage ineffective ones include the setting of goals, self-assessment, self-cueing, self-rewards and self-punishment (Manz & Neck 2004). Natural rewards strategies "are designed to leverage intrinsic motivation to enhance performance" (Neubert & Wu, 2006, p. 360). The last strategy, constructive thought pattern involves the visualisation of performance, the engagement in positive self-talk and the examination of one's individual beliefs and assumptions (Neck & Manz, 1996).

Thought Self-leadership

The concept of Thought Self-leadership (TSL) was first introduced by Neck and Milliman (1994), when they discussed a person's spiritual involvement in his or her workplace and "how can work become a spiritual experience for organisational members?" (p. 9). The authors suggested three strategies as an expansion of Manz's (1983; 1990a) original work on self-leadership. These strategies were Beliefs and Assumptions, Self-dialogue and Mental Imagery. Beliefs and Assumptions included the dysfunctional thinking which many people encounter in the workplace. Such thinking results in "an individual's tendency to evaluate his/her personal situation in extreme, black or white categories" (p. 12). The strategy would be to substitute these thoughts by those that were "rational in nature" (p. 12). Self-dialogue, similar to Beliefs and Assumptions, dealt with self-control of emotion, identification of what is right and wrong and convincing oneself to choose the right pathway. Mental imagery called for mental visualisation of positive scenarios to enhance self-confidence in one's execution of tasks.

The concept of TSL was revisited by Neck, Smith and Godwin (1997) through their paper on "self-regulatory approach to diversity management" (p. 190). The authors cited the increasing diversity in today's workplace and the positive outcome this may bring in terms of

cultural experiences and idea generation as compared to a homogenous workforce. The authors also suggested that the challenges could be overcome by each individual player in the team practising TSL through the three strategies suggested.

Two research papers, one by Neck et al., (1999) and the other by Godwin et al., (1999) brought the concept of Thought Self-leadership forward when the construct was discussed in the light of entrepreneur thought pattern enhancement and self-efficacy (Neck et al., 1999) as well as individual goal performance (Godwin et al., 1999).

In Neck et al.'s (1999) research, the authors encourage entrepreneurs to adopt "opportunity thinking" (p. 479) as against "obstacle thinking" (p. 479), due to the positive patterns of thoughts, like focusing on "opportunities, worthwhile challenges and constructive ways of dealing with challenging situations" (p. 479). On the other hand, obstacle thinking encourages the entrepreneur to "give up and retreat from problems" (p. 479). The authors defined entrepreneurial performance from a process-perspective rather than from a content perspective, with focus on "methods, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to entrepreneurship" (p. 482).

Furthermore, based on earlier research (Neck et al., 1999) that linked TSL to self-efficacy, the authors concluded that entrepreneurs who exhibit opportunity thinking will experience constructive and positive self-efficacy and that "self-leadership can serve as an integral component toward entrepreneurial self-development (p. 496). In a related study, D'Intino, Goldsby, Houghton and Neck (2007) suggested that the self-leadership concept is positively related to entrepreneurship. The authors suggested some "motivational and self-influence constructs" (p. 105) like "optimism, happiness, psychological flow, consciousness, personality models, self-monitoring, the need for autonomy, emotional intelligence and diversity

factors including age, gender, and cultural differences, and the work-life interface" (p. 105) as crucial factors leading to one's success in entrepreneurship.

In Godwin et al's., (1999) study on the assertions of TSL techniques on individual goal performance, the authors concluded that the application of TSL techniques enhances the number of times goal-relevant scheme is activated by the practising individuals. Assertion was also made that the use of TSL techniques on goal performance "enables goal-relevant categories to be more accessible" (p. 165) and "positively stimulates goal-promoting attributes within cognitive categories (p. 165). Lastly, individuals "who use TSL techniques will demonstrate superior goal performance over individuals who do not" (p. 165).

Self-leadership and Personality

An analysis and comparison of hierarchical factor structures to determine the relationship between self-leadership and personality was made by Houghton, Neck and Singh (2004). In their research, a sampling of "381 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory level management course" (p. 430) from an American southeastern university was involved. The students comprised of 60% male and 40% female with a mean age of 21.12 years. Through an anonymous and voluntary survey the students were asked to "complete instruments assessing both personality and self-leadership" (p.431). The Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire was used to measure the level of self-leadership each student possesses. As for the measurement of personality traits, the researchers used the "Soucier (1994) 40-Adjective Unipolar Mini-Markers Big five Instrument" (p. 431). This instrument is an abbreviated version of the Goldberg's (1992) Big Five factor structure psychological assessment instrument.

The findings suggested a "significant relationship between the three self-leadership strategy dimensions and the personality traits of extraversion and conscientiousness" (Neck &

Houghton, 2006, p. 282). However, when comparing the hierarchical factor structures of self-leadership such as "behavior focus, natural reward and constructive thought" (Houghton et al., 2004, p. 432) with that of an array of personality traits like "extraversion, emotional stability and conscientiousness" (p. 432), the research found no relation between the two. This is particularly so in "lower levels of abstraction" (Houghton et al., 2004, p. 283).

According to Neck and Houghton (2006), self-leadership is a unique concept that "may be distinguished from other concepts of self-influence and personality" (p. 283). Instead, the authors suggested that self-leadership is,

> A normative constellation of behavioral and cognitive strategies that operates within theoretical frameworks provided by more descriptive theories including self-regulation, social cognitive, self-control, and intrinsic motivational theories (Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 283).

Self-leadership and Performance Outcome

A piece of research designed to examine the relationship between the dimensions of self-leadership behaviourial focused strategies, job satisfaction and team performance was conducted by Politis (2006). The purpose was to evaluate "the extent to which job satisfaction mediates the influence of self-leadership behaviourial-focused strategies on team performance" (p. 203). The research involved the deployment of a questionnaire given to more than 300 employees from a manufacturing company in Australia. Results indicated three major findings. Firstly, "the relationship between self-leadership behaviourial-focus strategies and job satisfaction is direct, positive and significant" (p. 203). Secondly, "the relationship between job satisfaction and team performance is positive and significant" (p.203) and finally, "the results have clearly shown that job satisfaction mediates the relation between self-leadership behavioral-focus strategies and team performance"(p. 203).

The above findings on team performance within an organizational context was further strengthen by Bligh, Pearce and Kohles'(2006) research on self and shared leadership whereby the challenges of organizational diversity was counter-reacted through an intermediary process of trust, potency, and commitment that led to the development of innovative knowledge creation.

DiLiello and Houghton (2006) developed and presented a model of self-leadership, innovation and creativity based on existing theoretical and empirical evidences. Findings from this research suggested that "individuals with strong self-leadership will consider themselves to have more innovation and creativity potential" (p. 319) and are likely to generate innovation and creativity when they perceive strong support within the organization. In a separate but related study on workplace innovative behaviors, Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg (2006) examined the relationship between this form of behavior and that of self-leadership skills. The study involved employees and their supervisors from six organizations in Israel. Data collection was through structured surveys. Path analysis was conducted on the 175 matched questionnaires returned. The findings suggested a positive association between the three-dimensional scales of self-leadership, namely behavior focused strategies, natural reward strategies and constructive thought patterns, with both employee and supervisor rating of innovative behaviours. A second finding also established that "income and job tenure are significantly related to innovative behaviors at work" (p. 75).

In a separate research, Garger and Jacques (2007) compared self-leadership and students' academic performance. The research which consisted of 316 management courses student participants, were made to complete a Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The questionnaire which was modified to suit individual instead of team assessments consisted of measures for self-leadership under transformational as well as passive/avoidant behaviors.

Results suggested that those with high transformational self-leadership were able to score higher average academic grades than those with high passive/avoidant self -leadership.

The construct of team self-leadership performance as against the understanding of self-leadership being commonly perceived only as an individual performance indicator was further explored by Stewart, Courtright and Manz (2011), in their research, which involved a multi-level review. Findings from the review suggested that individual level self-leadership was more consistent than team level self-leadership in terms of "better affective response and improved work performance" (p. 185). The researchers also identified a few internal and external forces which influenced self-leadership for both individuals and teams. Of which, external forces in the form of external leadership, was still deemed to be of greater importance to teams and cannot be replaced by self-leadership which embraces empowering and sharing of leadership (Stewart et al.,2011).

Self-leadership and Goal Striving

Research concerning self-leadership and goal striving compared undergraduate final year students from the United States, representing a Western culture and China, representing a non-western culture respectively was conducted by Georgianna (2007). The study examined the goals and the self-leadership strategies used by participants from the two cultures. 36 students from each country were used for the study. Those from United States were represented by 17 males and 19 females while the Chinese students consisted of 22 males and 14 females. The students were asked to write a short essay of their "current, most important professional goal" (p. 35) as well as fill out a questionnaire. The students were also requested to list "four positive aspects that they associated with the fulfilment of their professional objectives" (p. 38).

Results from the study suggested differing strategies used by each group to reach their professional goals. The American students had indicated "abilities and favourable circumstances" (Georgianna, 2007, p. 52) as their strategy whereas the Chinese students had indicated "use of mental review, repetition, and increase of knowledge" (p. 52) for their goal attainment.

In an earlier research on the cultural differences in university students' goals attainment, Volet and Renshaw's (1995) study involved two groups of 63 students each, one group from South East Asia (78% Singaporeans) on student's exchange program and the other of local Australian students. The study looked into the extent to which the visiting students' ways of thinking about "learning, learning goals and perceptions of the usefulness of typical university study contexts" (p. 407) differ from local students at the beginning and at the end of their exchange programme. Results revealed that there were "cultural/educational differences" (p. 407) between the two groups in terms of their conceptualisation of goals at the start of the semester but this difference was no longer present towards the end of the semester. At the start of the semester, the South-east Asian students displayed a higher level of goals than local students, although both groups were uncertain about "which study settings would be most useful for achieving their personal goals" (p. 407). After the semester the South-east Asian group became similar to that of the local students which suggests that study environments have a huge impact on students' learning.

Sheldon and Kasser (2008) conducted three studies to determine whether people sometime "over emphasize extrinsic goals, to the potential detriment of their well-being" (p. 37) based on the researcher's assumption that people generally endorse "intrinsic goals for growth, intimacy, and community more that extrinsic goals for money, appearance, and popularity" (p. 37). The study was to find out when and why does this over-emphasis occur.

Their first study involving 84 (22 men and 62 women) psychology students was to determine their responses in terms of extrinsic or intrinsic goal endorsement from an induced existential threat. Study 2, involving 447 students (187 men and 260 women) stimulated an economic threat for the participants to determine their endorsement of extrinsic relative to intrinsic goals before and after the manipulation. Study 3 involved 222 introductory psychology students (84 men and 138 women). The participants had to attend a questionnaire session. During the session, they were first engaged in a guided visualization task and then completed an Aspiration Index test. This test helped determine the participants' "uncertainty and instability threats" (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008, p. 41) derived from seeing others getting "approval and acceptance" (p. 41).

Results from all 3 studies showed that the psychological threat on the participants increases their priority for extrinsic as against intrinsic goals.

Another research concerning the climbing of goal ladder and how upcoming actions increase the level of aspiration was conducted by Koo and Fishbash (2010). According to the researchers (p. 1):

> People's goals, whether they constitute central life objectives or mundane everyday pursuits, often follow a 'goal ladder' in which each goal is a step towards another, more challenging goal…two types of incentives exist for pursuing a goal. The first are incentives to engage in a goal, including the experience of enjoyment, or importance while pursuing a goal. The second are incentives to make progress on a goal and move up the goal ladder.

A total of five studies were involved in this research. However, this literature review will only focus on the first study as it is the only one related to my research. The first study, "Climbing the Academic ladder" (p. 3) involved 86 undergraduate students (37 men and 49

women). The study was to determine whether the participants' emphasis on remaining tasks versus completed tasks increases the level of aspiration to pursue the next level of task. For this study, the participants were asked to elaborate on their remaining versus completed academic tasks. The participants were further rated for their eagerness to graduate, to start a career and their satisfaction level with their current academic life. The prediction by the researchers was that for students who focused on remaining academic tasks as against those who focused on completed tasks would be more eager to complete their degree, start a career and were satisfied with the current academic life. Results from the study revealed that the researcher's prediction were correct. This study therefore provided evidence that students who focused on completed versus remaining actions increases the value of the current goal level. However, on the contrary those who focused on remaining instead of completed tasks increase the motivation to move up the next level that is to graduate and start a career. In addition the study also revealed that "satisfaction from the current goal pursuit is negatively related to the desire to move to a more advance level" (p. 4).

Job, Langens and Brandstatter (2009) did research on goal attainment and its impact on well-being. The researchers cited past research that having goals and successfully striving for them is a major precondition for well-being. Several studies (eg., Baumann, Kaschel & Kuhl , 2005; Brunstein, Schulthess, & Grassmann, 1998) have revealed that "incongruence of personal goals with implicit motives has a negative impact on well-being" (p. 984), whereas the opposite is true that "congruence of personal goals with implicit motives bolsters emotional and physical well-being" (p. 984). Four studies were conducted in all.

The first study was to determine whether "the explicit achievement motive moderates the relationship between commitment to a personal achievement goal and affective well-being" (p. 986). Eighty-eight students (59 females and 29 males) with an average age of 22.54 were

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asked to fill a set of questionnaire in a group session. The findings of this study supported the researchers' assumption that high achievement goal commitment "is related to positive affect only among individuals who have a strong explicit achievement motive" (p. 987).

The three remaining studies also confirm the hypothesis set out by the researchers. Study 2 results confirmed the hypothesis that for "high well-being, an achievement goal must be congruent with a high explicit achievement motive" (Job et al., 2009, p. 989). Study 3 showed that individuals who "pursue a large number of achievement goals in their lives and who have a strong explicit need for achievement" (p. 990) reported the largest number of positive experiences. Study 4 confirms that neither the "explicit achievement motive nor achievement goal commitment" (p. 991) was significantly correlated with other components of subjective well-being or medicine intake.

In another study on goal striving, Roney and Lehman (2008) suggested that goal framing, either done positively or negatively has an impact on performance. This research tests the hypothesis that negative framing can have detrimental effects on performance. Two studies were conducted. Study 1 was to "examine whether negative framing predicts performance in an academic setting" (p, 2696) and the primary hypothesis is that "negative framing will predict poorer subsequent performance, independent of goal level, expectancy, and past performance" (p. 2696). This study consisted of 133 undergraduate students with 73% female. The participants had to fill a questionnaire. Results were in line with the notion that "an avoidance orientation in goal striving has a detrimental effect on performance.

Study 2 was a replication of study 1, however it has 2 additional variables thrown in so as to examine the "role of self-regulation in this context" (p. 2700). The same goal questionnaire as in study 1 was administered twice to the participants, which consisted of 188 students of

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which 130 were females and 58 males. The first was administered before the midterm exam and the second, before the final exam. The researchers had predicted that the "negative goal framing will be stronger at time 2" (p. 2700) which was the final examination. The hypothesis was that:

> Defensive pessimists – who have developed self-regulatory strategies allowing them to avoid or to deal positively with anxiety - will not be adversely affected by negative framing. Thus, the predictive power of negative goal framing should be restricted to people who are not defensive pessimists.

Results showed once again the importance of goal framing "in the dynamics between goals and performance" (p. 2705). Negative framing was "more strongly related to poorer performance" (p. 2705) on a second exam than in the first as described. This result is also similar to that of negative goal framing for "non-defensive pessimists than for defensive pessimists" (p. 2705).

Cross-cultural Perspective of Self-leadership

A group of 6 researchers of different nationalities coming from different universities in America and Canada did a study on cross-cultural perspective of self-leadership using Hofstede's (2001) cultural and leadership framework. The purpose of the study is "to understand how differences in national cultures" (Alves et al., 2006, p. 338) could impact on "the understanding and meaning of the concept of self-leadership and its application" (p. 338). The study commenced by reviewing Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework which consists of five cultural dimensions. These are 1) power distance, 2) uncertainty avoidance, 3) individual (collective), 4) masculine (feminine) and 5) future orientation. At the same time a review of the main components of the self-leadership framework was also made. The two frameworks were then compared and re-analyzed to determine cross-cultural differences among nationalities.

Research analysis suggested 3 main conclusions. Firstly, the examination of self-leadership from a global perspective "should not be made independent of cultural dimensions as its application is indeed dependent on them" (Alves et al., 2006, p. 356). Secondly, should self-leadership be considered through Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, the suggestion is that researchers should consider the following implications (Alves et al., 2006, p. 356):

1) High power distance raises the importance of the symbolic value of tasks and correspondent convert processes;

2) High uncertainly avoidance makes more explicit the importance of non-rational, intuition-based thought processes;

3) Collectivism shows the relevance of social relations;

4) Femininity reiterates the importance of social relations and non-rational processes; and

5) Long-term orientation introduces the importance of making time an explicit element.

Thirdly, that a cross-cultural analysis of self-leadership "calls for change, adaptation, and extension of its current components" (p. 356). The researchers also conclude that self-leadership "can have different meanings across cultural contexts" (p. 356) and is "conceptually robust and may have a broad range of applications" (p. 356).

Research by Georgianna (2007) on cross-cultural perspective of self-leadership was conducted using two groups of undergraduate students, one from United States of America and the other from China. The US group from a New York university consists of 74 students (20 male and 54 female) and the Chinese group from a Beijing university had 44 students (18 male and 26 female). The median age was 21 years for both groups with the US participants ranging from 17 to 42 years and the Chinese from 17 to 33 years.

Five self-leadership strategies/dimensions, three taken from Houghton and Neck's (2002) Revised Self-leadership questionnaire and two from Muller's (2006) self-leadership items pool were used to test six hypothesis relating to individualism and collectivism cultures of the participants from the two nationalities. The 5 self-leadership strategies/dimensions were 1) Self-awareness, 2) Volition, 3) Motivation, 4) Cognition, and 5) Behaviour. The six hypotheses were (Georgianna, 2007, p. 576):

1) US participants will use more self-leadership strategies than Chinese participants.

2) Persons from the US will score higher on volitional self-leadership than respondents from China.

3) US respondents will apply motivational strategies more frequently than respondents from China.

4) Respondents from the US will report lower cognitive self-leadership than those from China.

5) US respondents will utilize behavioural strategies less frequently than Chinese respondents.

6) People entering the intervention with low self-leadership will exhibit a higher increase in frequency of self-leadership strategy use after the training intervention than persons who report high self-leadership scores prior to the training.

The methodology used for this research consisted of three phases. In phase one, the students were administered a questionnaire using a seven point Likert-scale where control variables were assembled. The questionnaire consists of strategies conceptualised to address the above five self-leadership dimensions. In phase two, after a lapse of four weeks, the questionnaire was administered a second time after an intervention was conducted. The intervention consist of a self-leadership training "to rate their expectation of success and the

importance they attribute to the realization of their goals" (Georgianna, 2007, p. 578). The students were also asked "to list four positive aspects that they associate with the fulfilment of their professional objectives" (p. 578) as well as "four obstacles that stood in the way of the fulfilment of their professional objectives" (p. 578). In phase three, a follow-up session was conducted after another two weeks and the students "rated their cultural beliefs and self-leadership for a third time" (p. 578).

Findings after the three-phase confirms "that the intervention did not influence participant's self-leadership strategies" (Georgianna, 2007, p. 569). Secondly, the "US group expressed higher levels of self-leadership than the Chinese group during the three phases of study" (p. 569). And lastly, to the surprise of the researchers it was found that the "Chinese students held higher individualistic characteristics than the US group" (p. 569). In this way, research can be used to challenge stereotypical branding of cultural characteristics.

The Self-leadership Questionnaire (SQL)

Another important aspect in the understanding of the self-leadership construct is in the development, design and usage of the Self-leadership Questionnaire or SLQ for short. This questionnaire is used as a research instrument to measure the self-leadership qualities of research participants.

According to Anderson and Prussia (1997), who conducted a construct validity study on the prototype self-leadership questionnaire (SLQ) claimed that it contained 90 items, "designed to tap the three theoretical dimensions of self-leadership: behavioural focused strategies; natural reward strategies; and constructive thought pattern strategies" (p. 123). The prototype SLQ was judged by a panel of 18 academics from a large southwestern university in the United States of

America. Judges were given a detailed background briefing on the construct of self-leadership as well as dimensions of self-leadership theory. The participants were then asked to assign the "90 randomly ordered" (p.124) items from the prototype SLQ into one of the three theoretical dimensions as described above, with a fourth choice that the item fits into more than one of the dimensions and a fifth choice that it does not fit into any of the dimensions.

Results from the study showed that only 50 out of the 90 items received agreement from the judges based on a cutoff of 60% agreement. The judges scored a range of between 61% to 94% for the 50 items. These include 27 items for behavioural focused strategies, eight for the natural rewards strategies and 15 for the constructive thought pattern strategies.

The 50 refined SLQ items (see appendix 9) were then put through a second study to "factor analyse" (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, p. 128) the items by a sampling of respondents. A total of 194 students with a mean age of 22.7 years from another university in the same region were used as the sampling. 80% of them were Caucasians and 45% were females. The students were each given a set of the 50 items from the Refined SLQ in which they had to indicate how true each item describes them on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all accurate) to 5 (Completely accurate).

With a huge majority of the respondents returning useful completed surveys (189 out of 194), "factor analysis was used to evaluate further, the extent to which the SLQ items assessed the theoretical constructs" (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, p. 129). 10 factors were derived from the factor analysis conducted. Visualizing successful performance was rated the highest factor, followed by self goal-setting, self-talk, self-reward, evaluating beliefs and assumptions, self-punishment, self-observation, focusing thoughts on natural rewards, self-cueing and self-withholding. According to the researchers the "10 meaningful, interpretable factors…correspond

to the theoretical components of the major categories of self-leadership" (p. 138). The conclusion therefore is that empirical testing together with results from the first study, "further argues for construct validity of the refined SLQ" (p. 138).

Anderson and Prussia (1997), took the refined SLQ through a third study with a second sampling of 155 students from the same university as in the second study. The third study involved the investigation of "psychometric properties of the SLQ" (p. 138) as well as its "intercorrelations" (p.141). The respondents were aged between 20 to 49 years with 27 years as the average. 66 % were males with 88% seniors or graduates. The respondents have an average of 9.3 years work experience. Results of the third study showed that:

> Reliability estimates for the scales, with only one exception, were acceptable and
> this finding argued for a moderate to good level of replicability for the
> instrument. While examination of the scale intercorrelation matrix disclosed poor
> discrimination among the categories of self-leadership, this was interpreted as an
> argument that the major theoretical categories of self-leadership may be less
> distinct empirically than theoretically (Anderson & Prussia, 1997, p. 141).

The Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ)

In 2002, five years after the Refined SLQ (self-leadership questionnaire) was developed by Anderson and Prussia (1997), Houghton and Neck (2002) made discoveries of discrepancies in the earlier study and called the effort "clearly preliminary" (p. 676). The researchers claimed that several items in the earlier SLQ were "loaded on the wrong factor and/or demonstrated minimally acceptable factor loadings (greater than 0.30) on more than one factor" (p. 676). Furthermore, one sub-scale did not meet the required standard, "thus indicating significant instability across samples" (p. 676).

In Houghton and Neck's (2002) study, a Revised SLQ (RSLQ) (see appendix 10) which "consisted of 35 items in nine distinct sub scales representing the three primary self-leadership dimensions" (p.676/677) were administered to two independent samples from a large southeastern university in USA. Final sample sizes were 442 and 357 with 60 % males and 40% females with a mean age of 21.12 years across both samples. The questionnaires were completed anonymously and with voluntary participation.

The self-leadership sub-scales were reclassified as follows. Self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation and self-cueing under Behavioural focused strategies; Focusing thoughts on natural rewards under Natural rewards strategies, and Visualizing successful performance, self-talk and evaluating beliefs and assumptions under the Constructive thought Pattern strategies.

Houghton and Neck's (2002) RSLQ was built upon Anderson and Prussia's (1997), 50 item SLQ. A total of 17 ambiguous items were removed with 2 items added upon from another study by Cox (1993). The data was analyzed in two primary stages in order to make "a fair and consistent comparison between psychometric properties of the RSLQ and Anderson and Prussia's (1997) SLQ" (p. 678). Results showed that in comparison to SLQ, the RSLQ's reliability estimates "improved significantly or remained relatively stable" (p. 685). Results from an EFA (Exploratory factor analysis) "demonstrate significantly better reliability and factor stability" (p. 672) while results from a CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) "demonstrate superior fit for a higher order factor model of self-leadership" (p. 672). This provides "evidence that the revised scale is measuring self-leadership in a way that is harmonious with self-leadership theory" (p. 672).

Generalizability of the RSLQ

In 2006, Neubert and Wu (2006) made an investigation of the generalizability of the Houghton and Neck's (2002) revised self-leadership questionnaire (RSLQ) to a Chinese context. Their contention was that "given the diversity of today's organizations and the increasing global competitive environment, self-leadership measures should be evaluated in cultures outside of USA" (p. 362). Neubert and Wu (2006) further cited the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) and noted that China scored the highest amongst the 62 countries surveyed, on collective dimensions (House et al., 2004). Neubert and Wu (2006, p. 362) wondered how the "collectivist culture of China will impact self-leadership". The researchers claims that the "self-leadership theory is inherently individualistic in its conceptualisation" (p. 362). However, they qualify by saying that even with a highly collective mindset, the Chinese employees also has "a high performance orientation that suggests they are still likely to engage in some self-leadership practices" (p. 362). The main objective of their study is therefore to determine the validity of the RSLQ in the Chinese context.

Neubert and Wu's (2006) study involves 650 employees from a large Chinese petroleum company. The company was undergoing organizational change that includes initiatives to "abolish life-time employment, implement a new performance evaluation system, and introduce continuous improvement programs" (p. 363). The study was conducted a year after the introduction of above changes. 559 surveys amongst the 650 respondents were found to be usable providing a response rate of 86%. The surveyed group's mean age was 35.7 years with mean job tenure at 15.6 years. 68% were males and 26% of the total belonged to the supervisory or management level.

Results indicated that out of the nine subscales from the Houghton and Neck (2002) RSLQ, only 4 attained acceptable levels of reliability. These include self-goal setting, self-reward, visualizing successful performance and self-talk. Subscales that did not yield acceptable levels were: self-punishment, self-observation, self-cueing, natural rewards and evaluating beliefs and assumptions. According to the researchers, the results suggest that some "conceptual dimensions of self-leadership may be universal whereas others may be culturally bound" (Neubert & Wu, 2006, p. 369). They further argued that a "generalizable core to self-leadership that has yet to be clearly articulated and measured" (p. 369). As such, and with the huge amount of robust research already conducted in the field of personal goal-setting, Neubert and Wu's (2006) challenge is, with "only a subset of self-leadership components" (p. 369) being generalizable, is self-leadership practices really "distinct from personal goal-setting and control practices" (p. 369). Alternatively, Neubert and Wu (2006) suggested that the unreliability of so many subscales did not meant that the subscales were irrelevant, but might be the result of the Chinese not being able to understand some of the survey questions in a way their US or western counterparts did. They suggested that more research should be conducted to better understand the concept of self-leadership in other cultural context.

This challenge was taken up by Ho and Nesbit (2009) when they conducted a research to refine and extend the self-leadership scale for the Chinese context. The main objective of this research was to study, modify and refine the subscales as presented by Houghton and Neck's (2002) study as well as Neubert and Wu's (2006) study that suggested cross-cultural issues with some of the self-leadership subscales. Their focus was to refine and extend three of the five unreliable subscales that were found in the Neubert and Wu's (2006) study by re-conceptualizing them to suit the respondents' understanding under a Chinese context.

Ho and Nesbit's (2009) study involved 590 Chinese students from a Hong Kong university. The researchers had argued that although Hong Kong is a highly westernized society, the Chinese people in Hong Kong "share a common cultural heritage" (p. 458) with the Chinese mainlanders as they celebrate similar "folklore, festivals, [and] observe the same traditional values" (p. 458). Ho and Nesbit (2009) also claimed that both the Hong Kong Chinese people and the Chinese mainlanders, "all worship Confucianism, and share a strong sense of family ties and belonging" (p. 458).

The sampling for this research was eventually reduced to 569 after taking into account the deletion of missing data in some of them. The data was then split randomly into two equal halves with 284 in one (44% males and 56% females) and 285 in the other (43% male and 57% female). One set of data was used for the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) while the other was used for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Average age of both samples was 20 years. Again the survey was conducted anonymously and based on voluntary participation. A 47 item modified RSLQ was presented to the respondents. Out of the 47 items, 33 came from Houghton and Neck's (2002) 35 item RSLQ. The remaining 14 items were newly developed items, 10 of which were developed for the three new dimensions proposed by the researchers. The dimensions include relationship-base natural rewards, relationship-based self-observation and social-oriented evaluation of beliefs and assumptions. These three dimensions were meant to reflect "the issue of relationship orientation" (p. 459) in the Chinese culture. The remaining four items "were developed to reflect the relation-based natural rewards" (p. 459) which "seeks to measure a person's tendency in finding enjoyment through maintaining social relations, group harmony and belongingness" (p. 459).

Content validation for the three new dimensions was conducted by three subject- matter expects who were Chinese psychologists, holding doctorates in the cross-culture psychological

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fields. All agreed that the new items were "valid for measuring each extended dimension of self-leadership" (Ho & Nesbit, 2009. P. 461). On the other hand, the modified RSLQ (see appendix 11) was given to a group of eight college-lecturer volunteers to judge in the validation exercise. Vague items were then reworded. The judges also validated the suitability of each survey question falling into the right dimension and subscale. This resulted in the removal of two items leaving the modified RSLQ with the 47 items as mentioned earlier.

A pilot study of the modified RSLQ was then administered to 20 Hong Kong tertiary students. Results showed that all the respondents "could clearly understand the meaning of each item and they could answer the questionnaire within 15 minutes" (Ho & Nesbit, 2009, p. 462).

Results from both the EFA as well as the CFA demonstrated good reliability and stable factor. The four dimensions that underwent refinement were found to yield reliability results that were above acceptable level. Moreover, the two new extended dimensions, namely relation-based natural rewards, and social-oriented evaluation of beliefs and assumptions, "consistently emerged in two independent student samples" (Ho & Nesbit, 2009, p. 450). However, results from the third extended dimension of relation-based self-observation showed that it was "consistently merged with task-based self-observation (the original subscale) to form one factor" (p.450). This gave the researchers the impetus to suggest that in the Chinese culture, task-based self-observation and relation-based self-observation cannot be separated.

This modified RSLQ, renamed as modified self-leadership questionnaires (MSLQ) was further researched by Ho et al., (2012). This latest study involving 395 (64% male, 36% female with mean age of 19.9 years) Chinese college students from Hong Kong, deemed to possess collectivistic culture, and 241 (69% female, 31% male, mean age 20.4 years) Australian college

students, deemed to possess individualistic culture, examined the "psychometric properties and measurement invariance of the modified self-leadership questionnaire" (p. 101).

Results from this research revealed that the MSLQ "exhibited a satisfactory condition of psychometric properties" (p. 101). This was confirmed through a series of multi-samples that showed the "cross-cultural similarity of an 11 factor model across Chinese and Australian samples" (p. 101). However, the MSLQ was found to possess "measurement invariance" (p. 101) which suggests that its usage is appropriate for cross-cultural research.

In the same year, another cross-cultural research on the adaptability of the RSLQ was conducted by Quinteiro, Curral & Passos (2012) in the Portuguese context. A total of 720 participants consisted of professionals, university undergraduate and post- graduate students were involved in this study through an online survey linked to an email invitation. The participants consisted of 68.8% females, 31.2% males. Their average age was 28.3 years. In this study the "RSLQ factorial [dimensional] structures were accessed through exploratory and multi group confirmatory factor analysis" (p. 553). Results revealed that Houghton and Neck's (2002) nine RSLQ dimensions were not totally acceptable under the Portuguese context. This was especially so for the dimension of self-observation. According to these researchers, the Portuguese culture, which relied heavily on leaders making decisions and coordinating work efforts, has made the need for individual self-monitoring on task awareness unnecessary. The study however, contributed to the RSLQ by suggesting the inclusion of self-learning strategies. This was particularly so in cases where knowledge was not available immediately and self-leaders had to obtain "the missing knowledge and then use it for task resolution" (p. 562).

Implications of the RSLQ to My Research

The development and refinement of the self-leadership questionnaire over the last two decades has strong implications for my own research. Firstly, I felt that the use of a questionnaire was inappropriate to my qualitative approach even though many researchers have used a variety of mixed methods in their research. In order to capture the essence of my participant's thinking behind each of the self-leadership questions, I felt that open-ended questions would serve the purpose well. I have therefore re-structured the questions in the RSLQ as such.

Secondly, with regards to the issue of generalization of the RSLQ to a different culture as researched by Neubert and Wu (2006) and Ho and Nesbit (2009), I have taken note of this implication, and will exercise caution when I begin my analysis of data. In the first place, I have not re-structured my interview questions according to what has been suggested by Ho and Nesbit (2009), as I do not see a total similarity of the cultures between Singaporean Chinese and other Chinese communities in China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. This matter will be further deliberated in my Methodology chapter.

Section 3: In Search of the 'Self'

In light of the obvious importance of self-reflection to understanding human behavior, it is curious that behavioral and social scientists took so long to move the study of the self to a prominent position, particularly given that its importance was recognized millennia ago (Leary &Tangney, 2005, p. 4).

The search for definition and concept on the construct of 'self' has long been many psychologists' and sociologists' troubles (Leary & Tangney, 2005). The reason is because there

has not been a "universally accepted definition of self" (p. 6). According to Olson (1999), psychologists do not consider a person to be a 'self', but rather, each person having a 'self'. Leary and Tangney (2005) offer three uses of 'self', firstly, "people's experience of themselves" (p.8); secondly, "their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about themselves" (p. 8) and lastly, "their deliberate efforts to regulate their own behavior" (p. 8). These actions taken collectively will enable the person "to arrive at the human capacity for reflexive thinking – the ability to take oneself as the object of one's attention and thoughts" (p.8).

My interest in collating this section of literature review has been my personal belief that the prospect of searching for and achieving a better 'self' is of complete relevance to the motivation of adult learning.

Differences in self-concept across cultures

According to Cross & Gore (2005), "people define themselves using the concepts, terms, values, and ideologies provided by their cultural and social environment" (p. 536). For decades now, researchers have understood 'self' as "a cognitive structure, a center of motivation and a regulator of behavior" (p. 536). However in recent times, there has been significant focus on 'self' within the cultural context.

Historically, cultural models of the self were closely associated with beliefs, idealism and purpose (Cross & Gore, 2005). However, cultural differences in societies around the globe have made the understanding of self highly influenced by the individual's psychological orientation and adaptation. For example, under Western influence, a person's strive for individualistic distinction is culturally valued (Markus & Kitayama, 1994) whereas such self-enhancement ambition is highly suppressed in certain East Asian societies. In other words,

"cultural models provide direction for individuals to construct socially valued and adaptive selves" (Cross & Gore, 2005, p. 538).

One of the most widely researched cultural variations of the 'self' concept is the study on independency versus interdependency. The 'self' in the western cultural tradition assumes a person to be "the autonomous individual…separate from society and the situation" (Cross & Gore, 2005, p. 538). However, "this independent relationship between the person and society is not assumed in collectivist cultural contexts" (p. 538). Under a collectivist culture, "the person and society are interdependent and mutually supportive" of one another. In addition, these cultures provide priorities to "social units…family, work group and the community" (p. 538) instead of the individual. According to Cross and Gore (2005, p. 549):

In the United States, the primary standard for evaluating the self is how well one meets the cultural norm of independence, autonomy, and uniqueness. In East Asian cultural context, the primary standard for evaluating the self is how well one meets the cultural norms of fitting into important groups, behaving appropriately in social situations, and maintaining harmony in relationships.

In related research, Kurman (2002) completed a study on self-enhancement (Kurman, 2002), and compared the differences between two groups of university students, one group shared a collectivist cultural background, the sampling consisted of Singaporean Chinese and Israeli Druze. The other group was from an individualist cultural background which consisted of Israeli Jews.

According to the researcher, the two cultures subscribed to different self-systems (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), with the individualists promoting "an independent self that is

autonomous and self-contained" (Kurman, 2002, p. 1705) while the other fostered "an interdependent self that is part of a comprehensive social relationship and that is partially defined by others in that relationship" (p. 1705). This suggests that the drive for self-enhancement is not necessarily shared or sought by people of all cultures (Bond & Cheung, 1983; Takata, 1987) as "the interdependent self is motivated to fit in, restrain itself and maintain social harmony" (Kurman, 2002, p. 1705). Any attempts to enhance self in an interdependent cultural grouping may "pose a threat to the harmony of the group" (p. 1076). Such motives may eventually lose its appeal to members of the group.

Kurman's (2002) research's purpose was to challenge, firstly the notion "that [the] lack of self-enhancement is intrinsic to the interdependent self" (p. 1706) and secondly, that the "cultural differences reflected in degree of self-enhancement are not necessarily the inevitable result of the collectivist nature of the interdependent self" (p. 1706). Two studies were conducted to support these claims. The first was to compare two different collective cultures based on differing traits, purpose of which was to "question the assumption that low self-enhancement is not characteristic of all collective cultures" (p. 1706), and "to show that self-enhancement of communal traits, which may facilitate good relationships and do not reflect personal success can thrive in both individualist and collectivist cultures" (p. 1706).

Kurman's (2002) study comprised of 143 Singaporeans (40 men and 103 women), 146 Israeli Druze (59 men and 87 women) and 129 Israeli Jews (40 men and 89 women). Initial evaluations showed that within collectivist societies there may be differences in terms of self-enhancement initiatives. This fact forces the researchers to first find these differences before any assumptions is made on any particular collectivist society. Facts based on past research confirmed the fact that Singaporeans and Israeli Druze are both collectivist societies although with "emphasis on different dimensions of collectivism" (p. 1707) while Israelis Jews "showed

the most individualist pattern of the three groups" (p. 1707). The participants were measured on two types of traits – communal and agentic. Communal traits include intelligence, sociability and health while agentic traits are honesty, cooperation and generosity.

Results revealed that "the measure of academic self-enhancement was found to be the most sensitive to modesty" (Kurman, 2002, p. 73). As for the comparison of the level of Academic Self-enhancement, the Israeli Druze maintain higher scores than the Singaporeans and the Israeli Jews. The conclusion is that each group's sensitivity to the modesty response corresponded with their cross-cultural differences (p. 73).

Self-efficacy

To understand the concept of Self-efficacy, one needs to have an in-depth knowledge of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2001). According to Maddux and Gosselin, (2005), the theory provides an understanding that "people actively shape their environments, rather than simply react to them" (p. 218). Self-efficacy is therefore about the belief in one's ability to "organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

Contrary to common misconceptions, self-efficacy beliefs are not competency skills (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005, p. 218) or skills and abilities "divorced from situation" (p. 219). Instead it is only concerned "with what people believe they can do with their skills and abilities under certain conditions" (p. 219). Self-efficacy beliefs are also not "predictions about behaviour"(p. 219), "intentions to behave or intentions to attain particular goals" (p. 220). Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs are not outcome expectancies, behaviour outcome expectancies, perceived controls, causal attributions, self-concepts, self-esteem or traits (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005).

Types of self-efficacy. Maddux and Gosselin's (2005) research noted two 'types' of self-efficacy beliefs – "task self-efficacy" and "coping self-efficacy" (p.221) which were conceived by Kirsch (1995). Task self-efficacy is understood as "the perceived ability to perform a particular behaviour" (p. 221) while coping self-efficacy is "the perceived ability to prevent, control, or cope with potential difficulties that might be encountered when engaged in a performance" (p. 221). Maddux and Gosselin (2005, p. 221) further clarifies on the types of self-efficacy beliefs,

> Self-efficacy should not be viewed as a construct with different "types'; rather, measures of self-efficacy are tailored for different types of behaviours and performances in different domains and situations, ranging from relatively simple motor acts to complex and challenging behavioural sequences and orchestrations...Beliefs concerning the ability to execute these different behaviours and sequences are not different types of self-efficacy; rather, they are self-efficacy beliefs for different types of performances.

As self-efficacy is not a trait it should not be measured as measurements can produce errors due to too little or too much specificity (Bandura, 1997). According to Maddux and Gossselin (2005), self-efficacy beliefs can be generated through five major sources. Firstly, through one's own performance experiences; secondly, through the influence of vicarious experiences; thirdly, through "imaging themselves [yourself] behaving effectively or ineffectively in hypothetical situations" (p. 223); fourthly, through the influence of verbal persuasions and lastly, through physiological and emotional states when people learn to associate failures with "aversive physiological arousal" (p. 223) and success with "pleasant emotions" (p. 223).

Self-efficacy and learning. The close relationship between a leader's level of self-confidence and his or her leadership success has often been taken for granted. According to

McComick (2001), this is a long recognized association, although there have been few explanations with regards to the theoretical aspect of this association. The closest explanation perhaps comes from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which explains the functioning of self-efficacy leadership.

Based on the above, it may be fair to assume that mature students embarking on the uncertain and unfamiliar journey of returning to school to pursue a tertiary education after a lapse of time, may require a high degree of self-efficacy to fulfil the task (Young & Ley, 2002; Barkley, 2006). Golden (2003) writes about the differences between traditional age students and mature students. She stressed that while mature students have the benefit of life's experiences such as "being in the workforce, married, [and] parenting" and "their diversity brings [bringing] a much richer and lived experience to the classroom" (p. 14), they remain less prepared for college education as opposed to traditional age students. She concluded that "self-efficacy, high self-esteem and high self-confidence" (p. 15) are key ingredients to the academic success of mature students.

Schunk and Ertmer (2000) found that students who practised strategies such as self-control and self-regulation in their academic learning process are more likely the ones to succeed as learners. Researchers in the educational field have also established that efficacy beliefs are strong motivators of students' self-regulatory skills (Schunk, 1989). Students who possess high self-efficacy levels are usually the ones that choose to perform difficult tasks, put in extra effort and have longer perseverance. They also tend to be less fearful of academic tasks, showing lower anxiety levels and more importantly the ability to execute complex learning strategies (Jakubowshi & Dembo, 2004).

Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) established that self-efficacy does not always have a direct impact on academic achievements, but rather on self-regulatory skills.

However, since self-regulatory skills are factors that contribute to academic achievements, the end result is that self-efficacy does have an impact on academic achievements. Self–efficacy is also linked to self-esteem (Brown & Mankowski, 1993). Individuals with low self-esteem tend to react to experiences in a more balanced manner. Events that are positive will lead to a positive psychological state and vice versa. However, in the case of individuals with high self-esteem, the inclination is towards embracing positive events only and disregarding negative ones (Brown & Dutton, 1995). This view is supported by Chase (2001) claiming that people who are not confident of success will usually avoid situations where they may experience a high degree of failure.

Occupational self-efficacy. In more recent time, Schyns and Sczesny (2010) discuss the differences between general self-efficacy and occupational self-efficacy. The authors concluded that occupational self-efficacy is very much related to a person's "personality characteristics" (p. 79) and reflects on a person's conviction to his or her work. This form of self-efficacy although relatively stable is still less stable when compared to general self-efficacy as it is very dependent on a person's "corresponding experience" (p. 79) such as the different types of jobs or professions and the person's job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Schyns and Sczesny's (2010) research involved a total of 136 management students from 3 countries, Australia, Germany and India. The Australian sample consisted of 33 students with 17 males and a mean age of 20.3 years; the German sample had 66 students with 37 males and a mean age of 23 years and lastly, the Indian sample consisted of 37 students with 28 males and a mean age of 24.1 years.

The authors claimed that as an earlier analysis did not yield any cultural differences between the samples, the various data were combined. The students were given two lists of

attributes, not presented under the context of leadership attributes but instead under "person-oriented traits" (Schyns & Sczesny, 2010, p. 83) and "task-oriented traits" (p. 83). The students were asked to rate themselves using a four-point scale, 1 being 'no', 2 being 'rather no', 3 being 'rather yes' and 4 being 'yes'. Items under the person-oriented traits include dependable, just, intuitive, visionary, encouraging, compassionate, trustworthy, confidence-builder, communicative, diplomatic, innovative, cooperative, inspirational, team-builder, honest and motivation. As for the task-oriented traits, items presented were, decisive, career-oriented, effective bargainer, plans ahead, courageous, independent, ambitious, persuasive, able to cope with stress, dynamic, hard-working, competitive, administratively skilled, self-confident, rational, performance –oriented, assertive and intelligent.

Data were analysed using regression analysis. As expected by the researchers, "leadership-relevant attributes were related to occupational self-efficacy" (p. 78). Schyns and Sczesny (2010) also found some support for their assumption "that ratings of the importance of relevant attributes moderate the relationship between reported leadership-relevant attributes and self-efficacy" (p. 78). However, this finding was only for task-oriented attributes.

Reclaiming Past Selves or Constructing New?

Babineau and Packard's (2006) research was based on mature students pursuing college education in adulthood. The study examined the identity processes that were implicated when mature adults return to college, including the possibility that they might be reclaiming past selves from adolescence or constructing new selves at that particular juncture in life.

The authors claimed that while not every mature student succeeds in his or her attempt to complete a college education, he or she is nevertheless highly driven by strong "motivation

and guidance" (p. 109) to do so as success would certainly mean a transformation of the self-identity. This self-identity has in turn a significant implication on the student's motivational level to succeed as it represents either achieving what they wish to achieve or what they do not wish to achieve, for example, they may wish to be a college graduate and not wish to be a college dropout (Babineau & Packard, 2006). The authors further reiterate that the motivation to want to pursue a college education usually comes during a person's mid-life, a time when many mature adults begin to reflect on their past achievements and focus on their future identity development.

Adult students' identity issues may include cases whereby these students lose their opportunities during their adolescent period to pursue a certain field of education in order to fulfil certain career ambition but were not able to do so for various reasons. Many may then consider these lifetime opportunities and self-identity to be gone forever and decide to pursue something else to recreate the new self. There will also be those who wish to reclaim their old lost self by pursuing the same dream all over again and thus the need to return to college (Babineau & Packard, 2006).

In the study, 70 adult students from an American community college were surveyed about their educational pathways with a focus on their career and educational plans and actions from the time they finished high school to the time they entered college. In addition 14 of the students were interviewed.

Results from this research showed that the participants choose one of the four approaches with regards to their identity process development when re-entering into the pursuit of a tertiary education. The first being to reclaim their past selves, second, to reject the past and construct new selves, thirdly to construct new selves and lastly to expand current selves

(Babineau & Packard, 2006). From the data gathered from the participants, 12% selected the reclaiming of past selves, 24% for the rejection of past and construct new selves, 34% for the construction of new selves and 30% for the expansion of current selves.

Babineau & Packard (2006) concluded that it is most common for "individuals to construct new identities, even if this meant a divergence from the current work or past selves of adolescence" (p. 112). The study also suggests that most of the students were not planning to return to college but may have been forced to do so due to external factors. It was interesting for this study to speculate about how the motivation of the participants would be influenced by a different setting and cultural context.

Section 4: Adults as Learners

The development of lifelong learning practices has been recognised as an appropriate human action in response to times of uncertainty and change (Su, 2009, p. 705)

According to Boeren, Nicaise and Baert (2012, p. 132), "lifelong learning is often perceived as an individual responsibility in dominant neo-liberal contemporary societies". However, the truth of the matter is, in many countries around the world, the provision and promotion of lifelong learning should also be the joint responsibility of the individual, the educational institutions and the state (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009). At the same time, in today's rapidly changing world, the pursuit of lifelong learning does not simply mean "the extension of the learning period" (Su, 2009, p. 705); and in order to sustain adult autonomous learning, one needs to have the resourcefulness and the persistency (Ponton, Derrick & Carr, 2005) required of a self-directed learner.

Some educationists believed that mature adults, many of whom having attained an abundance of life's experiences, may not adapt well to being taught using the traditional method of "teacher distilled wisdom" (Burns, 2002, p.229). This is because adults are assumed to be capable of self-direction. One of andragogy's beliefs is that adult education must be "student-centred, experience based, problem-orientated and collaborative" (Burns, 2002, p. 230).

While a class of children is probably at the same age and knowledge level, a group of adult learners may differ greatly in terms of experience, knowledge and reason for wanting to study (Burns, 2002). However, having experience may also present a negative side. Experience can cause the development of biases and habits that close minds to fresh ideas and alternatives. Furthermore, experience causes adults to be intolerant of criticism (Burns 2002).

Metacognitive Differences Between Traditional-age and Non-traditional-age College Students

The above research was conducted by Justine and Dornan (2001). The researchers cited various past research findings that nontraditional age students have different motives in wanting to attend college, and these are often triggered by "critical life events or reassessment of goals and priorities" (p. 237). The older students' motivational factors are usually intrinsic in nature whereas younger students more often than not are externally motivated (e.g. Klein, 1990; Nunn, 1994).

Research participants consisted of 95 college students from a state-supported university in the southeastern United States. The participants were divided into two groups, a traditional age group with ages between 18 to 23 years and a non-traditional age group, from 24 to 64 years. The younger group composed of 40 females and 18 males with a mean age of 20.57 and the older group with 19 females and 18 males, with mean age of 29.27 years. The students were

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presented with three surveys, namely, the Study Activity Survey, Form R (SAS-R), the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and the Inventory of Memory Experiences (IME).

Results showed that the two groups of students, traditional age and non-traditional age, produced the same level of motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy levels under the MSLQ measurement. The only exception was that "older female students reported more intrinsic motivation in the course than the younger students or older male students" (Justice & Dornan, 2001, p. 245). Through the SAS-R survey, non-traditional age students were found to use two particular higher level cognitive study strategies, namely hyper-processing and generation of constructive information, more frequently than traditional age students. These strategies involved "relatively sophisticated strategies hypothesized to increase comprehension and integration of information" (p. 25). Contrary to previous studies on age-related decline of memory, the IME survey found similar memory ability between the two groups of respondents.

Findings from this research conclude that awareness for metacognitive study strategies continue as students progressed into adulthood. The data also indicates that "higher education will need to respond to differences in the motivation and learning processes of nontraditional-age student" (Justice & Dornan, 2001, p. 248).

Learning Experiences of Adult Learners

Boeren, Nicaise and Baert (2012) discuss about the inequality in the participation pattern of adult learners. The authors suggest that adults who are "not highly skilled, are unemployed and are over the age of 45 have fewer chances of becoming adult learners" (p. 132). This is not

because of their lack of self-determination or motivation but the result of educational policies and practices that does not favour adult learning.

> To stimulate and motivate adults to participate and persist in adult learning, it is valuable to explore the experiences of learners in formal adult education programmes to determine whether their experiences are mostly related to their socio-economic background characteristics and / or to the educational environment in which their learning is taking place or both (Boeren, et al. 2012, p. 133)

The above research was conducted using a comprehensive model constructed by the researchers called the Comprehensive Lifelong Learning Participation Model (CLLPM). Data used came from a database with some 1227 Flemish adult learners who participated in a formal education system survey under the "European Sixth Framework Research LLL2010" (Boeren, et al., 2012, p. 135) which involved a total of 13 participating countries under the European Union.

Boeren's research established a total of five findings. The first is that adult learners who exhibit positive attitude towards learning, acknowledges that learning is relevant and possesses a high confidence level in their own abilities, "experienced a higher level of satisfaction" (Boeren, et al., 2012, p. 144). On the other hand, adult learners who were under some form of external pressure to participate were less satisfied.

The second finding concluded that adult learners who were already in possession of degrees, be it at the Bachelor or Master's level were more dissatisfied with adult learning as a whole as they tend to be more critical in their attitude towards the offerings and may even challenge the relevancy and applicability of such courses. On the contrary, under this particular finding, the study also discovered that older adults in general have a higher satisfaction level than those below 25, as the younger person is expected to face a much "longer perspective on the

labour market…and thus , more pressure to maintain their skills and knowledge" (Boeren, et al., 2012, p. 144). Employment status and gender, however, did not show any differences between the age groups.

The third finding showed that money and time were major obstacles or barriers for adults to participate in adult education and these could potentially become dissatisfying factors to the experience. Of the two, time seems to be more important to an adult learner than money.

The fourth finding concluded that the "inclusion of a classroom environment" (Boeren, et al., 2012, p. 145) and well organised educational practices by the educators does enhance significantly, the satisfactory level of the adult learners.

The final finding from Boeren's research showed that adults who were required to attend more than five hours of training per week were not satisfied with their experiences as many felt it was too lengthy and conflicted with their work schedules. Trainings scheduled during the evenings were also more welcomed by the learners as it did not conflict with their working hours. Finally, the research also discovered that adults, who passed the entrance text to the course they were attending, generate more satisfaction as it is a testimony of their ability to complete the course.

The above research is relevant to my study as it provides empirical evidences on adult learners' preferences and explains the main factors that could possibly contribute to their satisfaction levels.

Self-directed Learning

The concept of self-directed learning originates from the study and practice of adult education. Throughout the past decades this concept has been associated with external

management of the learning process (Candy, 1991) which means that learners are free to choose what they wish to learn. This has resulted in constraints and imbalances in implementing the concept in educational settings as more emphasis has been given to the concept than the learning process itself (Garrison, 1997). However, in more recent times, society is seeing an exponential growth in adult learning due to "medical advances and personal lifestyle" (Roberson & Merriam, 2005, p. 269), resulting in older adults "living longer and healthier lives" (p. 269). Because of these new transitions, many of these people have directed themselves towards learning and resulting in higher learner satisfaction (Boeren et al., 2012). In today's context, it has become important, if satisfactory learning experiences are desired, for "educational policy and practice" (Boeren et al., 2012, p. 133) to take into consideration the adult learners' experience. Meaning that needs has to be fulfilled if value is to be added to this experience.

According to Su (2009), lifelong learning is not simply about extending one's learning period but a lifelong interest in accepting change in the way learning is "structured and interpreted" (p. 705) and that the "notion of learning no longer implies a monopoly over knowledge and truth" (p. 705).   Su (2009, p.706) further emphasized that:

> Knowledge no longer exists prior to and independently of learners, and the way one learns throughout one's life in the organic model depends on how one responds to his or her lived situations; learning and knowledge in this sense are always provisional and incomplete.

Su (2009) also sees creativity as an indispensible capability in the long term development of lifelong learning practices. Creativity in time to come will lead the change that is being encountered. Despite the efforts put in by learning institutions and many local governments in promoting adult learning, many barriers still exist today. Her paper argues that in today's knowledge based society, the art of creativity should no longer be confined to the

designing of things to change human life but instead should be focused on "unpredictability and contestability" (p. 705) that people are faced with. The author also suggested that association and passion in "illuminating the formation of pedagogical practices that encourage creativity" (p. 705) should be extensively promoted so that in turn it could "assist in the effective development of lifelong learning practices" (p. 705).

In another research in the United States, Robertson and Merriam (2005) did a study on "older, rural adults" (p. 269) and noted that these older adults, have the benefits of "medical advances and lifestyle changes" (p. 269) and are now "living longer and healthier lives" (p. 269). To cope with these changing "life stages" (p. 269), the authors suggested that one way of overcoming them was through the understanding of the Self-directed learning process. The research, based on a qualitative approach, conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 older adults, with age ranging from 75 to 87. The participants were chosen from a rural setting in South Georgia. Findings from the study revealed that late life transitions often helped to initiate the process of Self-directed training. The authors also suggested that rural settings seemed to facilitate the participants' learning environment very well and that mature adults' pursuit of tertiary education is common today. That is because people's perception of the mature age adult's ability has changed over the years.

Adults' Ability to Learn

According to Macneil (1998), a professor in the department of sports, health, leisure and physical studies at the University of Iowa:

The idea that older people lose their ability to learn is one of the most pervasive and harmful myths about older adults. Considerable research has verified that the healthy older adult can experience personal growth and learning throughout life.

The myth persists, however, and is self-perpetuating. Younger members of society assume older people lose their ability to learn, and thus relegate them to insignificant roles where there are few opportunities to learn. Older people often believe that the loss of the ability to learn is inevitable, so they interpret the physical signs of ageing, such as fatigue or failing vision, as indications that their intelligence is deteriorating as well (p. 26).

The above bias is the result of one's belief that the sole purpose of education is for securing employment and making a living. Therefore as older people retire from work, education holds very little value to them as learning becomes associated only with the outcome it produces (Macneil, 1998; Burns, 2002). As a result, older adults are still capable of learning and expressing themselves, and because of their treasure house of past experiences they could be the best possible student a teacher might find (Manheimer, Snodgrass & McKenzie, 1995). Many mature adults, even though they have finished with their career, are not quite finished with their quest for new knowledge (Banes, 2011). Banes (2011) further emphasised that many mature students tend to do well and excel and the reasons he gave for this is that firstly, mature students have more relevant life experiences and therefore are able to lend complexity and examples to the theory they are learning; secondly, their ability to juggle work and family life has helped them to develop good organisational and time management skills and thirdly, it may be because funding their own education gives them focus and motivation. Lastly, many mature adults have learned the hard way that things worth having usually have to be worked hard at.

A majority of past empirical researches have investigated into the adult students' academic performance abilities and their related academic motivation and self-identity construct of academic competence (Kasworm, 2009). These studies, which examined a variety of adult groupings, noted comparable, if not higher academic performances of adult students over the younger ones.

The Adult Learning Experience

Rathunde (2009) wrote about 'experiential wisdom' and 'optimal experience' through the interview he did with three distinguished lifelong learners. His argument suggests that lifelong learning is enhanced by a person's capacity to make experiential course corrections that lead back to states of interest and flow experience. Rathunde (2009, p. 86) concluded that:

> A person with experiential wisdom recognises that optimal experiences are more likely to occur when an affectively charged intuitive mode works in synchrony with a deliberative rational mode and is better able to cultivate situations where the inter-relational of these two modes is optimised.

A central theme of the framework presented here is that sustained interest and flow experience are more likely to occur when two facets of attention work in synchrony: an affectively charged, intuitive, taken-for-granted orientation we bring to a task and the selective, deliberate, focused concentration we use to work on a task. When one or the other mode works in isolation or without the help of the other, the quality of experience degenerates and staying on a path of abiding interest becomes difficult (Rathunde, 2009).

Rathunde (2009) also suggested that future researchers should try to explore the potential of teaching experiential wisdom to students or other individuals who are struggling to stay engaged. He further suggested that the crucial question of how experiential wisdom is developed is a topic that needs to be researched.

In a related study conducted by Fogarty and Taylor (1997), the Approach to Studying Inventory (ASI-S) [see below] was administered to 503 mature-age students, many of whom were disadvantaged and returning to study after many years of absence. The study set out to

examine the structure of learning orientations of these students and to examine whether these learning orientations are able to predict academic achievement. The 503 students had an average age of 31 years and all were undertaking a mathematics unit as part of a preparatory study skills course to qualify them for university admission. On average, they had not studied for 12 years and many had not studied mathematics for a longer period than that.

The ASI-S is a measurement of learning orientations developed by Entwistle and Ramden (1983). The measuring instrument had 64 items with 16 subscales measuring four broad learning dimensions, namely, meaning orientation, reproducing orientation, achieving orientation and styles and pathologies of learning. The first two dimensions reflect "the distinction between deep and surface approaches to learning" (p. 3). The third dimension was added to improve its reliability and the fourth was to capture the variances created by the change in learning styles.

Students were tested on whether they used a *deep* or a *surface* approach to describe their learning experience. A deep approach is characterised by an intention on the student's part to understand the meaning of the materials whereas a surface approach is characterised by an intention to memorise only parts of the information students consider likely to be examined. Results showed that those who adopt the deep approach did far better in their examination then those who adopted a surface approach.

In another study based on adult literacy programmes, Terry (2006) conducted a research using qualitative case study to explore stakeholder's experience with two community-based adult literacy programmes in Manitoba, Canada. The study utilised three sources of data from research participants: official documents, personal documents, and one-to-one interviews. The research documents and interview transcripts were analysed to produce within-case and cross-

case comparisons of participants' perspectives. Participants reported that they underwent significant personal and academic changes and improvements as a result of their learning experiences. These improvements are in six major areas and they include (1) general attitudes towards life, (2) levels of interpersonal awareness, (3) self-esteem, (4) academic confidence, (5) learning goals and (6) employments plans.

Terry (2006) concluded the study by recommending the following action plan for adult educators:

1. They should pay close attention to their students' personal development needs as these could affect students' self-worth and respect of others.

2. They should strive to foster positive relations among students to combat interpersonal dissension.

3. They should discuss course objectives and learning criteria with individual students in relation to their overall academic and employment goals, and

4. They should ask about their students' personal interests and career plans.

The study calls for further research to be conducted firstly, in the area of using both qualitative and quantitative modes of investigation such as standardised test of self-esteem, secondly, focus on learner change as a fundamental reason for inquiry and thirdly in a variety of adult education settings (Terry, 2006).

Summary

To address the research's aims and questions I have explored extensively the literature related to four topics, culture and education – a Singapore perspective, the concept of self-leadership, in search of the "self" and adult as learners in this review. Collectively, these four topics have comprehensively examined the notion of self-leadership and mature adults pursuing tertiary education, including in different cultural contexts. This rich body of literature has assisted in the formulation and confirmation of the research questions as the literature revealed gaps that had previously been left unexplored.

As mentioned, past research on these concepts has been mainly quantitative in nature specifically to study a particular aspect of the concept's correlation with the chosen subject matter. Most of these researches were based on the approach of using a small to mid-size sampling of participants. These approaches were deemed unsuitable for this study considering its scope and nature which is to record the lived experiences of a small sampling of mature adults. My choice of pursuing a qualitative approach based on case studies is deemed to be appropriate considering how the data is to be dealt with, and studies show an inclination towards qualitative methods (Robertson & Merriam, 2005). After grappling with so many large scale quantitative studies it deemed that a qualitative approach would provide the detail needed in the context of Singapore.

Chapter 3: Framing the Research

If one of the most spectacular events or series of events of the twentieth century was the dismantling of colonialism, in the shape of the European overseas empires, then one of the less immediately perceptible – but ultimately more far-reaching in its effects and implications – has been the continued globalizing spread of imperialism.

(Williams & Chrisman, 1994, p. 1)

Introduction

Although the formal dissolution of colonial empires had begun in earnest in 1947, just two years after the end of World War 11, optimism was short-lived among the colonized as they were soon to realize that the extent to which "the West had not relinquished control became clear" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994, p. 3). After all, the newly independent countries had high hopes for the "inauguration of a properly post-colonial era" (p. 3). The Marxists had called this continuing influence by the West neo-colonialism, but many saw it as "yet another manifestation of imperialism" (p. 3). Therefore it may be fair to argue that although a colonized country has become post-colonial, it is yet to be "post-imperialist" (p. 4).

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework in which this research is framed – post-colonial theory through the lenses of Chen's (2010) work on *Asia as Method.*

Notable Theoreticians and Critics of Post-colonial Theory

Notable theoreticians and critics of post-colonialism include Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabba. Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist, in his work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, discusses the destructive nature of colonialism through the subjugating of the colonized

identity (Fanon, 1968). In essence, colonialism is about the systematic denial of "all attributes of humanity" (p. 250) of the colonized people through physical and mental violence. The purpose is to inculcate a servile mentality on the people (1968). Fanon's call was for the native people to violently resist colonial subjugation so as to restore self-respect (1968).

Edward Said (1979) describes Western Europe's intellectual division of the world into 'Occident' and 'Orient' thus creating the term 'Orientalism', a historical, artistic and cultural connotation about the study of the Orient (Said, 1997; Lopate & Said, 1999; Rose, 2004; Croydon, 2012). This 'us and them' binary created by the West claimed that these were social constructs which were mutually constitutive, and therefore cannot exist independently. Furthermore, Orientalism created what is known as the 'East', a cultural concept allowing suppression by the West. This suppression includes the disenabling of expression or representation by the East as discrete peoples and cultures. The orientalist paradigm allowed European scholars to misrepresent the East as inferior, backward, irrational and wild, while portraying the West as superior, progressive, rational and civil (Said, 1979; Lopate & Said, 1999; Rose, 2004; Croydon, 2012).

Gayatri Spivak (1988), a philosopher and theoretician, established the post-colonial definition of the term *Subaltern* (Afsaneh & Spivak, 1991; Morton, 2007). The term subaltern denotes people who are oppressed or have no access to cultural imperialism. However, this term is not to be used freely and does not apply to situations termed as hegemonic. Hegemony can be defined as "the dominant influence of one state over others (Funk & Wagnalls, 1980, p. 298). In order to describe the social functions of post-colonialism, Spivak introduces the terms *essentialism* and *strategic essentialism* (Afsaneh & Spivak, 1991; Morten, 2007; Sharp, 2009). *Essentialism* discusses the dangers attached to reviving subalterns' voices, in order to disrupt or over simplify the cultural identities of the heterogeneous social groups. This is to ensure that the

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creation of a stereotypical representation of the different identities of social groups would not

happen (Afsaneh & Spivak, 1991; Morten, 2007; Sharp, 2009). *Strategic essentialism* on the

other hand, is about the creation of temporary essential group identities to be used in the praxis

of discourse among peoples. Depending on situations, *essentialism* or *strategic essentialism* can

be used to best represent the interest of the social groups (Afsaneh & Spivak, 1991; Morten,

2007; Sharp, 2009).

Homi Bhabha is one of the most influential persons in contemporary post-colonial

studies. Many concepts describing ways in which the colonized peoples resisted the power of the

colonizers are coined by him. One of the key concepts was known as 'hybridity' (Bhabha &

Mitchell, 2005). Following up on the work of Edward Said, Bhabha's idea is that hybridization

is described as the emergence of new cultural forms from within multiculturalism; and instead of

viewing colonialism as something of the past, he suggested that, as history and cultures often

intrude into the present, a transformation of cross-cultural understanding is needed. As a result,

Bhabha applies post-structuralist methologies to his research on colonialism (2005).

According to Parry (1994), Bhabha's work has been preoccupied with "textual forms

and functions" (p. 6) setting it apart from that of Frantz Fanon, Ranajit Guba, Edward Said and

Fredric Jameson. Bhabha's taste for in between states and moments of hybridity is illustrated by

his usage of (p. 6):

> …paradoxical and open-ended words: ambivalent, borderline, boundary,
> contingent, dispersal, disjunction, dissemination, discontinuity, hybridity, in-
> between, incommensurable, indeterminate, interstitial, liminal, marginal,
> negotiation, transitional, translational and uncertain.

Parry (1994) further noted that the "free play of difference or the elements of

undecidability" (p. 6) associates Bhabha's intention "to reveal how the instability of textual

meaning is produced" (p. 6). Bhabha's perspective is useful in the context of Singapore as it demonstrates the possible "hybridity" (p. 6) and "undecidability" (p. 6) of minds within the local community in terms of affiliation and loyalty with the colonial rulers or the country where they migrated from.

Post-colonialism

'Post-colonial' is a term that refers to a period after the end of colonialism (Childs & Williams, 1997). Although the term looks very straight forward, the truth of the matter is far from being "simple or unproblematic" (p. 1). As Childs and Williams (1997, p. 1) reiterated:

> The dismantling of structures of colonial control, beginning in earnest in the late 1950s and reaching its high point in the 1960s, constituted a remarkable historical moment, as country after country gained independence from the colonizing powers. That so many millions now live in the world formed by decolonization is one justification for the use of the term post-colonial.

To some countries, especially those colonized in succession by multiple colonizers, 'post-colonial' may be a vague term (Childs & Williams, 1997). According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002), the term 'post-colonial' covers "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (p. 2). The reason is because of the belief that "there is continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (p. 2). However, whether this can be proven and at what loss or gain to the colonized country is still a very subjective matter (Childs & Williams, 1997). Williams and Chrisman (1994, p. 2) described their view of colonialism as:

> …the conquest and direct control of other people's land, is a particular phase in the history of imperialism, which is now best understood as the globalization of

the capitalist mode of production, its penetration of previously non-capitalist regions of the world, and destruction of pre- or non-capitalist forms of social organization.

According to Ashcroft et al., (2002), post-colonialism has become known as many things to many people, some even with conflicting interests. However, the authors stressed that in the midst of the "dizzying array" (p. 193) of critical practices, Edward Said's "analysis of imperial culture remains *de rigeur* [the most rigorous] (p. 193). In addition, Ashcroft, et al*.,* (2002) reiterated that "the colonial discourse theory of Bhabha and Spivak has continued to attract a considerable following" (p. 193).

The term 'post-colonial' has also been criticized for its lack of specificity, for example, there are those who argued that the term should be limited "by selecting only certain periods as genuinely post-colonial (most notably period after independence)" (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 194) or "that some groups of peoples affected by the colonizing process are not post-colonial (notably settlers)" (p. 194). Ashcroft et al., (2002) also cited other critics as arguing that total and absolute post-colonialism is only possible with the decolonization of societies "in psychological as well as political terms, involving massive and powerful recuperations of the pre-colonial cultures" (p. 194). There are also some who feel that:

> …no society can ever be entirely free of such effects and that contemporary forces such as globalization are the evidence of the continuing control of the "West" over the "Rest" (p. 194).

Ashcroft et al.'s (2002, p. 200), book, *The Empire Writes Back* argues that:

> …the term post-colonial might provide a different way of understanding colonial relations: no longer a simple binary opposition, black colonized vs. white colonizers; Third World vs. the West, but an engagement with all the varied

manifestations of colonial power, including those in settler colonies. The attempt to define the post-colonial by putting barriers between those who may be called 'post-colonial' and the rest, contradicts the capacity of post-colonial theories to demonstrate the complexity of the operation of imperial discourse.

Ashcroft et al., (2002) suggested the grounding of post-colonial as a colonial experience, however they stressed that it is hard to describe when the experience begins or end.

Asia as Method

According to Chen (2010, p. 2), there is a need to "overcome the limits of the postcolonial critique by shifting the terrain of analysis". Focusing on Asia, he argued that only by:

> …multiplying the objects of identification and constructing alternative frames of reference can we undo the politics of resentment, which are too often expressed in the limited form of identity politics. Only by moving beyond such fixations can new forms of intellectual alliance be built and new solidarities forged in the new context of globalization.

Chen (2010) further stressed that Globalization without de-imperialization "is simply a disguised reproduction of imperialist conquest" (p.2). He suggested that decolonization is not simply about anti-colonialism or establishment of sovereignty but building a historical relation with the former colonizer to reflectively discuss about culture, politics and economics, a painful process that involves "self-critique, self-negation and self-discovery" (p. 3).

Chen's (2010) proposal, as described in his book, *Asia as Method* is for the creation of new intellectual work by re-visiting the issues of post-colonialism through the transformation of the self and the rebuilding of subjectivity. He suggested that this can be done by Asia's post-colonial countries using each other as reference points so as to develop an "alternative horizon,

perspective, or method"(p. xv). Chen (2010) also supported Frantz Fanon's theory that decolonized countries transform their "nationalist energy into liberating consciousness of sociopolitical needs" (p. 23), otherwise once the colonizer leaves, the most powerful "among the national bourgeoisie" (p. 23) will turn "the colony into a neocolony" (p. 23). Chen (2010) further cited Edward Said's argument that too much emphasis has been given to political, economic and military aspects of deimperialisation, and this has neglected the "role of culture" (p. 24) inherited by people in the colonized country. Chen (2010, p. 63) further explained this phenomenon:

> The ubiquity of the postcolonial trajectory, which decolonization is followed by recolonization or neocolonization, shows that the ideological condition that permits the subimperial desire to take shape exists precisely because there has been no critical reflection on decolonization. This is what makes it possible for the imperialist cultural imaginary to be so effortlessly inherited by the colonized.

In order to understand Post-colonial theory in relation to this thesis, I have chosen to focus my attention on the framework of "decolonization" (Chen, 2010, p. 65). Asia as Method proposes and discusses three different frameworks in which post-colonialization exist – decolonization, de-cold war and deimperialisation. It will be beneficial to relate the decolonization of Singapore to Chen's work; answer the questions (see below) posed, by looking at them from a Singaporean perspective. It would also be exciting to understand through the reference of historical literature and the narratives provided by the participants of this research, the form or forms of decolonization Singapore had undergone – be it nationalism, nativism or civilzationalism (Chen, 2010).

Chen (2010) had proposed that formerly colonized countries adopt a framework supported by "geocolonial historical materialism" (p. 66) in order to analyze the problems of decolonization in the context of cultural formation. Without this framework and in the absence

of reflexive thinking, Chen (2010) warns of the "perpetuation of the imperialist cultural imaginary" (p. 65).

Chen (2010) also asked many questions which he hopes the formerly colonized, (including Singapore) would find answers for. These questions (p. 65/66) are presented below in chronological order:

1. Why has decolonization work on the level of cultural imaginary not been more thoroughly developed?
2. Have other third-world nation-states, formed after the Second World War, been confronting similar crises?
3. After the colonial regimes yielded power, did the newly independent regimes devote all their energies and resources to the political and economic arenas, effectively ignoring reflexive cultural decolonization?
4. What has gone wrong with nativism, which could have been a form of decolonization but has turned out to be a movement uncritically supportive of the ethnocentric nation-building project?
5. Has decolonization only meant anticolonial?
6. Has the struggle to oppose the colonizer reproduced the frame and limits defined by the enemy, and therefore allowed the imperialist cultural imaginary to persist uninterrupted?

In order for these questions to be answered, Chen (2010) proposes a methodology specific to each colonized country through the location of local historical materialism and by connecting them to "colonial and other historical forces" (p. 66), thus exposing the local "to world history and the structure of global capital" (p. 66). Chen (2010) further cautioned that:

…the question of modernity cannot be address without accounting for the history of colonialism and modernization as products of the structural transformation from the colonial to the neocolonial.

According to Chen (2010) the success of decolonization movement requires all three forms, nationalism, nativism and civilizationalism (see below). He cites many renowned philosophers' insights into decolonialization since the 50s and yet decades later the colonized people are "still deeply enmeshed in these problems". However, Chen is optimistic that it is not too late to engage these philosophers' advice. He is confident that by putting forward cultural studies as the decolonization movement, the cultural imaginaries that are still shaping our minds today can be eradicated. Chen's regret however, is that the "mood of triumphalism" (p. 69), which is clearly a reaction to colonialism, "indicates that we still operate within the boundaries of colonial history" (p. 69).

Chen (2010) reiterated that although subalterns try to reclaim their past, many factors cannot be transformed immediately. These include "Language, institutional dispositions, habitual rituals" and "the hierarchy of cultural categories" (p. 73). At most, subalterns can attempt partial changes, having a fragile standpoint and may be subjected to strong opposition from the "symbolic order" (p. 73). Chen (2010, p. 73) cautioned that,

> Political struggle does have an irreducible psychic dimension. Only when we have sufficiently dealt with the internal mechanisms of the psychoanalytic space can a strategy be cautiously advanced without endangering the self.

This partial transformation of "language, institutional disposition, habitual rituals" and "the hierarchy of cultural categories" (p. 73) has strong implications in the case of Singapore, as fifty years after independence, the country still adopts English as the official language of administration, English language as the official medium of instruction, a parliamentary system based on the Westminster system and Singapore laws having their origin in English law. This adoption of post-colonial systems is perhaps unique to Singapore as compared to her neighbouring countries who were formerly Crown colonies.

Nationalism, Nativism and Civilizationalism

With regards to the decolonizing process, Chen (2010) analyzed three particular forms, nationalism, nativism and civilizationalism. These forms were based on the critiques of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Ashis Nandy respectively. According to Chen (2010, p. 81):

> Nationalism had an active, unifying function during the anticolonial struggles. Nativism brought people's focus from the imperial centers back to their own living environments; in the process of reclaiming tradition, it tilted the balance away from the previous, sometimes worshipful embrace of the modern. Civilizationalism, in providing a cultural-psychic cure for the colonized, challenged the superiority of Western-centrism and produced the ideal of mutual respect in a multicultural world.

Chen (2010) also suggested that the colonized people do not disregard the problems and power generation nationalism, nativism and civilizationalism could bring. Unlike the imperialists, they must look into their own existence and maintain "a critical distance" (p. 81) from these three forms of decolonization in order to go on "thinking reflexively, resist the temptation of resentment and thereby arrive at a more balanced subjectivity (p. 81).

Chen's (2010) Analysis of Fanon's Critique on Nationalism

Chen (2010) described Fanon's pain in forecasting the outcome for Algeria in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, just before the author's death in 1961, a year before Algeria was granted independence. Fanon, a revolutionary activist since the mid-50s in Algeria, had forecasted the impending complications decolonization would bring about his country. Chen (2010) describes Fanon's prediction that the colonizers would leave with all the "colonial structures unchanged" (p. 81) on the condition that the colonized puts on the "mask of neo-colonialism" (p. 81).   Chen (2010, p. 82) further explained:

Once the system of the nation-state was imposed around the globe, the most viable mechanism for colonies to use in evicting the outsiders (colonizers) was ironically, the nation-building and state-making project.

These projects to evict the country of colonizers by using "nation-building and state-making projects" (Chen, 2010, p. 82) have significant relevance to the case of Singapore which became independent in 1965. The Singapore leadership, then under former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, had indulged extensively in nation building activities such as housing, education and defense with the introduction of national service (Lee, 1998). The British military forces were pulling out rapidly at that moment and Singapore's security was at high risk. One question has remained unanswered for Singapore, did Lee have the hindsight of what was needed to be done through the observation of other colonized countries before Singapore, or was he aware of the consequences of these nationalistic movements but yet chose to retain some of the perceived strength of her colonizer's culture.

Chen (2010, p. 82) viewed these nationalistic responses by the Third World's as "necessary historical choice" made in order to "affirm the new nation-states' autonomy from the colonizing forces". He added (p. 82):

In territories divided and occupied by colonial powers throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia, colonialist governments saw the rise of nationalistic movements not as a threat, but as a moment of re-adjustment, an opportunity to shed their responsibilities and reduce their cost while still maintaining colonial linkages, markets, and political influence.

These newly independent Third World states were so occupied by their nation building, they were not bordered with "the formation of U.S. hegemony" (Chen, 2010, p. 82). As a matter of fact they even "prosecuted their struggle" (p. 82) by accepting "financial and military 'help' from the United States" (p. 82). Chen (2010, p. 82/83) wrote:

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The nation-state structure, finally implemented everywhere, proved to be the fundamental constituents of the neocolonial system. With no better choice to counter an offensive nationalist-based colonialism, a defensive nationalism became the only unifying force opposing the colonizer.

In recognizing the almost inevitable historical necessity of nationalism, one should not lose sight of its problems. Shaped by the immanent logic of colonialism, third-word nationalism inevitably reproduced racial and ethnic discrimination, a price that was paid by the colonizer as well as the colonized.

These implications of nationalism were well understood by Lee as he continued to build the nation in post-colonial Singapore. He paid specially attention to racial harmony, Singapore being multi-racial and multi-religious in context. Despite his efforts, the country erupted in riots in the early sixties. These were soon to be important lessons learnt during Singapore's two year merger into Malaysia.

Chen (2010) however, summaries his feelings by asking the question of whether it makes any difference being ruled by the internal colonizer as against the external colonizer based on the understanding that the national bourgeoisie continues to "govern by exercising colonial tactics, dividing and ruling, for example, by exploiting ethnic differences" (p. 84).

Chen's (2010) Analysis of Memmi's Critique of Nativism

According to Chen (2010), nativism like nationalism "emerged as a byproduct of the national independence movement and operates deep inside the social structure" (p. 84). Nativism reaches out to people and has a wider cultural appeal through the modernization programs designed to replace backward local traditions as well as "cultural imaginations deeply contaminated by colonialism" (p. 84/85). However, Chen (2010) cautioned the need for nativism to stay clear of the "narcissistic self" (p. 85) while in the process of reconstitution, or risk being

dragged back into the colonial framework. Another problem is the resistance put up by the native people for change as they have become too accustomed to the colonial ways in terms of "body, thought, and desire" (p. 85).

Chen (2010) describes Memmi's (1991) work as that in between Mannoni's (1990) understanding of colonizers confessions and Fanon's (1968) self-analysis of the colonized, in other words, "having a split identity" (p. 85). Memmi was a Tunisian Jew and his country was a French colony. Although he was not a member of the majority Muslim population, he was treated as a second class citizen. This actually allowed him access to both the colonized and the colonizers, and this position enabled him to understand how colonialism restrains nativism, however, "unlike Mannoni, Memmi does not essentialize the colonizer" (p. 86). He believes that "the revolt of the colonized is caused by the inescapable internal contradiction of the colonial framework" (p. 86). Chen (2010) describes Memmi's meaning of "internal contradiction" (p. 86):

> It requires that you admit to the inferiority of your own culture. It forces you to abandon your existing dignity. It then wins over your active consent to learning and acquiring everything that belongs to the governing colonizers. To do this presupposes a painful process of self-negation. Once you have done that, you are told that your imitation is not quite right: you are still not like 'us'; you are, in essence, inferior.

It was only through religion and language that the nativist movement managed to unify the Tunisian people. These discourses have become the "core expression of cultural traditions, the Other of the colonial modern" (Chen, 2010, p. 87). Chen (2010) describes nativism as "still burning" (p. 87) but under the pressure of globalization today. He describes Fanon's critique of nationalism as being ahead of its time, "but we still live under the shadow of Memmi's critique of nativism" (p. 87).

Singapore's choice of adopting English as the official language in post-colonial era does not seem to fall under the abandonment of "existing dignity" or the admission to the "inferiority of own culture" (Chen, 2010, p. 86). English was perhaps adopted because of the language's practicality and extensive usage in the international arena. In fact, four languages, namely Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English remained Singapore's official languages till today.

Chen's (2010) Analysis of Nandy's Critique of Civilizationalism

Chen (2010) described Nandy's (1983) work as being in a better timeframe than that of Fanon or Memmi. While Fanon and Memmi wrote about post-colonialism when "national liberation movements were [still] unfolding" (p. 89), Nandy had more time to examine these issues. Nandy therefore experienced what is known as the second wave of colonization, referring to the superior imaginary of the West continuing to change "the cultural priorities" (p. 89) of formerly colonized societies. According to Chen (2010), Nandy's main agenda was therefore to "combat the hegemonic West by rediscovering cultural practices and traditions uncontaminated by colonialism" (p. 89). Chen (2010, p. 90) wrote:

> Nandy's attitude toward the West is not one of total negation. His critique focuses on those elements and dimensions that support colonialism, though the discursive effect of his writing may create the impression that he is constructing two distinct entities, the West and the non-West.

In his later work, Nandy realized that nationalism is not the solution and suggested that a higher and larger category known as civilizationalism is the way to compete with the West in terms of popular imaginary and cultural reform. Chen (2010) concluded that this form of psychological identification is "unquestionably a part of the postcolonial imagination" (p. 92).

Chen (2010) sums up his analysis on the above author's critique of nationalism, nativism and civilisationalism as interconnected movements, and "cannot be understood in isolation, only in reference to each other" (p. 94). He reiterated that (p. 94):

If nationalism is a general form of decolonization which targets the nation-state at the political level, then nativism is a downward cultural movement operating in everyday life, and civilisationalism is an upward version of nativism, often formed in physically larger geographical spaces with relatively long histories, and usually set against the imaginary West.

Chen wrote *Asia as Method* in Singapore between 2004 to 2006 when he was a visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. It was also during this period that he met a young Singaporean director called Tan Pin Pin who was trying to direct a documentary film entitled Singapore Ga Ga – a "55 minute paean to the quirkiness of the Singaporean aural landscape" (p. v11). The film portraits "Singapore's past and present with a delight and humour that makes it a necessary for all Singaporeans" (p. v11). Chen (2010) further reiterated that,

What the film seems to have captured most insightfully is that the most powerful way to reflexively address the issue of nationalism is to operate on the same affective plane where nationalist energy arises: one has to sincerely identify with the nation, genuinely belong to it, and truly love it in order to establish a legitimate position from which to speak (p. v11/1x).

Chen's (2010) observation of Singapore as compared to South Korea is that nationalism is being viewed very differently by their citizens. In the first place, he believes that nationalism is not a significant problem in a small country like Singapore. He sees Singaporeans being empowered in their hope for change, perhaps not through the political process but their sense of

belonging. On the other hand, South Korea has transformed her nationalism "into a powerful critical force that has moved that nation forward" (p. 1x). According to Chen (2010, p. 1x),

> Nationalistic pride in South Korea's democratic achievements, expressed in the form of a strong civil-society movement, is connected with deep-seated desire to build a more democratic , progressive and modern country.

As such, Chen (2010) admits that his own attitude towards nationalism has thus changed over the years "from pure negation to a conditional acceptance" (p. x). He presents nationalism as the "common element" (p. x) of three or more fundamental problems, "colonialism, the structure of the world during the cold war, and the imperialist imaginary" (p. x).

The colonial imaginary Chen (2010) suggested was that instead of focusing on the world based on historical materialism, perhaps now is the right time to see the world through "historical convergence and interaction of geographical spaces" (p. 102). He explained that "once global history is examined over a longer time span" (p. 107), many other factors will have to be discussed as well and these include "weather, climate, geographical location" (p. 107). These factors are "determinants of earlier forms of cultural subjectivity" (p. 107), and will become part of the present day form as well. Chen (2010, p. 108) summarises his proposal of using both historical and geographical materialism in the following manner:

> Colonialism has transfigured the inner structure of the cultural imaginary in both the colony and the imperial center. To consider the colonial question on the same level as historical materialism and geographical-historical materialism is (1) to politicize the epistemological grounding of historical materialism, so that colonization is necessarily placed at the center of analysis; (2) to remove the hidden Eurocentric elements, so that a more balanced account of the formation of different regional spaces of the world can surface; and (3) to emphasize the relative autonomy of local history of colonial matters. To put it simply, the

contemporary shape and the structure of the cultural imaginary in a specific space and time, both result from the dialectic articulation of the colonial, the historical, and the geographical.

Chen (2010) cited Blaut's (1993) argument that back in the 14th century, the three continents of Europe, Africa and Asia were all almost equally developed. However, Europe started to take the lead in early 16th century and became the "epicenter of capitalisim" (p. 108). The high point of colonial imperialism came as a result of the Industrial Revolution in 18th century. Colonialism gave the Europeans "the power both to develop their own society and to prevent development from occurring elsewhere" (p. 109) and it was through these developments and underdevelopments that explains the state of the modern world today.

Chen (2010) discredits Blaut's argument by calling it pure fantasy to arrive "at a single explanatory view of world history" (p. 109). Chen's (2010) belief was that in order to understand the world before the existence of "nation –states and colonialism" (p. 109) one has to return to the original conditions of each region. Chen's (2010, p. 109) understanding was that after 1492:

> …interactions and mutual influences among the world regions began to speed up, partly mediated through European colonialism's forcing of different regions of the world to connect and integrate. But the basis of interaction among the regions was the organic condition formed in each region before 1492.

Chen (2010) further iterated that the Europeans were unable to fully impose their will on the colonies even though they exported their institutions to them. The colonizers had to adjust to preexisting conditions and that explains the world remaining heterogeneous today. Historians have not been able to "persuasively explain the quick demise of colonial empires in the decade following the Second World War" (Chen, 2010, p. 110). Chen's (2010) argument is that for one to come to terms with this question, one has to accept the fact that imperialism has not collapsed,

but simply changed its mode of control from that of territorial to "political and economic maneuvering" (p. 110). However Chen (2010) pointed out that the real exercise of colonialism "is always mediated through the cultural imaginary" (p. 110) and this has to be part of the "geocolonial historical materialism" (p. 110). The cultural imaginary has resulted through the encounter of colonialism and "local historical and cultural resources" (p. 111) and embraces ideology linking to experiences of daily life.

Chen (2010, p. 112) summaries his chapter on decolonization by stressing that:

The study of colonialism and imperialism is not simply a return to history in order to deconstruct the colonial cultural imaginary and colonial identification, but, operating with the principle of a critical syncretism, it is an active intervention against the triumphalist sentiment of the imperialist desire… to further the progress of decolonization , the task of cultural studies is to deconstruct, decenter, and disarticulate the colonial cultural imaginary, and to reconstruct and re-articulate new imaginations and discover a more democratic future direction…at the very least, we must strive to decolonize ourselves.

Conclusion

This 'Framing the Research' chapter provides an insight into the Post-colonial theory as well as an understanding into Chen's (2010) analysis of decolonization and his recommendation of a critical syncretism in order to move forward his idea of dismantling neo-colonialism in the post-colonized nations.

These theoretical aspects and propositions put forward by Chen (2010) have some impactful implications on this research. Singapore being a post-colonial nation, and its peoples' general unawareness or ignorance of the effects of post-colonialism, neocolonialism or imperialism has suggested a study linked to these aspects of Singaporean lives. As proposed in

the introductory chapter, this research on mature Singaporeans pursuing tertiary education will view its theoretical framework based on Post-colonial theory and understanding of decolonization based on Chen's (2010) work, Asia as Method.

The following chapter explains the methodology on which this research will be based.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Learning and leadership represent two rich lines of research: one is about how people learn and the other is about how people lead. In this study we attempt to connect these two ideas together via the question: "What relationship does the way that people learn have with the manner in which they lead?"
(Brown & Posner, 2001, p. 274)

Introduction

Sara Delamont (2002) discusses the journeys made by pilgrims and explains how the pilgrims are "prepared to face deserts and heat, thirst and hunger, fear and loneliness" (p. 1) in their "lust of knowing" (p. 1). She also draws a comparison between the pilgrims and the experience of researchers. She suggests that researchers should emulate the pilgrims in searching for the truth, tell it "eloquently, and find an audience to buy it" (p.1).

Guided and motivated by this account (Delamont, 2002), this thesis sets out to investigate the research questions about career successful mature Singaporeans pursuing tertiary education and will explore the concepts of culture (Hofstede, 2001; Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2008;), 'Asia as method' (Chen, 2010), post-colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002; Chen, 2010), self-leadership (Manz, 1983, 1986; Houghton & Neck, 2002), self and identity (Leary & Tangney, 2005), and the way adults learn (Burns, 2002). My stories are told in a Singapore setting. As the methodology used informs the research, I have given much thought to the approach to be taken.

In this chapter, an outline of the purpose, aim and scope of this study is presented. This will be followed by a discussion on the research design, including an overview of why a

qualitative study using the case study approach is preferred and appropriate. Another discussion on reflexivity follows and under this topic, the sensitivity of being a researcher is discussed. When I ask "How have my own experiences, positioning and biases affected the way I conduct this research?"

I will explain the participants' selection and recruitment process and outline the advantages this process provided. A brief introduction to the participants is then made, followed by an introduction and discussion of the data collection methods. The discussion includes the benefits of this method as well as its application to the research aim. An outline of the problems faced and how these were minimised is also discussed. I then proceed to explain the data analysis method and what advantages were there in using this method and how they were relevant to my research focus. Finally, I will discuss the trustworthiness of my data, as well as the ethical issues anticipated and encountered in this research.

The Purpose, Aim and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is an investigation into the phenomenon of career successful Singaporean mature adults pursuing their first tertiary education. What events, beliefs, attitudes or policies (Stake, 2006) may have shaped this phenomenon and how are the participants influenced by self-leadership?

The aim of this study is to make meaning "of people's lives, under real-world conditions" (Yin, 2011, p. 8) and in this case, the lives of the participants, their lived experiences in "everyday roles" (p. 8). In every human activity, there are always two sides of reality, "one is the reality of personal experience, and one is the reality of group and societal relationship" (Stake, 2010, p. 18). Although the two realities connect, overlap or merge, they are different

(Stake, 2010). The reason is because, events that happen collectively are "seldom the aggregation of personal experiences" (Stake, 2010, p. 18) and "what happens individually is much more than the separation of collective relationship" (p. 8). Like many other qualitative researchers, I have chosen to "emphasize the micro over the macro" (Stake, 2010, p. 19).

Research Design

The qualitative approach – an overview, Qualitative research is often located within the interpretive research domain which "assumes that reality is socially constructed" (Merriam, 2009, p.8). That is to say "there is no single, observable reality" (p. 8). Instead, there are "multiple realities, or interpretations of a single event. Researchers do not find knowledge, they construct it." (p. 8).

As this research delves in-depth into the lived experiences of the participants, it is impossible to understand human actions without first understanding the meaning each participant attributes to those actions – which may include thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As such, there is a need to understand the deeper perspectives which can only be captured through face-to-face interactions. The strengths of qualitative studies will be demonstrated in this research as it is exploratory and descriptive in nature and stresses the importance of context, purpose, extent, setting and the participant's frames of reference (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

My research is intended to embrace a "host of personal meanings that are derived from the context of direct experiencing" (Burns, 2000, p. 11). Therefore it is important for each of the participants to link their perception and interpretation of reality to these personal meanings. These realities should not be "fixed and stable" (p.11). As such, it was only through the use of

qualitative methodologies that I was able to discover the deeper levels of these meanings (Burns, 2000).

Qualitative research has also been described as a set of interpretive activities that privileges no single methodological practice over another. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 9):

Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practises that are entirely its own. Qualitative researchers use semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival and phonemic analysis, even statistics, tables, graphs, and numbers. They also draw on and utilize the approaches, methods, and techniques of ethno methodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, rhizomatics, deconstructionism, ethnography, interviewing, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, survey research and participant observation among others

In most qualitative research, reliability can remain a problematic issue as human behaviour is never static (Merriam, 2009). Repeating a particular study will not see the same results but this does not mean that the previous one is discredited, as there can be many interpretations of the same data (Merriam, 2009).

Research paradigms. The theoretical perspective for this study is based on an interpretive paradigm. The paradigm influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted and sets the intent, motivation and expectations of the study (Creswell, 2007). The interpretive paradigm is also known as the constructivist or naturalistic paradigms (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985). Interpretivisim looks for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). In this paradigm or worldview, "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live

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and work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). At the same time, "they develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed towards certain objects or things" (p. 20).

My role therefore is to rely on the participant's views of the situation but be conscious of my own background and experience (Creswell, 2003). The interpretive paradigm does not begin with a theory but instead will "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (p. 9) through the research process. As the name suggests, interpretive research requires interpretations, however, the way it is interpreted "relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meanings of what they see and hear" (Stake, 2010, p. 36)

Case study. This research was conducted using the case study approach. Case study, according to Merriam (2009), has in common with other forms of qualitative research,

> ...the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary
> instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy,
> and the end product being richly descriptive (p.39)

The term 'case study' can sometimes be confusing. Some will refer to the term as "the unit of study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40) while others will refer to it as a "product of this type of investigation" (p. 40). Merriam (2009) suggested that various authors seem to have differing views of the term 'case study'. For example, Yin (2008, p.18) defines it as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"; whereas Stake (2006) concentrated on case study as the unit of study.

In the course of this research I was guided by different authors who offered different ways of approaching the study using case study as the research methodology. I was attracted to Stake's (2006) multi-case methods in the initial stages of my research. However, I realised that these methods were appropriate only if the researcher has to handle a large number of cases. Using this method would have simplified the data collection and analysis processes. As I only have five cases to handle and wanted the data collection and analysis processes to be as thorough as possible, I did not think that it was appropriate to use Stake's (2006) recommendations.

Yin (1994; 2008; 2011) and Creswell (2007) on the other hand offered a comprehensive explanation of the case study methodology concentrating on mostly single cases. This suited my strategy well and as a result this research has been guided mainly by Yin (1994; 2011) and Creswell (2007) approaches to case study.

Another concern was to ensure that the phenomenon I was studying qualified for the use of the case study approach. If the phenomenon being studied "is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case" (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). The way to determine this is for the researcher to check on how "finite the data collection would be" (p. 41). If theoretically there is no limit to the number of persons that the researcher can interview or observe, then the phenomenon is "not bounded enough to qualify as a case" (p.41).

Yin (1994) claims that case study can be criticised for its basic lack of rigor. However, he explains that, that is only because many Case Study researchers allow their work to have "equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of findings and conclusions" (p. 9). Another criticism is that many researchers found it difficult to recognise Case Studies on the "basis of scientific generalisation" (p.10). Based on the same argument, Yin (1994) claimed that scientific experiments too cannot fulfil generalisation requirements based on one experiment

alone. In order to gather accurate results many experiments under different environments may be needed and this is similarly fulfilled by a study of multiple cases in qualitative research.

The short answer is that Case Studies, like experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the Case Study like the experiment does not represent a sample and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (Statistical generalisation) (Yin, 1994, p. 11).

In fact, the aim of Case Study "is not to find the 'correct' or 'true' interpretation of the facts, but rather to eliminate erroneous conclusions so that one is left with the best possible, the most compelling interpretations" (Bromley, 1986, p.38). This argument is therefore in line with my deployment of an interpretive theoretical perspective for this research.

The use of multiple cases enhance the "precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (Merriam, 2009, p. 50). One of the most important tasks is to show how the phenomenon appears in different contexts (Stake, 2006). Each single case is of interest because it belongs to a collection of cases (Merriam, 2009).

This research involves a total of five case studies, each case being represented by a single person who has fulfilled my pre-determined criteria. Each participant was studied in detail (Stake, 2006) and their narratives are captured in the analysis chapters. There was a collection of multiple perspectives and views on the same subject matter from each of the participants. Stake (2006, p. vii) summarises my experience as follows:

We recognise that case study is often subjective. We rely heavily on our previous experience and our sense of the worth of things. We let our reader know

something of the personal experience of gathering the data. And we use techniques to minimise the misperception and the invalidity of our assertions.

For my research, the cases were handled one at a time so as to avoid any form of data confusion (Bogclan & Biklen, 2007). Moreover, by doing so, the first case provided a focus to define the parameters of the other cases thus making them easier to manage. Handling one case at a time also allowed me to commence initial data analysis work right away without having to wait for the entire data collection process to be completed. According to Merriam (2009) this is the preferred way as commencing analysis only after all the data collection is done would mean having to manage a huge volume of data which the researcher may find overwhelming.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity describes the relationship between that of the researcher and the researched, on the basis that the researcher may not always adopt a neutral stand and that his or her bias may affect the way the knowledge is constructed (Coffey, 1999; Ryan & Golden, 2006; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). As an example, Hamdan (2009) presented the case of a researcher having preconceived, biased or having insider opinions while researching within a cultural community to which he or she belonged. Under such circumstances there is always the possibility of the researcher consciously or unconsciously influencing the outcome of the research. The researcher may choose to ask questions that are only within the cultural understanding of the research group and such knowledge or questions would not have been put forward had the researcher not been a member of the community.

Gray (2009, p. 498) commented that:

Reflexivity involves the realisation that the researcher is not a neutral observer, and is implicated in the construction of knowledge. Far from being a disinterested bystander, the researcher is seen as someone whose observations are by their very nature, selective, and whose interpretations of results are partial.

Having a conscious knowledge of the above implications and given the subjectivity of my research, which centres on the cultural discourse of Singapore and Singaporeans, I became aware of my own identity as a Singaporean and was conscious of how this identity could influence the way my interview data were collected, how my writing was constructed and the way 'self' was reproduced and implicated and how relationships or identities were being treated (Gray, 2009).

In particular, I was conscious about how race, ethnic background and my cultural understanding could affect my "stance of theoretical sensitivity" (Gray, 2009, p. 183) and how these insights can assist me in understanding and differentiating what is important and what is not. This includes being sensitive to situations where I risk being biased to the responses of people I am interviewing. I had to consciously remind myself that everyone sees things through a different lens and that my own is just one of the many.

To support reflexivity, I have kept a diary to record certain feelings or reflections (Yin, 2011) that were related either to the setting, the interview questions or the participants. I was hopeful that this practice might help to "reveal unwanted biases" (Yin, 2011, p. 175) or bring to the surface "any methodological or personal tendencies over time" (p. 175). According to Bone (2005; 2007) a rightful reflexive approach will mean that researchers must be prepared to question themselves on the subject matter and to be aware of how their response might affect the research process.

Method

My research is about career successful mature adults pursuing their first tertiary education. As this phenomenon might be viewed by many as being non-traditional, I felt that a certain degree of sensitivity and privacy should be observed on my part as a researcher. Being a mature student myself, I was conscious that not everyone was open to the idea of sharing their personal experiences on the subject matter. This was perhaps due to cultural differences in our societies as far as modesty in exhibiting self-enhancement is concerned (Kurman, 2002).

My initial concern in conducting this research was therefore about finding the most suitable participants that would form the case studies. I was also conscious of the ethical issues that may complicate my choice of recruitment methods, the participant selection and the criteria of selection.

Recruitment criteria. The first of my recruitment criteria was that the participants had to be adults of mature age. However, the definition of a mature adult is a rather subjective matter and there was no clear definition of the term. If mature adults were defined by age, then there must be a need to also gauge their maturity. This can become a very complex issue as how mature a person is, becomes the subject of differing interpretations and standards.

My main focus therefore was to find participants who commenced their first tertiary education as mature adults; those who were past the normal university going age in Singapore. Although the definition for mature students is defined as 22 years old and above by Australian universities, I decided to focus my recruitment on participants who were above the age of 30 (Gordon, 1993) when they first enrolled for their tertiary education.

The second criterion was to recruit participants who were considered successful in their careers. This criterion was again highly debatable and subjected to multiple interpretations. My argument was that while it was more common to see mature adults pursuing tertiary education in order to enhance their career success, it was not common to have mature adults who were already successful in their careers to pursue their first tertiary education.

My focus for the recruitment of participants was therefore to select those who were both mature and successful. The benchmark set was to recruit participants who hold at least a senior managerial position or were entrepreneurs who run their own successful businesses.

The third criterion was that the participants must be Singaporeans by birth. This criterion was adopted as the study was intended to be one based on the Singapore context.

Having these criteria in mind, I went in search of the participants. Stake (2006) suggested that for the case study approach to be effective there should not be less than four or more than ten cases. Too little cases and there might not be "enough of the interactivity between programmes and their situations" (p.22). On the other hand if too many cases were involved, it may "provide more uniqueness of interactivity than the research team and readers can come to understand" (p.22). I decided to search for at least five participants.

Recruitment of participants. Two methods of recruitment for the participants were used for this research. Firstly, through the placement of advertisement (see appendix 3) with the Kaplan campus in Singapore, a private learning institution partnered with Monash University. Secondly, through informal networking with friends and business acquaintances, so as to interest them into introducing suitable participants who may fit the research criteria.

These two methods of recruitment were approved by the ethics office based on its non-biased nature and neutrality as the researcher was not in the position to influence the consent outcome of the potential participants. The ethics approval for the second method requires that my informal network contact present a copy of my Explanatory Statement (See Appendix 1) to the participants in advance. It is then up to the potential participant to accept or not to accept my invitation to participate.

The response from the first recruitment method through advertisements placed in the Kaplan campus in Singapore turned out to be unproductive. Only one potential participant responded. The respondent turned out to be a foreign student and was deemed to be unsuitable given the criteria set. I was not at all surprised with the poor response rate as Singaporeans are known to react indifferently towards participation in surveys and interviews (Ho, Ang, Loh & Ng, 1998; Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002; Ellis, 2014).

The second method of participant recruitment was quite successful. Within a matter of one month, I managed to hear news from five interested persons who were willing to be my research participants. Out of the five, three were men and two were women. I went on to arrange individual meetings with each participant and at the same time provided them through emails a welcome and thank-you message together with another copy of the Explanatory Statement (See Appendix 1) and a copy of the Consent Form (See Appendix 2). I also suggested the first meeting date, time and venue.

Regrettably, a month and half into fieldwork, I had to forgo one of the male participants due to his lack of interest. Fortunately, a week later, I got another referral. So the final five participants became two males and three females.

The recruited participants. Through the net-working approach, I managed to recruit a total of five participants. The participants were from different backgrounds and professions. Their age ranged from late forties to mid-sixties. The age in which they commenced their first tertiary degree education was from 32 to 55 years old. As some of the participants were not comfortable with the use of their real name, and in line with normal ethical practice, pseudonyms were used.

Cynthia. The first case study was Cynthia. Cynthia was in her mid- 40s and was working for a government agency as a career counsellor when we first met in 2010. She was a friendly, sincere, and accommodative person. Cynthia grew up in very humble beginnings. To supplement her family's income, she started work at a very young age. Her determination to succeed soon saw her taking on multiple jobs to finance her own education. After completing her diploma course in Counselling Skills, she enrolled in a Bachelor's degree course in Psychology at the age of 39.

A self-disciplined and conservative person, Cynthia is able to look at problems from various perspectives. Her years of work experience had helped her significantly in becoming a top quality student, capable of rationalising situations effectively and accepting change.

Satsuki. Satsuki was a professional tourist guide. She was also a trainer for the tourism industry. Satsuki spoke with poise and confidence in the multiple languages she had mastered. Despite her career success, she decided to pursue her first tertiary degree education at the age of 55.

When she was younger, she had always dreamt of becoming a university graduate. Lacking the necessary qualifications to enrol in a degree program, she embarked on a diploma

level course beforehand. Satsuki did well in her diploma and was finally given a place in the University program she wanted. She felt very nervous with the thought of embarking on a university education at such a mature age. At this stage, she said that having an academic qualification was only to fulfil a 'paper chase', as in the end what really matters is one's work and life experiences.

Samuel. Samuel was a 52 year old senior management staff member at a Singapore based higher institute of learning when I interviewed him in 2010. He held a group portfolio taking charge of multiple functions in the organisation. When Samuel first joined the organisation, some 30 years ago, he only had an 'A' level General Certificate of Education. He then completed a Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management before embarking on his degree in business administration at the age of 32.

Samuel had won many accolades in his life. From the diplomas and degrees he received, to the testimonials written about him, one can easily trace and detect the progress he had made over his career. This was a contrast from his self-description that he was a playful child when he was a teenager.

Samuel continued his educational pursuits even though he became a very senior executive in the organization. Working for the education industry had compelled him to ensure that his own educational qualifications were up to expectations.

Timothy. While searching for my case study research participants, I was hoping that I could find a self-made entrepreneur to be part of this research. My wish came true when a friend whom I had entrusted to refer participants to me, introduced me to Timothy. Timothy was a 63

year old self-made businessman. He was running a successful business. Busy as he was, Timothy agreed to be my participant.

Timothy turned out to be a great communicator. He spoke passionately and at length about his business, his educational journey and his family. There was hardly any opportunity for me to interrupt with a question not to mention engage in a conversation.   Timothy approached his tertiary education in a very different way. At the age of 40, he completed a Certificate course in Management from the Singapore Institute of Management. At age 44 he completed a Diploma in Marketing from The Chartered Institute of Marketing in United Kingdom and was admitted to the Institute as a member three years later. With this professional qualification together with his many years of work experience, Timothy applied to do his Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from a renowned British university in 1990 and was admitted. He received his first degree, a Masters a few years later.

Whitney. Finally, as my fifth case study, I had Whitney, a 52 year old who was working for a multi-national exhibition and events company. Barely days after she had completed her secondary school and being just 17 years of age, Whitney had volunteered her services to help in one of the international conferences that was held in Singapore. She had not looked back since. For the next few decades, she devoted her passion into the events and entertainment industry.

At the age of 49, Whitey decided to pursue her first tertiary degree education. According to her, she was inspired by a younger junior colleague who was also doing his tertiary education despite a hectic work schedule and family commitments. She was also aware that her younger colleagues were all graduates.

Data-gathering Methods

Semi-structured interviews. The interview method has often been described as a conversation with a purpose and is used extensively by most qualitative researchers. In addition, there are many things that cannot be observed. According to Patton (2002) this includes "feelings, thoughts and intentions" (p. 196). Merriam (1988) explains that, "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (p.72). According to Yin (2003, p.85):

> Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well informed respondents can provide insights into a situation. They also can provide shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, helping you to identify other relevant sources of evidence.

Interview questions and modifications. Eager to capture the "rich descriptions and explanations that demonstrate the chronological flow of events" (Gray, 2009, p. 493); and hoping that it will lead to "serendipitous findings" (p. 493), I was convinced that engaging the participants with semi-structured interviews would be the best strategy. This was because interviews are descriptive and "words have a more concrete and vivid flavour that is more convincing to the readers than pages of number" (p. 493). According to Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 32):

> Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feeling and understandings.

My interviews were audio recorded and were carried out over a period of three months with some participants having one while others, two interviews. Interview questions (See Appendix 4 to 8) were focused on the research questions in particular and questions that leads to the identification of the characteristics and traits of self-leadership in general. My interview questions were therefore derived from a selection of questions from the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ) (Houghton & Neck, 2002). The questions were then modified into open-ended ones to suit the qualitative nature of the study. The RSLQ was originally administered to participants based on a Likert scale score of 1 to 5, 1 being *not at all accurate* and 5 being *completely accurate*. Please refer to Appendix 11 for some examples of the modified questions.

Self-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews being the main method of data gathering for this research, I was hoping that my idea of introducing a self-conducted interview session by each participant in addition to the traditional researcher-participant interview would bring out the spontaneity and the lighter side of their stories. Inspired by Landy (1982, p. 257), "The self-interview had the spontaneity and playfulness of an improvisation as the interviewer/guest expert moved from role to role, much like a ventriloquist and his dummy".

The result of the "self-interview" did not turned out to be as ideal as I had hoped it would be. None of the participants was comfortable with such an arrangement as many of them found it awkward to conduct or record an interview without the presence of an interviewer. Reluctantly, the idea was dropped after three interviews.

Review of artefacts (documents). In addition to the interviews, the participants were also requested to provide copies of whatever artefacts they had in relation to their job, social work or academic journey. Yin (2011) has found the review of artefacts a good supplement in addition to interviews and observation methods. This data collection method is non-intrusive,

non-reactive and rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants (Merriam, 2009). Artefacts such as emails, letters, diplomas and certificates, awards, testimonials or pictures and so forth can certainly provide a much deeper understanding of the everyday lives of the participants.

In the course of my field work, I managed to obtain between five to eight artefacts from each participant. These artefacts provided supplementary information over the interview data. Each artefact was contextualised into meanings and woven into or reassembled (Yin, 2011) as part of the interpretation process. A sample of the documents collected with my remarks (before the analysis process) is provided in Appendix 12.

Field-notes. In the process of generating data, I also took field notes and wrote about each case. The notes featured important information such as my synopsis of the cases, the sites and the activities (Stake, 2006). It also recorded "situational constraints" and "uniqueness among other cases" (p. 45) in addition to identifying the prominence of each category in each case. While interviewing, I also took notes of the body language of the participants. This and other gestures provide clues and meanings to what is being said in the interview process (Angrosino, 2000). I also noted my own responses and reactions in my field notes.

Data Analysis

After familiarising myself with the various qualitative authors and their methods and recommendations for data analysis, I decided that the approach proposed by Yin (2011) was the most suitable to my study due to the process of data interpretation recommended. Prior to this, I was conscious of the warnings given by Yin (1994) and Merriam (2009) about case study analysis as well as the treatment of evidence collected. These authors have warned that many

novice researchers do not know how to get about doing their analysis simply because of the duration they have kept their data before the analytical process begins. In qualitative research, the process of data analysis should be an ongoing activity and should not begin only when all the data has been collected from all the participants. Merriam (2009) further suggested that by then, the volume of transcripts resulting from the many interviews conducted as well as the amount of artefacts and documents collected from participants might be too overwhelming to handle, least of all to analyse.

Interviews and transcribing. In order to avoid the mentioned pitfalls, I commenced my data analysis as soon as I completed recording my first interview session. The first task was to transcribe the interviews. Some of the interviews were more difficult to transcribe than others as the participants were using a mixture of languages and local dialects. Strangely, while this is very common in everyday conversation in Singapore due to our multi-cultures and ethnic backgrounds, it became a challenging task when it comes to transcribing an interview.

The interview sessions with the five participants and the transcribing process took me about five months to complete. I chose to transcribe the interviews on my own without engaging professional help as I believed the process itself would have provided me with an intimate first-hand insight of what had been said. I was not wrong in making this assumption.

Interpreting the data. Yin's (2011) method recommends five phases of data analysis. These are compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding. I shall describe each of the phases in greater detail. Before I begin, I was also concerned with Yin's (2011, p. 177) warning on the issue of rigor in the analytical process. The author had recommended that rigor could be derived from exercising three precautions:

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1. Checking and rechecking the accuracy of your data.

2. Making your analysis as thorough and complete as possible rather than cutting corners; and

3. Continually acknowledging the unwanted biases imposed by your own values when you are analysing your data.

Overview of the analytic phases. According to Yin (2011), although qualitative research analysis does not follow any fixed methods, it is not "totally undisciplined" (p. 177). The author claims that in general, the five-phased cycle is being adopted, "regardless of the particular qualitative orientation being adopted" (p. 177). Figure 4.1 shows how the five phases interact with each other.

FIVE PHASES OF ANALYSIS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS

5. Conclude

2. Disassemble Data

3. Reassemble Data

4. Interpret Data

1. Compile Database
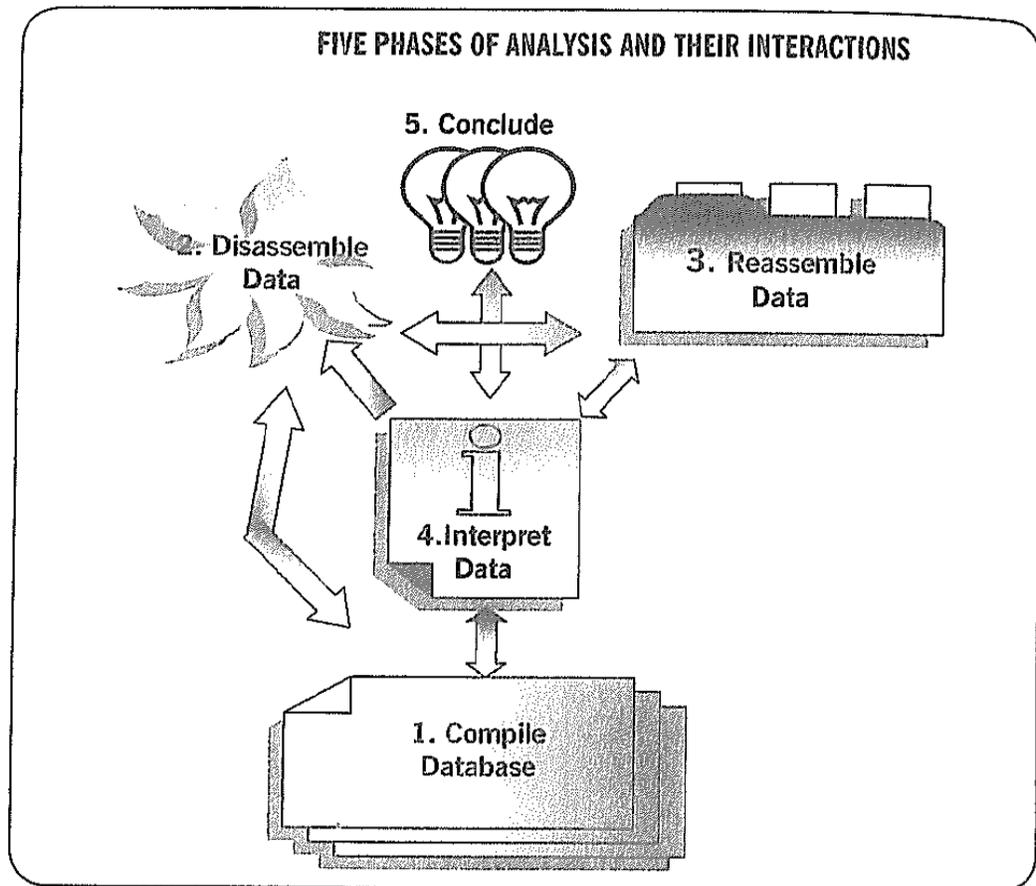
Figure 4.1: Five phases of analysis and their interaction (Yin, 2011, p. 178)

In the first phase, which is *compiling*, the data collected has to be arranged in some order. What I have done was to arrange the data in the following manner. First, the self-interview data, followed by the researcher's interview data, field notes data and lastly data from the notes I wrote about the documents provided by the participants. All this compilation was done for each of the cases independently (see example in Appendix 13).

In the second phase, *disassembling*, the compiled data were broken down into smaller fragments or pieces referred to as "illustrative words" by Yin (2011, p. 189). This is done by

extracting key words or phrases from the original data (see Appendix 13). These key words then form the basis for the first level initial coding and subsequently the second level category coding (see Appendix 13). I found this initial process of disassembling the data to be much of a "trial and error" (p. 178) process as cautioned by Yin (2011) in "the two-way arrow between these first two phases" (p. 178) as illustrated in figure 1. I found the coding process difficult, due mainly to the interpretive skills needed to assign the codes. What substantiates each assignment and what meaning or interpretation do I base it upon? According to Yin (2011, p. 187), "the purpose of trying to code these items is to begin moving methodically to a slightly higher conceptual level". Assigning the same code to items that are "essentially similar" (p. 187) will assist the researcher in sorting the data into "similar or dissimilar groups" (p. 187) and thus gaining insights into them.

The third phase was the *reassembling* process. In this phase, I became "aware of potentially broader patterns in the data" (Yin, 2011, p. 190) and began to think of the "broader meaning" (p. 191) which came with it. I began to link these patterns and meanings to the research questions and the study topic. The reassembling process (Yin, 2011) also allowed me to move on to the third level of coding which was the generation of themes or even the fourth stage which was the generation of theoretical concepts. The question I had to constantly ask myself was whether the "emerging patterns make sense" and whether I am "moving to a substantively important plane" (Yin, 2011. P. 191)?

The fourth phase, *interpreting*, involves the use of "the reassembled material to create new narratives…that will become the key analytic portion" (Yin, 2011, p. 179) of my draft manuscript. During this phase I recalled that my initial interpretations had led me to recompile the data by disassembling and reassembling them in different ways until a satisfactory outcome is achieved.

The fifth and final phase, *concluding*, as suggested by Yin (2011, p. 179):

Calls for drawing the conclusions from your entire study. Such conclusions should be related to the interpretation in the fourth phase and through it to all of the other phases of the cycle.

Interpretation and analysis. In Yin's (2011) interpretation of a thorough analytical process is considered to be "the craft of giving your own meaning to your reassembled data and data arrays" (p. 207). The author also claimed that "this phase brings your entire analysis together and stands at its pinnacle". Given such an attractive proposition, I paid full attention to what was recommended in terms of interpreting my data. According to Yin (2011), a good interpretation has to conform to five attributes. These attributes are completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, value-added and credibility (Yin, 2011). Questions I had to ask myself on these attributes were, for *completeness*, does my interpretation have a beginning, middle and end?; for *fairness*, given my interpretive stance, would others with the same stance arrive at the same interpretation?; for *empirical accuracy*, does my interpretation fairly represent my data?; for *value-add*, is the interpretation new, or is it mainly a repetition of my topic's literature?; and lastly for *credibility*, independent of its creativity, how would the most esteemed peers in my field critique or accept my interpretation (Yin, 2011)?

According to Yin (2011), the data do not "speak for themselves" (p. 207). It was therefore very rare to find several researchers' interpretation coinciding with one another's (Yin, 2011). It was therefore of utmost importance that my interpretation was of the quality that would make a difference in the way others viewed my entire study. At this stage, my data analysis took on a whole new meaning. For the amount of data collected, I was not prepared to settle for a "superficial interpretation" (Yin, 2011, p. 208). Thus began a complete change of my own mind-set in the exploration for deeper meanings that hopefully were embedded in the data.

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Using "description" as a form of analysis (Yin, 2011, p. 208), I began to think beyond the context of self-leadership in the conceptualisation of the themes. I began to compare my findings with other studies or literature to forge new insights and understanding to broader topics such as cultural differences, "diversity of people or social groups in a geographical area" (Yin, 2011, p. 212).

This is when the writings of Chen (2010) in his book, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, began to make an impact in the way I view my analysis. Chen (2010, p. vii) calls for critical intellectuals in the former and current colonies of the third world to "once again deepen and widen decolonization movements, especially in the domains of culture, the psyche, and knowledge production". He further urged critical intellectuals in these countries to "undertake a de-imperialization movement by re-examining their own imperialist histories and the harmful impacts those histories have had on the world" (p. vii).

According to Chen (2010, p. v11) the "dialectical interaction between these two processes is a precondition for reconciliation between the colonizer and the colonized". He stressed that only when "such reconciliation has been accomplished will it be possible for both groups to move together towards global democracy" (p. v11).

Validity

One of the quality control measures that are important to any research study is its validity. This requires the researcher to validate his or her collection and interpretation of data (Yin, 2011). Arriving with false findings would render the study to be worthless, however, "such an extreme outcome is unlikely to occur" according to Yin (2011. p. 78). It is also important not to confuse validity with the researchers' stance (Yin, 2011). One perspective to look at, is to

think of another study, "given the same lens or orientation", would it have collected the same evidence and draw the same conclusion as your study (Yin, 2011)?

In order to strengthen my study's validity, I invited "rival explanations" (Yin, 2011, p. 80) to provide not just "alternative interpretation" (p. 81) but rival interpretation if any of my study. This was done through the help of family and friends throughout the interpreting and writing phases of my study. With all the considerations given to protecting the anonymity of my participants, I was constantly guided by Yin's (2011, p. 80) three sceptical questions:

1. Whether events and actions are as they appear to be;

2. Whether participants are giving their most candid responses when talking with you; and

3. Whether your own original assumptions about a topic and its features were indeed correct.

According to Gray (2009, p. 272), the way to strengthen the validity of semi-structured interviews is to ensure that "the question content directly concentrates on the research objectives".

One of the limitations in case study research is the "credibility and plausibility" (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003, p. 122) issue, of selecting the right participants who are credible and truthful in their personal accounts of lived experience. To satisfy this validity, I had to rely on the careful recruitment of the participants. The participants were all referred to me by friends whom I have known intimately and for a long time. Nevertheless, I still had to rely on their good judgement to introduce reliable and honest participants for my research.

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Strengthening of internal validity. In order to strengthen the validity of the data I relied on the following practises. Firstly, I try to build a close relationship with the participants, on the understanding that the closer I get, the more open they probably would be (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The semi-structured interviews also "allows probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand their answers" (Gray, 2009, p. 373).

Secondly, taking notes during the interviews, of the participants' body language, 'attitudes, motivation, opinions, events" (Gray, 2009, p. 372), allowed me to gain more depth and understanding of the participants.

Thirdly, I relied on participants' validation of the transcripts written. This method "involved those being researched in checking the data for accuracy" (Gray, 2009, p. 190). This verification process was successfully carried out by me when the transcripts were finally completed.

Fourthly, internal validity is strengthened through triangulation of evidence collected. Apart from the interviews, the participants also provided many documents for verification. I was able to verify their claims of educational achievements, charitable deeds, and volunteerism work through the triangulation of the transcripts and documents.

Fifthly, another internal validity issue which I noted carefully was the issue about making inference. Accordingly to Gray (2009, p. 261), another threat to internal validity "comes from the problem of making inferences from the data, when it is simply not possible to actually observe the event". This results in the researcher having to 'infer' that something "has occurred based upon case study interview data or documentary evidence" (p. 261).

External validity. One of the most problematic issues faced by the case study approach is "whether its findings can be generalised beyond the study itself" (Gray, 2009, p. 261). However, case study research is also not meant to be interpreted in such a manner (Yin, 1994). Case study research is not to be confused with survey research where a sampling can represent a larger community (Yin, 1994). While survey research works on "statistical generalisation" (p. 36) case studies are based on "analytical generalisation" (p. 36). For analytical generalisation the researcher's aim is to "generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory" (p. 36).

Reliability. The aim of reliability is to ensure that the researcher minimises errors and biases in a study (Yin, 2003). In other words, it is vital for the researcher to ensure that if the study is conducted all over again will the result be more or less the same? This reliability can be enhanced if the researcher develops proper documentation of all the steps taken in conducting the study. The more steps taken and documented the higher the chance for reliability. To enhance the reliability of my study, I took note of the entire research process from participant recruitment, to planning of interview questions, conduct of interviews to data analysis. These steps taken would mean that the research can be conducted in other educational settings, in different countries or under different conditions.

Ethics

In any successful research project, "the validity and reliability of a study depend upon the ethics of the investigator" (Merriam, 2009, p. 228). It is important that the researcher is able to make critical self-reflection (researcher's reflexivity) on areas concerning assumptions, worldviews, biases and theoretical orientations. Research ethics can also mean "conducting research in a way that goes beyond merely adopting the most appropriate research methodology,

but conducting research in a responsible and morally defensible way" (Gray, 2009, p.69). Ethical concerns in research include the issues of informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Ethical procedures. Application for ethical consent for this study started almost immediately after my research proposal was accepted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). The experience gained from this submission made me aware of ethics requirements when conducting a research.

I had applied for the recruitment of research participants through two methods; the placement of advertisements (See Appendix 3) at educational establishments and through informal networking contacts. In other words, having friends recommend their friends to be the research participants. The ethics committee (MUHREC) provided the approval for the first method applied. However, they were not in favour of me getting the potential participants' contacts directly from my social contacts. Instead, I was asked to provide my social contacts with a copy of my Explanatory Statement (See Appendix 1) and this statement was to be given to potential participants by my social contacts. It is then up to the potential participants to read and understand the process of my research and only if they are interested in participating to contact me directly. In other words, at no time, was there any pressure being put on potential participants to take part in the research because of friendship or relationship.

Having established suitable ethics procedures, I approached various educational establishments for permission to put up an advertisement for the recruitment of research participants. Meantime, I was working through various friends and social contacts for their kind introduction to suitable candidates.

Informed consent. In the area of informed consent and as part of my application to the university's ethics committee for human research, a sample copy of an Explanatory Statement (See Appendix 1) providing full details of the research was to be provided to each research participant. It provides a very comprehensive description of the proposed research which includes information such as the aim of the research; the person undertaking it; who are the participants; what kind of information is being sought; how much of the participants' time is required; the voluntary nature of participation; access to the data once it is collected and lastly, how the anonymity of respondents will be preserved (Gray, 2009).

Upon reading this statement the potential participant was able to gauge for him or herself the nature of the research and the level of involvement that needed to be committed. The participant can then make an informed decision to participate in the research or not.

Right to privacy. Respecting a person's rights and privacy are "basic tenets of living in a democratic society (Gray, 2009, p. 78). In any research project, it is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that the right to privacy of the research participants is safe guarded at all times. For a start, informed consent must always be obtained before the commencement of any research or data collection activity – for example, interviews, observations or questionnaires. Participants have the right to terminate any of these activities if for reasons believed that his or her privacy is being compromised or intruded upon. As far as my research is concern, participants were made to sign consent forms (See Appendix 2) acknowledging the conditions for withdrawal from the research. This clause protects both the interest of the participant as well as that of the researcher (Gray, 2009).

Personal identities of the research participants must also be protected by the researcher. My five case study characters have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity from being exposed.

Protection from harm.   Part of the researcher's responsibility is also to ensure that his or her research participants are free from harm. Harm under this context can mean "to be embarrassed, ridiculed, belittled or generally subject to mental distress (Grey, 2009, p. 74). For this research, I carefully crafted the interview questions to avoid any form of embarrassment or belittlement to my participants. I have also been extra vigilant in keeping a lookout for any signs of discomfort in my participants.

Conclusion

In the course of working on this study, I have for the first time in my mature adult life felt immersed in a rather different world. I have noticed that people similar to me could speak freely and passionately about their own educational journey. They articulated the kind of educational journey I thought I was experiencing only on my own. This is a huge contrast from the working world that I have become so accustomed to. This experience would not have been possible had I chosen a different methodology and approach for this study.

The interviewing sessions were engaging and respectful and I believe it has brought out the most honest of answers. The case study methodology as well as the various methods deployed in the collection of data for this research has allowed me to probe in-depth into the construct of self-leadership as well as other related concepts such as self-motivation, self-goal setting, self-efficacy and self-reward. In the chapters that follow I shall relate these concepts to the life of each of the participants.

There will also be an attempt to understand how each participant visualises success; how they interpret personal beliefs and assumptions and what sort of attitudes they possess towards failures. The narrations and stories told will also conceptualise each participant's vision and aspiration to enjoy a better future and be a better self. Evidence gathered from the participants form the main bulk of my findings and these are documented in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 5: Leading and Motivating

Leadership is the process of influencing leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change (p. 5)…Motivation is anything that affects behaviour in pursuing a certain outcome (p. 74).
(Lussier & Achua, 2004)

Introduction

After a thorough analysis of the collected data, four themes have emerged from the narratives. I am pleased to present them in this chapter, and the three that follow. The four themes are leading and motivating, goal striving, in search of the self and self-leadership in uniquely Singapore – a cultural insight into the self-leadership questionnaire.

This chapter introduces the theme of Leadership and Motivation in a Singapore context, through the tracing of the country's colonial past and discusses how that era and those that follows may have nurtured and shaped today's Singaporean leadership style and sense of motivation.

The leadership construct which includes self-leadership, and motivation construct which includes self-motivation have strong implications to this research – why do mature Singaporeans pursue their tertiary education and how has self-leadership played a role in this desire?

In presenting this chapter, I have drawn narratives from various sources, in the hope that readers would experience a version of *The Singapore Story* (Lee, 1998, 2000), both old and new, told concurrently. The first source is from the memoirs written by one of Singapore's founding leaders, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, describing his own experience through the periods of British

colonisation, the Second World War and Japanese occupation, return of British colonisation, self-government, merger into Malaysia and finally, independence. Historical discourses are vital to this study, as the events that unfolded had a significant impact on the way the first generation of Singapore leaders developed their style of leadership. In turn, they have governed the country for the last five decades since independence.

The second source is taken from narratives provided by the case study participants. This includes interview responses as well as a collection of artefacts provided. These artefacts are mainly educational achievements, testimonials and awards and are also featured in the next chapter, Chapter 6. They have been analysed and contextualised into meanings and stories that support the themes that have emerged from this research.

The narratives from the case study participants are indented. Should multiple quotes be used in a single narrative, the source is indicated on the bottom left hand corner of each quote to avoid confusion.

This chapter will focus on several leadership and motivation topics which are related to the Singapore story. It will begin with a background description of the history of Singapore and the circumstances that led to her independence. This is followed by a story of Lee and his obsession in finding leadership for the nation. The Singapore story will then begin, with narratives from the past and the present. This is followed by a discussion on self-leadership and how this leadership form relates to the participants. The next topic is on motivation and what is this construct's role in motivating mature Singaporean adults into pursuing their tertiary education. Two other topics that are related to the leadership and motivation constructs are presented next. The topics are religious persuasions and English language's role in supporting Singaporean leadership.

Suddenly Independent

Whenever one mentions about the modern history of Singapore, one name usually surfaces, that of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first Prime Minister and statesmen extraordinaire, whose name has been synonymous with Singapore's success as a nation (Han, Ibrahim, Chua, Lim, Low, Lin & Chan, 2011). A recent edition of one of his books opened with the following quote:

> Lee Kuan Yew is one of the brightest, ablest men I have ever met. The Singapore Story is a must read for people interested in a true Asian success story. From this book we also learn a lot about the thinking of one of this century's truly visionary statesmen – quote by George Bush, US President, 1989-1993 (Lee, 2000, preface).

Singapore's past history is far from uneventful, although unlike many other countries in the world, she did not fight for independence. Lee (1998, p. 22) recalled in his book, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*:

> Some countries are born independent. Some achieve independence. Singapore had independence thrust upon it. Some 45 British colonies had held colourful ceremonies to formalise and celebrate the transfer of sovereign power from imperial Britain to their indigenous governments. For Singapore, 9 August 1965 was no ceremonial occasion. We had never sought independence. In a referendum less than 3 years ago, we had persuaded 70 per cent of the electorate to vote in favour of merger with Malaya. Since then, Singapore's need to be part and parcel of the Federation in one political, economic, and social polity had not changed. Nothing has changed – except that we were out. We had said that an independent Singapore was simply not viable. Now it was our unenviable task to make it work. How were we to create a nation of polyglot collection of migrants from China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and several other parts of Asia?

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For more than a century, Singapore had thrived as the heart of the British Empire in South East Asia (Lee, 1998). However, she fell into the hands of the Japanese in 1942, at the peak of the Second World War. The Japanese occupied Singapore for three and a half years until the war ended in 1945. Once again, she was returned to colonial rule. Singapore was granted self-government by Britain in 1959. In 1963, together with the States of Sarawak and Sabah, she joined Peninsula Malaya to form what is known as Malaysia today. However, on 9th August 1965, after just two years in Malaysia, Singapore was separated from it and became a sovereign country on her own. Recalling the time of dramatic separation, Lee (1998) wrote:

> I was weighed down by a heavy sense of guilt. I felt I had let down several million people in Malaysia: immigrant Chinese and Indians, Eurasians, and even some Malays. I had aroused their hopes, and they had joined people in Singapore in resisting Malay hegemony, the root cause of our dispute. I was ashamed that I had left our allies and supporters to fend for themselves…we had set out to create a broad coalition that could press the Alliance government in Kuala Lumpur for a "Malaysian Malaysia", not a Malay Malaysia… (Lee, 1998, p. 17)

All of a sudden, Singapore had become a "heart without a body" (Lee, 1998, p. 23). Surrounded by a sea of hostile neighbours and weighed down by endless severe internal and external problems, many had thought that Singapore would not survive on her own (Lee, 2000).

Lee, however, knew that he had to get on with the business of governing this new Singapore. The country faced a bleak future as Singapore and Malaya, "had always been governed as one territory by the British" (Lee, 1998, p. 21). Faced with adversity and uncertainty, Lee recalled what he had learned during the time when Singapore was under the Japanese occupation (p. 74):

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The three and a half years of Japanese occupation were the most important of my life. They gave me vivid insights into the behaviour of human beings and human societies, their motivations and impulses. My appreciation of governments, my understanding of power as the vehicle for revolutionary change, would not have been gained without this experience.

The experience Lee gained during this period of his life must have had a huge impact on the way he chose to run Singapore, as for the next 25 years while he remained as the Prime Minister, Singapore was governed with much assertiveness and authority. Lee's formula must have worked well, for five decades since independence, Singapore had not only survived, but has become the only country in South East Asia to achieve first world living standards (Lee, 2000).

One Man's Obsession in Finding Talent and Leadership for Singapore

As a young student in England, Lee was attracted to the general theory of socialism. It struck on him "as manifestly fair that everybody in this world should be given an equal chance in life" (Lee, 1998, p. 105).

…in a just and well-ordered society there should not be a great disparity of wealth between persons because of their positions or status, or that of their parents. I made no distinction between different races and peoples (Lee, 1998, p. 105).

As Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee recognised the substantially varied performances of "different categories [of people] within each race" (Lee, 1998, p. 105). After trying out a number of unsuccessful ways to reduce inequalities, Lee (1998) concluded that "the decisive factors were the people, their natural abilities, education and training" (p. 105). It was then when

he began to challenge the assumption that all men and women were equal or should be equal (Allison, Blackwill & Wyne, 2013). He questioned himself on the realism of equality and argued that if equality is not realistic, then any insistence on it, "must lead to regression" (p. 129). Lee (Allison et al., 2013, p. 129) wrote:

> One of the facts of life is that no two things are ever equal, either in smallness or bigness. Living things are never equal… so it is with human beings, so it is with tribes, and so it is with nations. Human beings are not born equal. They are highly competitive. Systems like Soviet and Chinese communism have failed, because they tried to equalise benefits. Then nobody works hard enough, but everyone wants to get as much as, if not more than, the other person.

Lee also believed that in any given society there were bound to be those who were near-geniuses, those who were just average and some would be "morons" (Allison et al., 2013, p. 129). He stressed that "…it is the geniuses and above average who ultimately decide the shape of things to come" (p. 129/130).

> We want to give everybody equal opportunities. But, in the back of our minds, we never deceive ourselves that two human being are ever equal in their stamina, in their drive, in their dedication, in their innate ability (Lee, 2000, p. 129/130)

Lee had harboured the belief that human's "capabilities, proclivities and temperament" (Allison et al., 2013, p. 145) are genetic. From his empirical observation of people and leaders, he believed that 70 to 80 per cent of these characteristics have already been "fixed in the womb" (p. 145).

Trying to recruit the right people to run the government was not easy for Lee. He cited the small population base and the "tendency for younger Singaporeans to spurn public service"

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(p. 100) as two issues he faced. He admitted that his own decision, as well as those belonging to the old guard of ministers was made in an "age of revolution, a life-changing act forged in the fires of post-colonial struggle" (p.100). He foresaw that Singaporeans of today, with their comfortable living and high salaries, would not see the need "to pick up the leadership baton" (p. 100).

Many Singaporeans however, have occasionally questioned Lee's legacy of recruiting only academically talented people for leadership roles in the government as well as the public service. If Lee's assumption was that success emboldens and energises a person to take on more challenging tasks, then sadly, his assumption is not supported by Dweck (2000). Accordingly to her, success does not boost a person's "desire for challenge or their ability to cope with setbacks" (p. 1). Perhaps it simply leads to a sense of entitlement and power stays in the same hands.

It is interesting to speculate that Lee thought that an oligarchy of successful, genetically suitable, academically inclined people were the natural rulers of Singapore and if this was challenged by the ambitions of the ordinary Singaporeans to 'shape up' and get on with life.

I have presented this narrative as a background to the words of my participants and to demonstrate that from analysing their words from the perspective of 'Asia as Method' (Chen, 2010), I began to be able to see them from a Singaporean, rather than an American, British or Australian point of view. I also become more curious about the background to their stories and wanted to find out how this unique Singaporean background constructed their ambitions and their outlook to pursue success through the acquisition of higher education.

The Singapore Leadership Story – Past and Present

Timothy, being the oldest of my research participants was born just after the Second World War. Lee recalled this traumatic change of event as follows:

> These were moments of great exhilaration. The Japanese occupation nightmare was over and people thought the good times were about to return. The signs were favourable…and we believed that soon there would be plenty of rice, fruit, vegetables, meat and canned foods. This was not to be for some time. But during those first few weeks, there was jubilation. The people were genuinely happy and welcomed the British back (Lee, 2000, p. 85).

Timothy was probably too young to understand what was happening in the outside world. However, he recalled that his father had taught him well as a child, especially in the art of business doing and leadership. He remembered that at the age of 10 he wanted to set up his own business. He eventually worked for an international organisation and began climbing the corporate ladder. He later established his own company. As the years went by and having been thrust into leadership roles at a young age, Timothy began to understand the importance of social harmony and discretion. He said:

> …I don't spent a lot of time with my colleagues because I am running in the field most of the time. In a big company, yes I do, to have interaction with people and to work in the environment. But my company is not big enough for me to spend a lot of time with them... I used to tell myself, I want to work towards a time where I have a lot of time to say hello and you look after me and I look after you. So that is the relationship I want…if you understand harmony, discretion is important…Success depends on the co-operation of others including yourself.

Timothy places value on interconnectedness, relationship building and above all, motivating others to lead themselves (Goel, Manz, Neck & Neck, 1995). This is in contrast to Lee's emphasis on individual excellence which focuses mainly on a person's academic success, genetic intelligence and suitability. Timothy's words have reflected his characteristics as an Asian Chinese where social harmony and a collectivist culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1994) prevails. His preference to lead by example, suggests his humble nature and understanding of how people feel about one another in an Asian context. His idea of having to blend and harmonise with the environment and society at large suggested a strong self-observational consciousness of himself and his surroundings (Manz & Neck, 2004). The ability to conduct self-observation is one of self-leadership's underpinning characteristics (Manz & Neck, 2004).

Although Timothy was a strong believer in experience gained through the workplace, he also felt that education was important and would encourage anyone to pursue it. He said:

> …In life there must be knowledge, you must acquire it…acquire wisdom, wisdom is the principle thing in life…wisdom is the application of knowledge…I will encourage them go ahead provided you have the time. People tell me they have no time, make time, this is important.

Timothy's view was that both work experience and education were under the scope of attaining education, just that one was informal and the other, formal. Depending on context and application, both were just as important to him. The ideal situation would be if a person has both academic qualifications and work experience. Timothy's view of wisdom (unlike Lee) is that it can be acquired.

Satsuki was born in the early 50s. Life in liberated Singapore was not the same as before the war. Lee (2000, p. 89/90) recalled the early days of British re-colonisation of Singapore:

My education in the unfairness and absurdities of human existence was completed by what I saw happening in the immediate aftermath of the war…It was very different from my memory of the colonial thirties. Those British civil servants who survived internment had been sent home for medical treatment and recuperation, and temporary officers of the British Military Administration controlled what were improvised departments…True, they were reinforced with a few of the pre-war generation who had been on leave when the Japanese came, or had got away in time. But they were out of touch with the changes that had taken place. The men now in charge –majors, colonels, brigadiers – knew they would be in power only until they were demobilised, when their wartime commissions would vanish like Cinderella's coach. The pumpkin of civilian life to which they would then be reduced was at the back of their minds, and many made the most of their temporary authority.

Satsuki never had the opportunity to pursue higher education when she was younger. She said:

…I did not have an opportunity at that time, circumstances were not in favour, so I did not had a chance to take on a degree.

However, despite these setbacks, Satsuki kept her dream alive. She recalled the events that led to her return to pursue education:

Yes, when I was much younger, I often thought to myself how I wished I had that dream job. I also realised that wishful thinking would not get me anywhere nearer to it. So, I took a bite at a time, learning the Japanese language, obtained a Tourist Guide licence from the then STPB [Singapore Tourists Promotion Board] to conduct my tours in Japanese. I began to like what I was doing and over the years, improved my guiding skills too. I thought I could do more as a trainer, passing my knowledge and experience to people who aspire to be tourist guides. Next, to be a trainer to conduct diploma courses, I had to upgrade my skills first and that set me to take the Diploma in Travel and Tourism in 2008,

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and then a degree course in International Tourism and Hospitality Management in 2010.

Satsuki's choice in wanting to be a Japanese speaking tourist guide in the early 70s must have been met with scepticism. Although the Japanese occupation of Singapore had ended some two and a half decades before, anti-Japanese sentiments were still felt (Lee, 1998). However, by the mid-70s, the Japanese were returning to Singapore in significant numbers, only this time as tourists. Satsuki's vision had paid off. Years later, faced with a set of new challenges in overcoming her educational pursuit, Satsuki said:

> For most people, it would have been an academic journey first, followed by their careers. Pursuing a tertiary education would probably be done soon after leaving school. The short time lapse would make school to university a seamless continuation with minimal adjustment. The students are still young, energetic, with good memory. And with relatively less responsibilities and hence less distractions, they can stay focused on their studies. However, my path was the other way round. I was stacked against so many odds. It was a 30 year lapse between school and university. In between I was pursuing my career and trying to make a success out of it. I was already middle-aged when I pursued the university course. It was a huge adjustment, what with balancing a career and studies and family too, tired out after a long day at work and trying to stay focused at work and at studies, just to name a few obstacles. It was not easy. It called for perseverance. It was a challenge I took up and I would not put it down until it was accomplished.

Like Samuel, whose story follows, Satsuki realised that her years of work experience had given her an edge over younger students who came without any or little work experience. According to Burns (2002) adult education should be "student-centred, experience based, problem-oriented and collaborative" (p. 230). This is because adults are assumed to be capable

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of self-direction (Burns, 2002) while using their experience gained knowledge and wisdom to solve problems. Knowing that her years of work experience would have provided her with the wisdom to deal with the challenges faced, Satsuki said:

> It was an advantage because a lot of things that the lecturers were talking about I have already been though that so there wasn't any issue at all for me to write any notes or even projects, so it was an added advantage. I think it is how you project yourself, if you want to think yourself as old, old it shall be but then for me age is not an issue, because being a soft skill trainer, I always say age is no issue. So knowledge coupled with wisdom, I rather say wisdom than old and that gave me a lot of confidence.

While Satsuki values her experience-gained wisdom, Burns (2002) warns that too much experience may also present a negative side. Experience can cause the development of biases and habits that close minds to fresh ideas and alternatives or causes adults to be intolerant of criticisms.

Satsuki's innovative work behaviour (Carmeli et al., 2006) displayed through her self-leadership is critical as she is aware that being a self-employed person, she does not have a supervisor to assess her work outcomes (Neck & Manz, 1996a). Carmeli et al.'s (2006) study also "offered insights into the theory of individual innovation" (p. 86) and suggests that innovative behaviour can be fostered "through efforts directed toward augmenting behaviour-focus, natural reward, and constructive thought strategies" (p. 86) which are deemed to be self-leadership strategies.

Samuel was born in the late 50s, at a time when Singapore was transiting from colonial to self-rule. Lee (2000, p. 170) recalls his struggles in finding an official language for Singapore:

When we formed the government in 1959 we decided on Malay as the national language, to prepare the way for merger with Malaya. We realised English had to be the language of the workplace and the common language. As an international trading community, we would not make a living if we used Malay, Chinese or Tamil. With English, no race would have an advantage. But it was too sensitive an issue for us to make immediate changes. To announce that all had to learn English when each race was intensely and passionately committed to its own mother tongue would have been disastrous. So we left the position as it was, with four official languages – Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English.

Lee (2000, p. 172) also remembered the challenges he faced during the early days of self-government in convincing parents to choose English education for their children:

We waited patiently as year by year parents in increasing numbers chose to send their children to English Schools, in the face of determined opposition from the Chinese teachers' unions, Chinese school management committees, Chinese newspaper owners, editors and journalists, leaders of clan associations and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Every year, around the time when parents had to register their children, these groups would mount a campaign to get parents to enrol their children in Chinese schools for the sake of their culture and identity. They berated those who chose English schools as money-minded and short-sighted.

Lee had realised from the beginning that English would have been a better common language for all Singaporeans. English, as an international language with wide appeal, is also the official language widely used by the international business community. Language proficiency in English would give Singaporeans an edge in trading with or being the middlemen for, the East and the West (Allison et al., 2013).

Samuel's parents were one of the minorities that had sent their children to English medium schools. They had placed high hopes in their children's future. Samuel said, "…I think that was the focus and I was very guided… ."

After his primary education, Samuel was admitted to a good secondary school. Being a playful teenager in his growing years, his studies began to slacken. However, Samuel managed to progress well enough to pass his 'A' Level examinations. At that time, like many students of his era, he had no intention or ambition to further his studies. Samuel decided to enter the workforce.

Several years later, while working in an educational institution and having observed and admired other mature students' active pursuit of tertiary education, Samuel began to see the need to pursue his tertiary studies to support his own career development. Samuel describes his learning experience as a mature student:

> …With years of work experience, I could also relate better to the management theories I learnt during my studies… I think it was a very enriching experience. You know while you work, you study and you can relate to what you study in the workplace, so I think in that sense that was the advantage of adults pursuing further studies. You can relate to what you study in your work, while if you are a full time student, you have not been to the workplace, a lot of things you study can be just the theory and very academic.

Samuel's work experience had indeed provided him with a strong nexus between his studies and his job. It also sets the relationship between work experience, leadership, motivation and the pursuit of higher education in mature age students (Brown & Posner, 2001). Findings from Justice and Dornan (2001) suggested that motivational levels may not differ between "traditional age and non-traditional age college students" (p. 245), as both can be as motivated,

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however, Terry (2006) suggests that mature adults are able to bring "established social attitudes" (p. 6) and "emotional, imaginative connection with the self and with the broader social world" (p. 7) into their learning environment. These factors gained through years of work experience and performing leadership roles provides the mature adult with a sense of self-leadership as clearly displayed in the case of Samuel.

Samuel measures his work performance through the setting of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). He takes the performance of task very seriously so as to ensure the task's success. He commented:

> I believe that it is very important to plan well for any task and ensuring that all the gaps or shortcomings in the plan are taken care of. The next important step is to ensure that your staff understands how to implement the plan.

On a personal side, Samuel does not set targets for himself. He believes in doing his best and be on the lookout for new opportunities. He does not consider himself overly ambitious as he feels that a good balance in life is more important.

During my interviews with the participants, the question of volunteering for a task that has little chance of success emerged. This question has always intrigued me as I recalled what Lee (2000, p. 19) wrote:

> There are books to teach you how to build a house, how to repair engines, how to write a book. But I have not seen a book on how to build a nation out of a disparate collection of immigrants from China, British India and the Dutch East Indies, or how to make a living for its people when its former economic role as the entrepôt of the region is becoming defunct...We faced tremendous odds with an improbable chance of survival. Singapore was not a natural country but man-

made; a trading post the British had develop into a nodal point in their world-wide maritime empire.

I was very impressed with Samuel's answer and had compared it with Lee's even though I knew very well that they were not on a similar scale or period in time. Samuel said:

I like to take on new challenges and have volunteered myself for new projects many times during my career in the organization. I don't evaluate whether a new challenge is difficult or easy before I decide to take it up. Since the organizational culture allows for failure, it is easy for staff to take up such challenges. In fact, the harder the challenge, the more motivated I get.

These positive attitudes displayed by Samuel have provided me with a better understanding of his leadership style and the factors that motivates him. As a mature adult, Samuel's confidence in the self (Roberson & Merriam, 2005) has aided his self-directed learning effort to the fullest.

Self-leadership

Self-leadership qualities displayed by career successful mature adults suggest that it may be one of the fundamental reasons why they succeed in pursuing education at a mature age. While the term is not as commonly used as, for example, 'self-motivation', it was easily understood by the participants at the time of interview. However, the participants' views were varied as each one of them had their own perception of what self-leadership symbolises.

Cynthia's perception of self-leadership was focused on self-discipline and the ability to empower oneself (e.g. Manz, 1992a) – working towards an objective so as to maintain the right direction. Cynthia however, admitted that her own academic journey was a great challenge as

she had to face it all by herself whereas many others had family support and a planned academic pathway laid out for them. Cynthia is a self-disciplinarian, one that is good at conforming to rules, a hard-working and intelligent person but not as creative or flexible. A self-leader on the other hand is one who is successful in entrepreneurial thought patterns, processes a high level of self-efficacy and performance (Neck et al., 1999) and is innovative (Carmeli et al., 2006).

Timothy has a different perspective of self-leadership. He believes that self-leaders like good businessmen are born and not made. He does not believe that the art of doing business can be taught, it is either a person is a born businessman or not a businessman at all. Timothy's philosophy is very similar to that of Lee's (1998, 2000) in terms of his views on leadership. Lee said (Allison et al., 2013, p. 145):

> …contrary to what American books say, that you can teach people to be leaders. I think you are a born leader or you are not a leader. You can teach a person to be a manager, but not a leader. They must have the extra drive, intellectual verve, an extra tenacity, and the will to overcome.

> …I always argue that business cannot be studied. You know, administration yes, management yes, but business cannot be studied, either you are a businessman or you are not... (Timothy).

Timothy also believes that one has to adapt to the environment and Singapore being a meritocratic society, one has to achieve the minimum qualifications to be accepted. However, his personal belief is that one does not necessarily need high educational qualifications to succeed in life. He cited the case of a former Singaporean taxi driver who became a billionaire. Timothy's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial performances are closely linked to Neck et al's., (1999) description of self-leadership enhanced by entrepreneur thought patterns, self-efficacy and performance. Working and building on past research on self-leadership these authors have

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developed a comprehensive model to explain concisely how Thought Self-leadership (TSL) can influence entrepreneurship performance through the following flow chart.
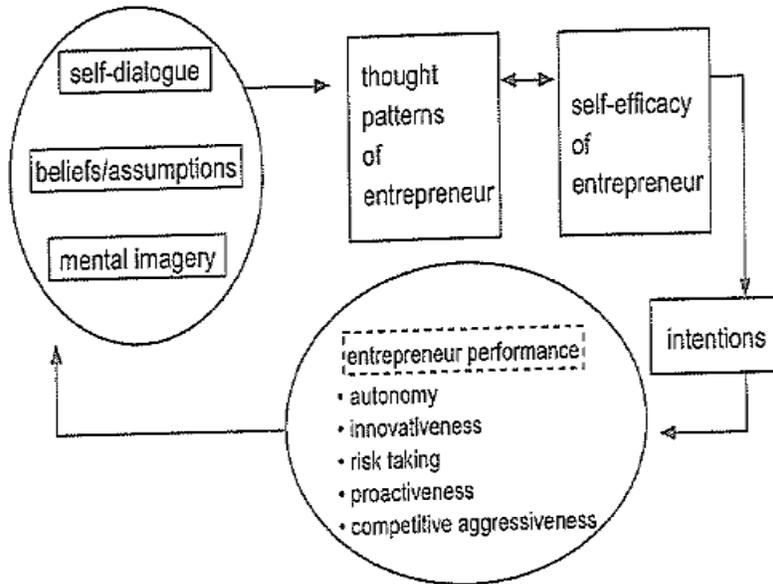
Figure 5.1: Thought Self-Leadership view of entrepreneur performance (Neck et al., 1999, p. 482)

The above figure shows that through self-dialogue, beliefs and assumptions as well as a strong sense of mental imagery, a self-leader like Timothy can easily create the necessary entrepreneurial thought patterns. This coupled with the self-efficacy of the self-leader, a series of intentions are developed. These intentions are then translated into entrepreneurial performances, autonomy, innovativeness, risk taking, pro-activeness and competitive aggressiveness which are known trademarks of entrepreneurship.

Samuel's definition of self-leadership is a person having self-motivation and self-direction. He also stressed that a good self-leader should also have integrity, self-beliefs and discipline. He or she must be understanding towards colleagues and subordinates, be able to

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think strategically and is always open to new ideas. Most importantly a self-leader must be willing to improve and move into unchartered territories. Samuel reiterated his own strength as a self-leader and believes that his self-leadership has enabled him to succeed well in his pursuit of tertiary education at a mature age:

…Yes, I believe having self-leadership has enabled me to decide on pursuing my tertiary education in my thirties and managing to complete it successfully.

Samuel has been told that as a leader he is demanding but fair. He said he could live comfortably with such as a perception as he is not in the job to be popular. He also encourages diversity of views in the workplace. He said:

…A better decision will come out of such differences. I keep an open mind on differing opinions and will try to harness the merits of those differing opinions by exploring how to incorporate good ideas of the others into the decision making.

Samuel however has a low tolerance for people who don't perform because of their bad attitude. He believes that self-motivation is very much within the control of the self.

As a mature adult, I pursued studies because I wanted to, and not because someone wanted me to. Fortunately for me, I work in an educational institution and this has made it easy for me to embark on my academic journey because I received ample support from the organization.

Samuel's confident style of self-leadership suggests a close relation with his personality traits (Houghton et al., 2004). While these two dimensions, self-leadership and personality are "distinct concepts" (p. 436), much correlation between the two concepts have been established through research. Samuel's personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional

stability (Houghton et al, 2004) can be said to be closely linked to all three self-leadership strategies through his display of behaviour-focused, reward-focus and constructive thought pattern-focus (Manz & Neck, 2004) management and leadership style.

Satsuki's understanding of self-leadership was quite different from the other case study participants. As a self-employed person, her perception of self-leadership was heavily focused on career survival, facing and overcoming challenges and obstacles. These were her thoughts:

Having been self-employed for 30 years...I faced challenges and overcame obstacles. I am very pleased with my achievements and I would like to think I am a survivor, taking this as due to self-leadership aspiring me to pursue a degree course...

As a veteran freelance tourist guide, she was able to pick and choose assignments that excited her. By managing her time well, Satsuki was also able to take advantage of her training schedules by teaching two courses within the same day. She believed that it was her self-leadership that has guided her on all these factors.

According to Carmeli et al., (2006) self-leadership requires innovative behaviour at work and these have been displayed prominently by Satsuki in the way she manoeuvres her multiple tasks which in a way has been facilitated by her self-employed status. Being self-employed has provided Satsuki with empowerment "to make decisions concerning their own tasks at work and implement them" (p. 75) efficiently. Satsuki's self-leadership emphasizes therefore on innovation and creativity which suits her profession very well.

Whitney's idea of a good self-leader, seemed to me, very confined to her personal workplace experience. She suggested that a good self-leader must be able to set goals, for themselves and others. Whitney said:

I think when we call ourselves, or when we term ourselves as self-leaders, I think this person has to be very self-motivated. And he has to be a keen learner, especially to learn new skills and to acquire new information, what's happening in the world. And I think he also have to learn to take some challenges.

Whitney believes that her self-leadership had motivated her in her academic and career journeys. She said:

Yes I would say I do lead myself. I like to – I may not be the best learner of things or rather I may not be the most keen person to learn new things but when it is going to help me in my academic or career journeys yes I would definitely want to learn it and do it you know. I will do research or do the findings, talk to people who are already familiar with this area to help me so that I can improve on the academic and career side.

Whitney's own admission in many of her narratives, that she is often dependent on friends or family for assistance in terms of work or studies have revealed her dependency on others and suggest weaknesses in her self-leadership. According to Yun et al. (2006), on the other hand it might mean that she is strong in terms of making connections and networking.

In summarising the participants' self-leadership, it can be said that each of the participants has his or her own beliefs as well as a system that provides structure to their world and meaning to their experiences (Dweck, 2000). Some beliefs like those of Samuel's and Timothy's portrayed a dynamic self, capable of growth; whereas the others were more static and shown fixed qualities and were satisfied to achieve what they have set out to do (Dweck, 2000).

As a self-leader, Samuel dares to make unpopular decisions if there are reasons for him to believe that they are made for the good of all. Han et al., (2011, p. 248) had described Lee in the same manner:

> Lee Kuan Yew has had to deal with some of the toughest issues involving race and language in Singapore - the closing down of Nanyang University or Nantah and the compulsory learning of a second language in schools, among others. These unpopular measures could not have been implemented without his legendary political will … he was unapologetic about the way he resolved those tricky issues and as convinced as ever that they were the right decisions which has benefitted Singapore in the long-term.

Timothy on the other hand had suggested [indirectly at least], that he is a born businessman and a leader. His ability in dealing with people; close bonding with his subordinates; having good business sense and the belief in the supernatural are his indicators of self-leadership.

Cynthia, Satsuki and Whitney's understanding of self-leadership were more towards self-management, self-development or self-fulfilment towards their personal goals and overcoming of challenging situations.

Motivation and the Pursuit of Tertiary Education

Whitney is a motivated self-leader at work and her aspiration is to run her own company one day. For the present, she is committed to excel in her job as a department head in a large events company. As the company place high emphasis on education, she became motivated to pursue a tertiary education. She had believed that a degree, coupled with her years of work experience, would enhance her own market value and facilitate her climb in the corporate ladder.

Whitney was not motivated in the pursuit of education when she was young. She cited negligible parental support as one of the factors. It was in the 70's and the British troops were withdrawing from Singapore. Her father's job was affected by the withdrawal and that had an impact on her. Her mediocre primary school results only managed to gain her admission to a neighbourhood secondary school, something which she detested. However, this motivated her to improve her grades so that she could be transferred to a better school.

Whitney's years of work experience has made a difference in providing her with the right mind set to pursue her degree. On the other hand, age does have its setbacks and she found it difficult to compete in terms of memory or energy level with her much younger classmates.

Cynthia's educational journey could be described as a roller coaster ride, with so many ups and downs, twists and turns. However, with each turn she became more resolute and determined to realise her academic dreams. Cynthia can be described as a highly motivated individual, yet at the same time, patience has been one of her great virtues. Cynthia took five years to complete her degree course, not giving up even though she was discouraged by her classmate's dropping out of the course one after another. Coming from a very different family financial background; having to work at a very young age; and having experienced hardship has made her into a highly motivated and determined person.

Samuel's profession had allowed him to be in contact with some of the most motivated students. Amongst them were mature students returning to the classroom after many years at work; there were also handicapped students and others with special needs. One particular visually handicapped mature student had made a lasting impression on him, because of her will to succeed and to learn. Making the special arrangements to facilitate her learning and finally

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seeing her graduate has been one of Samuel's proudest moments and inspirations. These little episodes in Samuel's life have immensely strengthened his own motivation to succeed. He said:

> I think a lot of things come from within yourself and if you have that belief, that mind set to pursue something…and if you want it badly enough, you are discipline enough, motivated enough, to work towards what you set up, then I think that will be possible.

Samuel felt fortunate to work for an educational institution that supports employee aspirations. However, despite having this advantage, he felt that balancing work, family and academic demands was not an easy task. Samuel believed that good time management, the ability to study consistently, self-motivation and perseverance were important attributes for academic success. All these should come from a person's self-leadership qualities.

Having been in the tourism industry for the last three decades, Satsuki felt confident in pursuing a degree in tourism. As a tourist guide and a trainer, she needed to read and research extensively to keep up with her product knowledge. This interest in research was also one of the motivating factors behind her decision to resume her studies after a long lapse of 30 years. Satsuki said:

> …it was all hard work and sheer determination to succeed that saw me through… initially it was a bit uneasy because all my course mates were all very young, in their 20s and 30s, so I am the oldest I would say. But later on when they approached me for help because they introduced themselves and they knew I was in the tourism line, they come to me and I felt it was okay.

Satsuki could not explain why she had chosen to do a degree programme instead of staying on a successful pathway with appropriate professional development. All she could

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answer was that it was a personal choice and that it did not matter which pathway one chooses. Her advice was to choose the path you believed in and to stay focused thereafter.

Timothy's motivation for academic pursuits came from his love for books. He enjoyed reading to keep educating himself. He also recited a Chinese proverb that promoted lifelong learning. Timothy believed that the learning capacity of each individual comes with what he or she is born with, however, he agrees that there was a limit in memory power once a person reaches certain age. Timothy also believed that keeping one's confidence level is one of the success factors of a good leader and entrepreneur. In business, it does not help to be overly anxious or panic over business circles as economic forces cannot be controlled. What is important is to keep a close watch on one's budget and be realistic. Small companies cannot withstand crises. It is therefore the role of a leader or entrepreneur to anticipate such moments. Timothy's definition of intelligence was not about being educated. An intelligent person is one who knows how to apply the right strategy for the occasion. That is something one cannot learn from pursuing education.

Religious Persuasions

One of the common subjects that emerged from my interview sessions with the participants was the proclamation of their religious faith. While Cynthia and Satsuki did not raise the subject, Timothy, Samuel and Whitney were quite happy to share their religious beliefs and how their faith has played a role in their lives and pursuit of higher education. They said:

> I will try my best to solve them [relating to challenges he faces] by evaluating all possibilities and alternatives. When it is beyond my control, I will seek God's help as most, if not all, Christians do… as a Christian I place my trust in God whenever I am confronted with difficult situations I cannot solve. (Samuel).

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: …my outlook in life influences my relation and outlook into work. So you know, imagine myself at various stages of success, I count that as a question of success. So being a Christian I will tell you success is when you have known the best… now who is the best, God is the best. So if you know God that is the best. There are no other comparisons you know. So do other achievements prompt you to work harder? [Repeating my question] So that means success is happiness – probably well-being and happiness, this being tie together. And I will work harder for it, yes I will. How does it prompt you to work harder? Because of understanding life equate to details. Keen interest in life, work is life. (Timothy).

Timothy's ability to relate from one standpoint to another, coupled with his deep thoughts and mental processes, although a challenge to comprehend has conveyed well enough his inner thoughts towards life and his beliefs.

I asked Whitney about things she would do when faced with a difficult problem. Her answer was much more direct than Timothy's:

…Well I am a Christian; generally the first thing is, I will go to God in prayer. Then after that I will be more practical, looking at the environment to see what is happening. You know, I will also seek the help of friends, close friends, sometimes my father, and my husband of course. So these are people who can help me.

What amazes me most in Whitney's answer was the way she gave priority to her religious beliefs even though her practical self had 'warned' her not to expect any miracles. This explains Whitney's character as a practical, down to earth person whose interest is to see that things work and gets done, regardless of methods used. I also asked Whitney about her beliefs and assumptions and how do these play a part when she is faced with difficult situation. She said:

Well as I said being a Christian so God is always my guide and I do have some very good friends and some so call mentors you know who I could go to and these are the people who will usually help me in difficult situations and of course that on my personal life.

Singapore's Christian community, although a minority, has been linked to their higher educational qualifications, as one in three university graduates is a Christian (Han, et al., 2011).

In my conversation with the participants, although the topic of religious beliefs was not directly discussed, I could sense that regardless of having a religion or not, as may be the case for Cynthia and Satsuki, they had viewed their beliefs to be of great importance and an inspiration to their educational journey. This is especially so for Samuel, Timothy and Whitney whom I have observed to possess strong Christian beliefs.

Through their stories, I have explored and re-constructed the complexities of the tensions and pressures they would probably experience as mature adults pursuing tertiary education in Singapore. It is quite obvious to me that most of them sought spiritual guidance when they are faced with problems they cannot solve on their own or with family, colleagues or friends. Timothy said:

Faith is in God, a very powerful element. In life, philosophically and religiously and morally, you either live by two ways – by faith or by fear. Anyway it is faith that drives you on. Is there assumptions that plays a part – it is faith, faith in life.

The religious faith experienced by some of the participants suggested a contrast with that of Lee's who only had faith into inborn abilities.

English Language's Role in Supporting Singaporean Leadership

One of the many policies that were implemented during Lee's prime-ministership was the policy of bilingualism– the ability in communicating effectively in both English and one's own mother tongue. Lee commented (Allison et al., 2013, p. 10/11):

> While Singapore shares with China many of the core philosophical tenents of Confucianism, we worked over the past 40 years to establish English as our first language, and Chinese as the second. Why? Certainly not by accident or without provoking strong opposition. We did so to open ourselves to the world and allow ourselves to engage and embrace the main focus of discovery and invention and creativity that occur not only in the language but also in the mentality of English.

While many formerly colonised countries in South East Asia fought hard to discard their imperialistic languages and promote their own native national language, Singapore did the opposite by preserving English as the official language. Singaporeans' style of leadership or motivation, their fluency in the English language suggested the adoption of westernised mentalities and yet subscribing perhaps to both Western and Eastern leadership styles and motivational cultures (Chang & Wong, 2008).

This uncertain cultural inclination suggest that a reflexivity calling for a closer examination and understanding of how Singaporeans handle the cultural and psychological aftermath of colonisation and imperialism be conducted. Chen (2010, p. 204) suggested:

> Intellectuals from the United Kingdom can work with their counterparts in India, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, and Hong Kong to write the history of British imperialism in Asia

According to Loomba (1994, p. 311) who defended the introduction of English language in the British colonised countries:

> …like British education in general, was not inserted upon a colonial vacuum but entered into a lively interaction with indigenous educational practices and subjects which both implicates them in the legitimization for the English text, and registers the subversive potential of the encounter.

Another view shared by Thiong'o (1994, p. 438) who defended the good of the English Language as introduced to the colonised countries of Britain, share his views as follows:

> The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education.

Unlike Chen's strong views about the slow progress of decolonisation and deimperialism on the cultural and psychological aspects of the colonised countries, one should also see the potentials of what the language of the coloniser could do for the advantage of the colonised. For example in the case of Singapore, Singaporeans' English proficiency, which can be regarded as fluent by any Asian countries' standard was brought about by Lee's visionary foresight. The ability to speak English fluently has also brought about Singapore's successes in areas of international trade and commerce (Lee, 2000). In his recent writing, Lee expressed gratitude to the British for their system and their graceful exit (Lee, 2013, p. 114).

And on the whole, the British left institutions behind them, including in Singapore. We had the rule of law, we had statutes, we had the English Language and we were wise enough not to change any of that. They have helped us to grow. Their institutions were already working. What I did was to make sure that we did not subvert the institutions but reinforced them

Like Lee, the participants having been educated in English may see self-leadership as a cluster of 'inner qualities' that permeates within them, but these inner qualities could also have been fostered by being educated in English. In a post-colonial context, like the case of Singapore, this might have ironically turned out to be an advantage.

Summary

The above stories from the five case studies demonstrate the complexity of factors that led the participants to a display of leadership and motivation in their journey to pursue a tertiary education. It can be seen, that while the participants had very similar main objectives that drove their overall motivation, they have displayed a diversity of leadership styles which is guided by their stamina, their drive, their dedication and their innate ability (Lee, 2000). Spiritual beliefs also played an important role in helping some of the participants' "cope with the vicissitudes of life" (Han et al., 2011, p. 218).

'Leading and motivating' is the first theme generated through my study. I believed that what we have learnt of this theme from the participants, was how these two constructs, leadership and motivation, had led the participants to firstly, believing in themselves and secondly, having the courage, the determination and the perseverance to convert their dreams into realities. Many of the participants have also experienced personal adversities coming from a diverse background.

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In the process of my research, I was challenged to look beyond my own perspective of the present day context for Singaporean leadership and motivation. Despite the limitations of my own gaze, my worldview has been overwhelmingly enlarged as a result of my appreciation and application of unique historical factors that I believed had shaped the leadership form of Singaporeans today. Singapore's unique history situating from colonialism, to post-colonialism, to mergers and to Western imperialism and above all magnified by a harmony enduring multi-racial and multi-lingual society have, I believed, produced the Singaporean leadership and motivation of today.

The call to de-colonise, de-imperialise and de-cold war (Chen, 2010), has further enlarged my gaze and worldview of culture and cultural heritage and wondered for the first time in my life whether, as a Singaporean, do I and my participants, belong to the West or the East? In the era of globalisation is this relevant (Chen, 2010)? However, this chapter shows how I began to answer the research questions about mature Singaporean adults' pursuit of tertiary education.

The other themes of this research will be covered in the next three chapters. In the next chapter, the theme of Goal Striving will be discussed in greater detail.

Chapter 6: Goal Striving

Empirical studies demonstrate that setting specific, challenging, and
obtainable goals tends to enhance performance
(Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990)

Introduction

Although colonial rule ended some five decades ago for Singapore, the effects of colonialism are still very evident today and are impossible to be eradicated (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996). This cultural domination is now further complicated with the blending of old world powers such as the United States, and new world powers such as China (Lee, 2013; Tay, 2013). In addition, there appears also some "sub-empires" (Chen, 2010, p. 18), such as Taiwan, Korea and Japan which, under the imperialist hierarchy, are still "dependent on an empire at a higher level" (p. 18). These multiple cultural dominations have either coexisted, being superimposed with one another, or are with the original imperial order (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996).

In the case of Singapore, neo-imperialism may have already become entrenched in the everyday lives of Singaporeans. This intersection and interaction of multiple cultural dominations can be complicated (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996) especially for mature Singaporeans who have experienced the stages of the country's political past (Lee, 2013).

Chen's (2010) focus on Asia's need for de-colonization, de-cold war and de-imperialization, against the region's past colonizers and its present neo-imperialists, is a strong reminder that Singaporeans have to refocus on several cultural aspects of their lives, which inevitably, have been altered and influenced over the decades. Chen (2010, p. 18) clarifies the role of neo-imperialism:

Neocolonial imperialism here refers to a form of structural domination in which a country with more global power uses political and economic intervention in other countries to influence policy and exercise control over markets

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the subject of Singaporean leadership and motivation. These factors may have been influenced by the present political leadership, past colonial leadership or the present state of neo-imperialistic influence and dominance by the world's super powers. Looking at the landscape, from just a political, economic or military control point of view, according to Chen (2010), is only gazing at the surface. Chen (2010) iterated:

> History has proven that the formation of empire is never a matter of political, economic, and military control. Cultural discourse also plays an active role in providing the theoretical justification needed for empire building…Critical discourse on imperialism has disproportionately focused on its political and economic aspects, while the role of culture in the experiences of modern imperialism has not received adequate attention (Chen, 2010, p. 24).

According to Tay (2013), Asia seeks a new model that is beyond one-power hegemony. China is resentful about the "US pivot, or rebalancing of military and diplomatic assets, to Asia" (p. 10). The Asian financial crisis in 1997 saw the relationship of many Asian countries change as they grew closer to China largely without American involvement. Tay (2013, p. 10) commented:

> This should give pause to America's regional policy, post-pivot. Asia is not looking for a return to the era of unquestioned dominance, where America is the sole power, setting the agenda. Asians don't endorse the American rebalancing - not for the long term and at any price. Witness the regional economy, which

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continues to outperform the rest of the world. The first fear for Asians is a possible Chinese slowdown. What happens in the US is secondary.

The implication of multiple hierarchy neo-imperialism, and the fact that Singapore is now a First World and not a Third World country (Lee, 2000) leads me to yet another theme, that of Goal Striving, which I shall discuss in this chapter. According to Lee (2013), Singapore has a very open economy. From the time she was separated from its natural hinterland, Malaysia, she had "no way to develop other than to create very extensive links with the rest of the world" (p. 228). That has always been Singapore's goal striving for survival in the 50 years since independence. Singaporeans have learnt the art of survival in the face of adversities, to be always prepared for the worst, and yet to do one's utmost to be able to continue to enjoy the best. The never ending quest and aspirations to strive for goals in one's lifetime, has become part and parcel of Singaporean self-leadership.

Goal striving as in the context of adults pursuing their tertiary education at a mature age, has to be seen from the perspective that those striving are doing so more voluntarily than involuntarily. This should at least fundamentally explain their self-generated goal striving ambitions. Like their younger college-age counterparts, setting goals and striving to achieve them is vital to their academic success.

Mature students may also face a different set of challenges, with "changes and transitions" (Robertson & Merriam, 2005, p. 269) and their educational journeys may not be as smooth sailing. Having gone through life in the workplace, and having chosen the path to arrive at where they are today (Lassey & Lassey, 2001), each mature adult is unique and likely to have experienced decades of intellectual, emotional, physical and social growth (Jarvis, 2001). This chapter will also focus on the self-directed learning processes of mature adults and will tap on

the narratives from the five case studies to support these processes. Each of the participant's case studies will also be accompanied by data from the provided artefacts.

Cynthia's Story – Striving for Goals, One at a Time

Cynthia was aware of the challenges she faced as a mature student, and taking small steps (Koo & Fishbash, 2010) toward overcoming them, had been her strategic way of achieving her goals. She would gauge what it took to achieve a given goal by focusing on the end results. Her strategy was therefore to set small measurable goals (Koo & Fishbash, 2010), where progress could be monitored easily. This form of goal striving had been described by Dweck (2000) as a multistage process with multiple factors influencing each stage. These processes involve motivational and social cognitive factors (Dweck, 2000) which were demonstrated through Cynthia's strategic approaches. Cynthia said:

> …I will remind myself why I need to do this and then I will focus on reaching the end result. Importantly, I need to discipline myself to make it a habit to monitor my performance so that I can accomplish my goals.

Cynthia's strategic approach does not apply only to her personal goals. As a career consultant working under a self-managed work-team environment (Elloy, 2008), Cynthia's work-related goal performances are measured by her company's Key Performance Indicators. Although this environment allows her to plan and monitor her own performances, Cynthia has always believed that team work among the team members is just as important. According to Elloy (2008), the relationship between leadership and self-leadership behaviors and organizational variables in a self-managed work team environment has indicated that "supervisory trust, decision-making, feedback and team goal setting" (p. 801) are vital towards employees' development and enhancement of leadership qualities and goal achievement

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strategies. This knowledge of managing team work to achieve work-goals is well understood by Cynthia. She said:

…Everyone is working towards a common goal. I feel good when my colleagues offer emotional support from encouragement to offering a listening ear when needed…we are ready to set goals towards a successful pathway... It is important to set achievable goals so that we can give ourselves something to work towards. It is important to ask whether the objectives and goals are realistic…I feel working as a team means it is like a part of a collective body whereby everyone is working towards a common objective or goal. This also means that I need to be patient and understanding to one another. I have to learn and adapt to different working habits, point of views, and personalities within my team members.

The setting of goals and having the right strategies to achieve them has been Cynthia's daily work routine. Although she finds the Singapore work system stressful, she is happy that the system helps keep the pressure on her to work harder.

This Singapore work culture is something Cynthia has been accustomed to and has been described by Chang and Wong (2008, p. 881) as a:

Psychological process that takes place, where values, shared goals, and the expectations of the cultural community would provide the framework that defines the meanings and priorities of these achievement-related motives and cognitions.

It is precisely with this expectation of the cultural community (Chang & Wong, 2008), and a strong sense of family responsibility that Cynthia chose to work at the tender age of just 13 years to help supplement her parents' low family income. Cynthia's perseverance made her stay

with the fast food chain she was working for, for the next 15 years. However, throughout her early work life, Cynthia had kept her goal of becoming a counsellor alive. She said:

> …So at different stages of my life I knew what I wanted. I have been in retail, in fast food. Then I told myself that one day I am going to be a counsellor. I have been through a lot of difficulties in my life, so I would like to help others ... in order to achieve this goal I must have a degree which I do not have…

Cynthia knew that in order to achieve her goal of becoming a counsellor someday, she needed to possess the necessary educational qualifications. This strong drive to attain a tertiary education to achieve one's goals instead of staying on a successful career pathway with appropriate professional development has always been Singaporeans' preferred choice. The security a degree education provides far outweighs that of on-the-job training and climbing the corporate ladder without any external qualifications. It was therefore with great determination that Cynthia eventually became one of the early batches of mostly mature students to graduate from The Open University. She had majored in Psychology; a discipline she believed would bring her understanding of other fellow human beings to a professional level. The degree also gave her the entry requirement to be a counsellor.

> I think the most significant factor is personal satisfaction…however, when I think about it, I feel it is the most rewarding experience in my life…I am moving toward in the right direction. In order to move to a goal in my life, which I always wanted to, this is the right direction. So I believe I am in the right path.

Cynthia's academic journey was not without challenges. As a part-time student, it had taken her five years to complete the degree program. She recalled this difficult period of her life:

I feel my academic journey was a struggle as I needed to balance work and family commitments. Life was very difficult…I needed to make changes and adaptation. I needed support from people and empower myself to get things done…as an adult student, I have many responsibilities and challenges to meet especially not only in academic but also in my career.

However, unlike many risk-adverse or 'kiasu' Singaporeans (Li, et al., 2008; Gupta, 2010), Cynthia was never afraid to make her ambitious academic journey known. She was fully aware of other mature students' similar plights in pursuing higher education and felt that it was an honourable venture for herself even if she did not succeed.

One of Cynthia's strongest assets is her friendly disposition and her ability to build good relations with people. She treasures teamwork amongst colleagues, so that common goals can be forged. She feels good when colleagues offer emotional support. Cynthia said:

I will motivate myself, be mindful in my doing and feeling positive with my workplace. Besides tapping on personal drives, readiness to face change, looking at situations from different viewpoints, I also improve relationships by building rapport with my colleagues and clients...my relationship with my colleagues I should say is good because we work as a team…I respect and show them that I am willing to listen to new ideas and open to discussion.

A few years into her counselling career, Cynthia was elated when her employer awarded her a scholarship to pursue a Master's Degree in Counselling. With great pride she handed me an artefact that says:

This scholarship is awarded to Cynthia [real name omitted] on [actual date omitted] to pursue a Masters in Counselling, which will be beneficial to her contribution to the fields of Career Consulting and Counselling

Artefacts from Cynthia, When not working or studying, Cynthia spends time in volunteerism work as another form of pursuing her personal goals. Cynthia had provided me a total of 13 artefacts out of which four were posters related to her voluntarism work with a particular Singapore government organization. Amongst the artefacts related to her educational pursuits, two of the earliest documents provided were an academic transcript and a diploma for her attempt in learning counselling skills. These documents were dated late 2003 which proved that Cynthia's interest in counselling had started some time ago. Results from this diploma also revealed her strength and weaknesses in areas of learning. Cynthia was obviously good in interpersonal and community skills but weak on academic subjects.

Putting her newly acquired counselling skills to the test, Cynthia volunteered her services to be a counsellor. She must have spent many years doing this voluntary work as the next artefact provided saw Cynthia receiving her long service award from this organization at the end of 2006.

In early 2008, Cynthia was finally in possession of one of the most treasured artefacts in her life – a degree from a recognized university. Working on a part-time basis, she had majored in psychology. The period of the artefacts suggest that she must have begun her degree course almost immediately after her diploma. These pursuits were done while working, caring for her aged parents, siblings and doing volunteerism work at the same time, a testimony of her determination, will and motivation.

Cynthia's story is similar to those of other older Singaporeans, born in the "unsettling 60s, when hardship and poverty were still the rule rather than the exception" (Lee, 2013, p. 206). Lee (2013) describes these Singaporeans as those with "good understanding of the nation's

imperatives – what it took for us to get here and what it would do to keep up with our success – as well as its vulnerabilities" (p. 207).

Satsuki's Story – The Self-described 'Comeback Kid'

Satsuki describes herself as a 'comeback kid', as she confessed that she would never have imagined that she would be able to pursue a tertiary education some 30 years after she had left school. However, with the motivation coming from her wanting to become a trainer, and the encouragement of family members and friends, she found the will and the strength to complete her tertiary program. Describing her pursuit as a long term goal, she said:

> I have long and short term goals. The long term goals are made up of a series of short term goals. With each success in achieving my short term goals, I felt very happy, satisfied and encouraged, knowing I am getting nearer to achieving my long term goals. This made me feel even more confident, encouraged and motivated to strive harder and in the process, more focus on my goals, setting a higher level of expectation and to be accomplished in a shorter period of time.

According to Koo and Fishbash (2010), regardless of how important or trivial peoples' goals are, they tend to follow a goal ladder in which goals are prioritized in terms of levels of difficulty in attaining them. This explains Satsuki's preference for a series of short term goals as she ascended her goal ladder. The dilemma most people face is when they become uncertain whether to move up the ladder or to stay in the same position (Koo & Fishbash, 2010). This dilemma may have been faced by Satsuki, as after three decades of working as a tourist guide, she had wanted to migrate into the field of training as she felt that her years of guiding experience would have made her a good trainer for new aspiring guides. However, to be a trainer she needed to have the necessary educational qualifications. To move up the goal ladder (Koo & Fishbash, 2010), Satsuki knew that she had to "invest more effort" (p. 1), however, she also

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knew the benefits were enormous. Like Cynthia, this explains Satsuki's choice of pursuing a tertiary education instead of continuing her successful career pathway as both had believed that a tertiary education will help them achieve the career breakthrough that they were seeking.

Koo and Fishbash (2010) believed that the monitoring of a person's present goal, in terms of "remaining action or completed action" (p. 1) has an influence on the level of aspiration he or she has for the next goal level. Therefore a distinction between the two incentives in goal striving is that one comes from 'process derived motivation' and the other, from 'outcome derived motivation', in other words, one can perform a goal activity for its own sake or as a means to reach an outcome. Koo and Fishbash (2010, p. 2) further elaborated that:

> For many goals, both types of incentives are possible, such that whether a person values engagement of movement depends on how he or she perceives pursuing a goal. In particular, people can perceive pursuing a goal in terms of either expressing commitment to a desired state or making progress toward this state

The distinction between the two incentives in goal striving and the process in which they are executed has various implications on Satsuki's motivation to pursue her tertiary education. As she only resumed her pursuit of education after a long lapse of time suggested that there was no planning process involved based on a goal ladder framework during the time when she last attended school. In other words the outcome of her last academic pursuit did not incentivize her to progress to the next level in the goal ladder, the pursuit of a tertiary education. If there was the 'process derived motivation' she would have pursued her tertiary education not long after completing her post-secondary education. It was many years later that she became motivated to pursue her tertiary education in which case the 'outcome derive motivation' theory better explain her decision to strive for the goal. She wanted a degree and the 'outcome' to own one was important to her. Satsuki said:

…I have goals for my personal life and career, and I believe in striking a balance between them. Having developed such a balance, there will be synergy when pursuing the respective goals. Hence a good balance is essential. Where that balance point is, it varies at different stages of my life.

One of Satsuki's career goals is how she is being measured by the performance ratings she gets. These ratings come from foreign tourists whose feedback on her performance as a guide helps provide her with the necessary input to improve her skills and fulfil her goal of being a leading professional guide. She said:

The response from my participants is an indication of my performance, and it is instant, from their verbal or body language. I am glad that it has been mostly positive so far…When I take on an assignment, I try to understand what the objective is and what is to be accomplished. Then I will chart the path to accomplish that objective. I begin with the end in mind.

Like many mature Singaporeans, Satsuki had aspirations to be a 'somebody' when she started her career in post-colonial Singapore with the nation's independence just in its infancy stage. According to Barr and Trocki (2008, p. 6), that was a time when Singapore was "characterized by extraordinary cultural, intellectual and political dynamism". Barr and Trocki (2008, p. 6) further reiterated:

Students, labour unions, ambitious political contenders and representatives of the various ethnic communities all stepped forward to offer alternative visions of Singapore's future. They came from across the entire political spectrum, and between them generated a ferment of ideologies, priorities, perspectives and social visions such as mainstream 'official' Singapore politics had never known before, and has not seen since.

In the midst of chaotic nation building, Satsuki may have been fascinated at the possibility of becoming an extraordinary tourist guide, serving a glamorous tourism industry that was just emerging. She wanted to do something different, to chart her way and become a different 'self'. She was unimpressed with the humble aspirations of ordinary Singaporeans, and for the next three decades, Satsuki worked hard to fulfil her goals by creating an impression on others.

Another of Satsuki's professional goals is to be a well-respected guide with a reputation of being neutral and fair by always looking at the positive side of things.

> All of us have our own opinions. So, yes, sometimes, we differ. And opinions being opinions, there is no right or wrong to them. We discuss and I try to understand their point of view. We may still end up with our opinions unchanged but I have broadened my outlook by seeing things from their perspective.

Satsuki's ability to use her emotional intelligence to build relationships supports research findings by Fitzgerald and Schuttle (2010, p. 495) that "adaptive emotional functioning defined as emotional intelligence, may be the formation for the development of transformational leadership". The researchers further suggest that there is a close co-relationship between transformational leadership, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy which explains Satsuki's level of self-leadership in executing her work duties.

Artefacts from Satsuki. Satsuki had provided an assortment of artefacts mostly related to short courses she took between the year 2006 to 2010; certificates of recognition for her voluntarism work, and most importantly her main pride – a Bachelor's degree with honours from a University in the United Kingdom.

Satsuki was also very interested in doing volunteerism work and like Cynthia, they volunteered in the same organization. The two poster artefacts provided by Satsuki are the same as those provided by Cynthia, with all the volunteers featured in one poster.

In 2010, Satsuki had a triple celebration when she was firstly given a long service award by the organization in which she had volunteered her services. This is in recognition of her five years of dedicated support and contributions. Secondly she received an Outstanding Volunteer Award from another organization for the exemplary services rendered and lastly she graduated with honours in her Bachelor of Science degree majoring in International Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Samuel's Story – The Playful Teenager Who Found Success

The concept of goal-achievement as seen through the monitoring of self-performance (Tesser, 2005) is very evident in the case of Samuel. While he admitted that he was a playful teenager who did not take his educational journey seriously, Samuel has been very successful in his career. As a senior management staff of an educational institution, Samuel's main work responsibility is in the supervision and monitoring of work performances of his staff. This in fact sets a benchmark for his own self-performance, as how well his staff perform will reflect largely on his leadership and management skills. Samuel said:

As a senior management staff, my job is mainly supervising and monitoring the performance of others. I would judge my own performance by how well my staff performs in their jobs, and my achievements of the KPIs set.

According to Tesser (2005), this form of self-evaluation is often associated with "goal satisfaction or dissatisfaction and focus on some goals that have been identified as being

particularly self-relevant (p. 275). Tesser (2005, p. 275) further elaborated that, "one such goal, the goal of maintaining a positive evaluation of the self, turns out to be particularly robust". Samuel's ability to be very focused on goals that are self-relevant helps him in "maintaining a positive evaluation of the self" (Tesser, 2005, p. 275). Furthermore, Samuel's strength in examining the relationship between "affect and cognition" (p. 279), while evaluating his staff performances may have also helped him in establishing a qualitative difference between the evaluation of non-self objects and the evaluation of self. These abilities mean that Samuel was in a position to positively differentiate the areas of effective self-evaluation versus those that may present a conflict of self-interest.

Samuel's high level of self-awareness, (Georgianna, 2007) has also helped him maintain the confidence, interest and excitement in his work and as a result he had "performed better, perceive longer and demonstrated more creativity" (p. 570). This self-awareness, which suggests a unique capacity termed as "reflexivity" (Craver, 2005, p. 179) allows Samuel the ability "to somehow turn around and take itself as the object of its own view". His self-awareness either experienced externally or internally, can "gravitate to a wide range of possible stimuli" (Craver, 2005, p. 179) and motivation towards goal achievements. Samuel said:

> No, I don't often set myself career targets or achievements. I will just do my best in whatever I am involved in and be on the lookout for opportunities…by having a work plan and regular meetings with my staff I am able to monitor their performance closely.

One of the approaches towards the maintenance of self-evaluation is simply the expression of values that we hold within ourselves (Tesser, 2005). These were expressed through Samuel's apportion of the value he set for attaining a tertiary degree. His attitude suggests that different focuses on self-evaluation were made. One attitude was probably to help him

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understand the world, while others were meant to secure rewards and avoid punishments. Yet another might be to validate the self he was (Tesser, 2005). Along the same goal striving pathway, Samuel's self-leadership style also suggested a strong alignment with the Thought Self-Leadership concept as discussed by Manz and Neck (1991a) and Neck & Manz (1992). This concept requires self-leaders to establish or develop "constructive desirable thought patterns" (Neck, et al., 1999, p. 478) in order to enhance self-leadership. Reflecting on his own desirable thought pattern, which includes how he manages his time, his motivation and his cultivation of self-respect, Samuel said:

> …it is never easy to balance work, family and academic demands. Hence, it is important to have good time management. I also find it helpful to study consistently and not leave it to the last minute. Self-motivation and perseverance are also important attributes for academic success. And these come from having self-leadership…undertaking academic studies at an advanced age is an honourable thing that deserves our full respect. By making my academic journey public, it helps me to push on and not let myself down.

Samuel's words reminds me of the time when I first started conducting my interviews with the participants. I was then a little apprehensive about the way the participants might react to one of the interview questions, which I thought, was of a sensitive nature. My question was that coming from a risk averse culture such as Singapore's, what were their views about making their academic aspirations known. I was obviously referring to the notion of 'face' in the Chinese cultural context. After all, the participants were all career successful mature adults, and 'face' might be something of importance to them. To my surprise, all five participants appeared not to be affected by this stereotypical paradigm; instead they were all proudly announcing their ventures in the hope that making it public would mean intentionally putting pressure on

themselves to complete their degree. This manifestation ironically may also invite criticism that in itself is a 'face' saving strategy – the winning of sympathy from others in the event of failure.

As I analysed the thinking behind the participant's motive I began to realize the intricacies behind the concept of 'face'. Loewenberg (2012, p. 691) describes 'face' very appropriately:

> *Face* is an ancient Chinese concept of protocol and social behaviour that is relevant for the understanding of Chinese perceptions of each other, of interaction with foreigners, and of foreign policy and international behaviour. By *face* in Chinese culture I mean the self as presented to, or revealed to, others. Chinese culture has a highly developed sensibility to preserving, not humiliating the *face* of others. *Face*, may be conferred, saved, or lost. A person or group may "save" or "leave" *face* to another by not exposing a lapse, slip, or *faux pas. Face*, which is an external surface quality visible to others, implies reputation and good name.

The above definition of 'face' suggests an emphasis on the context of others and not so much on one's self. That in Chinese culture, it is of utmost importance not to cause others to lose 'face'. What one chooses about one's own 'face' is a matter of separate consideration. This perhaps explains why the participants were prepared to put their own "face" as a priceless stake to the educational pursuit challenge.

Samuel also realized that having a positive thought pattern requires self-regulation in goal striving (Roney and Lehman, 2008). A goal framed in a positive state by focusing on attaining the level targeted will result in a higher level of performance than that of a goal framed in a negative state. Goals framed in the negative state are the ones striving not to go below the level targeted. Roney and Lehman, (2008, p. 2692) explains the outcome:

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Specifically, striving to master the task at hand (i.e., mastery goal) enhances intrinsic motivation; striving to demonstrate better ability than others (i.e. performance –approach goal) enhances performances; and striving to avoid demonstrating low ability (performance-avoid goals) decreases performance.

These theoretical outcomes as suggested by Roney and Lehman (2008) were supported by Samuel's mastery goal striving which enhances his intrinsic motivation. His performance-approach goal philosophy has resulted in Samuel generating confidence in attaining his tertiary education. Samuel said:

> For me working in the education institution, it takes on a greater significance in terms of academic qualifications. You got to be the living example for your people that come to you and if you are not well qualified, in terms of academically, then you can be called to question…so you must basically do what you try to preach to others. So I think that to me was important and that is the reason why I wanted to pursue higher education.

Samuel's positive way of goal striving also supports his belief that a person requires both academic qualifications and the ability to perform. However he acknowledges that qualifications can only help a person make inroads into a quality career. Once past the entry point, the remaining journey rests upon the person's performance in order to sustain the career. He describes his workplace as being ideal in grooming people to strive for goals:

> In fact the greatest satisfaction working in an organization like ours here is to be able to provide the opportunity for people to upgrade themselves through a tertiary education, and then seeing them moving on in their career, be successful in what they want to do, that is to me the greatest satisfaction.

Such opportunities were not present during the time when he was pursuing his own tertiary education. He recalled:

In fact during my early days I didn't have that kind of opportunity. It was not so easily available, and I think you can see that has stifled a lot of people's career progression. So now with this opportunity we can provide them, we certainly think that we play a very useful role in helping people to develop to their full potential and allowing them to have a better career.

Samuel's ideal workplace, according to DiLiello and Houghton (2006) suggests the presence of good organizational skills and self-leadership on the part of the management. At the same time, DiLiello and Houghton (2006) concluded that those with innovation and creativity potential are likely to display them if they perceive their organization to be supportive than those who do not perceive their organization to be supportive. This scenario describes Samuel and his workplace very appropriately.

I am by nature a hands-on and detailed person. I like to get things done right the first time. I will not hesitate to 'roll up my sleeves' to get involved. Sometimes, people will see this as micro-managing.

Artefacts from Samuel. Samuel handed me an artefact that speaks volumes on his character, his abilities and the way he accepts challenges. The testimonial letter was written by one of his senior superiors and it says:

As I am retiring from the [real name of institution omitted], I am taking the opportunity to write testimonials for staff who have worked faithfully and loyally with me through part of the long stay I have at the Institute. One person for whom I have pleasure to write such a testimonial is Samuel [real name omitted].

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Samuel joined the Institute as an Assistant Executive in [date omitted]. He was
one of the very few persons that joined the Institute with only 'A' level
qualifications. He quickly enrolled for the Graduate Diploma in Marketing
Management programme at the Institute and followed this up with the Bachelor
in Business Administration (BBA) degree of the [name of University omitted]. In
[date omitted] he was promoted to Information and Service Executive; in [date
omitted] he was promoted to head the [name of department omitted].

When the Government offered the [name of degree programme omitted] to
[name of institution omitted] I identified Samuel to be the person to head up the
[name of division omitted] Division. He undertook the challenge and has not
disappointed me. He had a great team with him and together they put the [name
of division omitted] Division in place within the stipulated time. The efficiency
with which the Division has performed the task has been attested to by the
accolades that have been heaped on the [division name omitted] Division, even
by Government Ministers.

Samuel [real name omitted] is a dedicated and thoroughly service-oriented
person. He has a knack of getting people who work with him to put the best into
whatever they do. He is good person to have in any organization and he readily
accepts a challenge.

Samuel [real name omitted] has a great future in front of him.

His first artefact showed that he graduated with a Graduate Diploma in Marketing in

mid-1986. Four years later Samuel graduated with a degree in business administration from a

renowned Australian University through distance learning. At the turn of the millennium,

Samuel continued to upgrade his knowledge by enrolling in many short courses. One such

course was a specialist diploma in E-learning Instructional Design which he completed in late

2002. The attendance of this course has demonstrated Samuel's desire to be up to date with technology development and his anticipation of things to come.

One artefact revealed the Singapore government's recognition of Samuel as a prominent member of the education industry when he was appointed a member of the Schools Appeals Board in 2007. The following year, three other artefacts showed Samuel getting his promotion as a senior corporate member of the Institution, receiving his Master's degree in Educational Management and being conferred a gold medal for his excellent academic efforts.

Timothy's Story – The Born Entrepreneur

Georgianna (2007) believes that the motivational force behind people striving for their goals is their "expectation of success and the importance these individuals ascribe to achieving their goals" (p. 1). On the other spectrum of success, there has always been people's fear of failures. Singapore being a country that puts a strong emphasis on its meritocratic system has in many ways resulted in Singaporeans viewing failures as an unacceptable consequence of life (Stott & Low, 2000). I asked Timothy how he reminds himself of what is to be accomplished in terms of goals, he replied:

> ...You are asking questions about various stages of success and my question is, "What is success?"…What is to be accomplished? When you set a goal, you will have to make effort to reach that goal, however painful it is, so targeting it , working towards it, move towards it, and be single minded towards it, otherwise you can't achieve your goal. If you are strapped by something like climbing up a hill, you see a nice flower here and a nice flower there and you are there. Target your goal, pursue it.

Being an entrepreneur, Timothy does not seem to subscribe to the traditional goal-setting strategies. Always remembering the words of his father, that to be rich one needs to be in business, he continued to strive for goals in his life. However, he knew the importance of having a tertiary education in Singapore even though he did not pursue it during the time when he was at college going age. He said:

Well I feel satisfied, you know at least self-satisfied and then prove to yourself that you did it. So I did not get a degree just to show off or just to get more money…

Among the participants in this study no one displays empathy more than Timothy. As an early baby boomer born just after the Second World War, Timothy has seen most of the multi-faceted changes that has happened in Singapore within the last 60 years since the war ended. Although Timothy grew up in a traditional Chinese cultural background, he was soon able to absorb different cultures through his years of English education, working for a western multi-national company and eventually finding his own footings as an entrepreneur running his own business. Timothy recalled what his father had told him:

Yes I set goals. My goal is being in business at age 10. I already make up my mind to be in business at age 10. I ask my dad what I should be, he said, "look, Timothy [real name omitted] if you want to be rich, be in business. But if you want to live a peaceful life just be a school teacher or civil servant and so on". He said, [referring to his father], "The word 'kung' meaning work [in Chinese language] says that you do not have a chance to be successful, whereas the word 'Sheng' being the first character of the word 'business' is where you will find success. So if you don't stretch your head out like a tortoise and take risk you will never be advance. So I told dad I will be in business, so in that sense I have already plan, made my life just setting goals and wanting to be in business.

Characters from the Chinese language often carry the same pronunciation even though they are different words with different meanings altogether. In the case of Timothy he was referring to two words, 'kung' and 'sheng'. In fact what he meant was 'sheng kung' which means 'success' in Chinese. However, when the two words are split up, 'sheng' can also sound like 'sheng' with a higher pitch, which means 'to stretch out' - a scenario painted by Timothy about the tortoise stretching its head out which is symbolic of 'risk taking'. On the other hand, 'kung' by itself means 'work'. To Timothy if a person has only 'kung' and not 'sheng kung' than that person is destined to be only a worker and will not find success. That explains the reason why his father had wanted him to be in business. However, unlike many Chinese entrepreneurs, Timothy does not believe in luck. Instead he subscribes to hard work to ensure what he does is successful. He said:

> I used to tell people, do you believe in luck?...thought without deed, deed without thought both fall in bad luck…so in the absence of bad luck, you should have good luck and stick to it…

Timothy's endorsement of old Chinese traditional values has set him apart from the younger generation of Singaporeans today, although both the older and the younger generations of Singaporeans endorses modern values more than traditional ones (Chang, Wong & Koh, 2003). According to these researchers, people of Timothy's generation still prefer to adopt some of the traditional Chinese values, like "moderation, social power and face" (p. 24) amongst others. Although these values' position "in the value hierarchy are uniformly low" (p. 24), Timothy continues to believe in them. He said:

> Two schools of thoughts, and I think you will have to have a mix of both [referring to Eastern and Western values]. If the society wanted to know, are you taking education – yes that is why I have no time to see you. So don't be shy,

extremely shy and hide is not the point. As I said it is just like dressing, do I dress well. Yes dress well is not to show off but is the environment, the surrounding. Don't be a misfit, you know if you go fine dining don't wear tee shirt or singlet, you have a democratic right but when you exercise your rights at that time, you are wrong. Like using a big hammer to knock the eggs! Can tell people if need be but don't need to brag. And no need to hide yourself with false modesty it is not going to help. We are living in a small world so we have to communicate.

Timothy's reference to 'a small world' is a term frequently heard in Singapore. The term may carry different meanings to different people in the context of Singapore. Firstly, one may be referring to the tiny nation in terms of physical size. Some may be referring to Singapore as a microcosm of the world, a symbolic representation of everything that can be found on earth, can be found here in Singapore, and yet a third usage which may be the case of Timothy's reaction, that the world is too small to ignore people – therefore the need to initiate communication with one another.

For the average Chinese Singaporean, being "prudent, industrious, maintaining civic harmony while being mindful of self-cultivation" (Chang et al., p. 24/25) are important modern values to upkeep. These values can easily be detected in Timothy as I observed the way he conducts his business, the social work he does and the way he cultivates his self-worthiness through the pursuit of education. When I first visited Timothy in his office, I was totally surprised that it was situated in an old industrial building even though I could tell that his business was well-established and flourishing. His prudence, displayed through his thriftiness, his industrious and humble nature was clearly visible. Timothy also sat on various school boards and was chairman of one of the boards when I interviewed him.

Timothy's case study gives rise to the belief that culturally shared values can help determine the direction in which achievement goals could be constructed upon (Chang et al., 2003). This is particularly so for Asian cultures under a Singapore context where goal achievements and social harmony are just as important (Chang et al., 2003). This understanding of culture and goal achievements have broadened my own perspective and has certainly strengthened my own belief that mature Asian adults pursue tertiary education not just for education or status sake, but also for the purpose of improving social harmony perhaps just within the family, or within colleagues or maybe even within the community. In other words, the emphasis of social purpose in academic achievements is more pronounced in Asian students (Tao & Hong, 2000).

I tend to describe Timothy not only as a self-leader but a charismatic one as well. In his study on charismatic leadership, Choi (2006) describes the impact charismatic leaders bring upon their followers – envisioning, empathy and empowerment. A charismatic leader's envisioning behavior influences followers' need for achievement, and the leader's empathy behavior stimulates follower's need for affiliation. Followers' need for power is enhanced by a charismatic leader's empowerment practices (p. 24). Timothy remarked:

> …Your level of success depends on the co-operation of others. And if you run a small company, try not to think you are the majority of one. Don't command everything, these are your people, encourage them to be successful.

Understanding his own domineering nature is also another virtue of Timothy. He knows his strengths and his weaknesses and that helps him to navigate his way around people and building relationship at the same time. In many ways, Timothy resembles Lee.

Artefacts from Timothy. Timothy's artefacts were slightly different from those provided by the rest of the participants. Included in his items was firstly, a 'curriculum vitae' of him. This artefact dated 1990 helped me in establishing a brief history of Timothy's working life as well as his achievements. Timothy was a young achiever. In 1975 at the age of 29 he won the bronze award for a very prestigious national competition for youth. The award had nine finalists chosen amongst the thousands of hopefuls. The eventual winner of this award had gone to a person who is now a very prominent political figure in Singapore.

Timothy was also involved in various social activities including that of being the Vice President of a youth group in a local constituency and a member of the Citizens' Consultative Committee.

In 1990, Timothy received his professional qualification from the Chartered Institute of Marketing. With this and his years of management experience Timothy decided to enrol himself in a Master in Business Administration (MBA) degree program. Two interesting artefacts provided by Timothy were in relation to his application. The first was his letter to the director of MBA programs in the university. Timothy had cited the following reasons for his wanting to be enrolled. Timothy wrote:

1. *To acquire greater analytical skills and techniques to enable me to effectively diagnose our organisation and better formulate or develop strategy.*
2. *To acquire more management know-how and be a better executive.*
3. *Undoubtedly, the MBA Programme will enable me to give greater contribution to our organisation.*
4. *To make continual education part of enrichment in my business career.*

5. *Lastly, I believe the MBA Programme from University of* [real name omitted] *not only will help me immensely as Chief Executive but also the untold benefits derived from the Programme will worth more than the time effort and money invested.*

Timothy's letter also provided information about his company and gave a general update of its operations and names of business partners.

The second artefact on this same subject was the university's reply to Timothy accepting him as a student. The reply disappointingly focused on his ability to pay the fees as a "privately financed" candidate rather than appreciating his suitability.

Timothy's final artefact was a certificate confirming his admission as a member to The Chartered Institute of Marketing. This certificate was dated March 1993, probably a short while after he had completed his MBA program.

Whitney's Story – Pursing Education, Better Late Than Never

A cultural shock from going to a school not of her choice had left Whitney with a lasting impression that she has to work hard and strive for goals in her life. Whitney recalled:

…Then when I went on to secondary school, I went to a very bad school. I really got a cultural shock there, but I got very good results in secondary one and two, because I tell myself I don't have to be stuck to this junk forever.

Many years later in her working life, Whitney's quest for excellence remains the driving force behind her achievements. One complimentary letter she received from a training instructor describes her journey in a very concise way.

Remember, if you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. You do know where you are going, so let us help you get there…

Whitney is a systematic goal-setter. Always setting mini goals and achieving them before reaching out for the ultimate one. She remembers her strategies:

…I am a goal setter to begin with and I guess from young age I was brought up to set goals, whether personal goads or eventually when I work, it is corporate goals. I believe if I don't set any goals I don't know where I am driving; it is like there is no roadmap, so I want to reach that goal. But of course I don't want to set unrealistic goals…I think I have to set goals for my life first, because that is the overall. And once I have set the right goals and I have attained it then it is easier for me to set my goals for my job or even for my career. And that has been the direction I always take.

I asked Whitney if she often imagined herself to be at various stages of success, be it in her career or other achievements and how these had prompted her to work harder. She said:

Yes, of course I like to imagine myself at various stages of success so that it will actually motivate me to even work harder. For example let us say right now I am not heading the department yet but if I imagine myself heading the department, so that will actually provide the goal for me. I will work towards that goal and if the opportune time comes along and if the management thinks that I am good enough, well they might just promote me. So in that light I do have something to look forward to you see down the road 3 years, 5 years, you know.

Whitney's journey to pursue her tertiary education was very much inspired by one of her colleagues. For a period of time, she had noticed a colleague of hers working very diligently during lunch breaks and after work hours. She was curious about what he was focusing on. To

her surprise, she discovered that her colleague was actually pursuing his tertiary education. She recalled the incident:

I respected him for it, so I went home and thought about it – hey, I could do it you know, my son is in NS [national service] he don't need me to fund him, so I have like 2 years, 3 years maybe and of course I have put aside a sum for my son's education, and now I am still earning money, so I don't really have to like worry because financially I am okay. So if [referring to her male colleague] can do it so can I, I am already married, I am one step ahead of him, and then hey I still haven't finish study yah? It was like 20 year wait because you know I did half way up to the dip [diploma] and then I stopped because my son came along. Hey if [male colleague] can do it, I can do it, because I am older, so that was actually one particular incident that really motivated me lah! [a Singaporean exclamation]

Whitney was not at all worried about letting friends and colleagues know about her late-life ambition in pursuing a tertiary education. She said:

Okay this is actually tied to goal setting you know for me, because when I set a goal I want people to know, especially this type of important goals about taking a tertiary degree or taking a degree at this age. I believe that if I do tell people around me, whether my personal friends, my church friends or my colleagues, that I am taking a degree, it would spur me on to want to succeed because I have actually told 10 people already, or told the whole office you know. It is a good pressure.

Although Whitney highly aspires to be a university graduate, deep in her she still believes that experience is more important in the workplace than academic qualifications. However, she recognizes that trends are changing and the basic education level of an average Singaporean has also been raised over the years. Her fear of a mismatch between her job

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position and educational qualification drove her to take the necessary steps in acquiring the necessary qualifications for herself.

I believe that the word experience, even a young person will eventually chucked up enough experience for him to stay on the job or even get promoted. So if I keep on saying that I am an experience person, with no degree, how long can I last in the job? So as an 'experience' person, let us say almost 30 years of working experience and if I am armed with a degree, it will really allow the potential employer to think it may be a better deal if he takes me because I come in only, I am instantly value added resource for him compared to a fresh grad, of course a fresh grad will eventually chalked up experience you know but it take time and how long time it take him we don't know. Fresh grad can have honours you know, can be the best student but whether he can catch up with experience is another question.

Goal setting and striving, and the motivation to achieve them, differs from one person to another (Job et al., 2009). Those with high "explicit achievement motive" (p. 983) are the ones with a strong need for achievements. According to Schmuck and Sheldon (2001), having goals and successfully striving for them helps in the development of well-being. The reason is that "goals serve as an important reference standard for the affective system" (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999, p. 284). Amongst the many theoretical approaches between goal striving and well-being, goal difficulty (Wiese & Freund, 2005) stands out as a strong motive or need for goal striving. According to Job et al., (2009, p. 984):

Several studies have demonstrated that incongruence of personal goals with implicit motives has a negative impact on well-being, whereas congruence of personal goals with implicit motives bolsters emotional and physical well-being.

Job et al. (2009) indicated that there has been no research so far addressing the potential effect of congruence between goals and explicit motives on well-being. However, they argued that this does not mean that goal striving on well-being is "restricted to implicit motives but extends to explicit motives as well" (p. 984). According to McClelland, Koestner and Weinberger (1989), explicit motives respond to social extrinsic incentives because they are strongly anchored within the social context. Job et al., (2009) concluded that implicit motives, explicit motives and personal goals represent a "triad of distinct self-regulatory instances" (p. 995), if working in synchrony is an important source for goal striving and overall well-being.

This gives rise to my argument that Whitney, having demonstrated the congruence between her personal goals with that of implicit motives, and this having positive impact on her well-being (Baumann et al., 2005) has also found her well-being being further reinforced by the congruence of her goals with explicit motives as well. The mention of well-being in this particular case refers to as the increase in confidence and comfort level in dealing with the challenges of pursuing a tertiary education in the Singapore context.

While implicit motives are generated from a more primitive motivational system derived from affective experience, explicit motives are self-attributed based on more cognitively elaborate constructs (McClelland et al., 1989). As such, individuals who are "explicitly achievement motivated think of themselves as being somebody who strives to do their best" (Job et al., 2009, p. 984). Being strongly connected to the social context of extrinsic incentives, explicit motives responds well to these incentives (Job et al., 2009) which in turn generates influence over attitudes, judgments, choices, and other decisions associated with structured situations. These attitudes are clearly demonstrated in Whitney's case and are presented above through her narratives.

Whitney's interest to pursue her tertiary education is also in line with Singapore's aspiration to be the regional hub whereby education and training are considered "core elements" (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011, p. 289) and "key drivers" (p. 289) towards improving the "educational qualifications and skills levels of the workforce" (p. 289).

Artefacts from Whitney. Whitney was the only participant who did not provide any proof of attending her degree. The reason was because at the time when I was interviewing her, she had not completed her tertiary education. She was on the final stages of her Bachelor degree program.

Whitney however, provided a few interesting artefacts about her earlier career interest and eventually her devotion to the events industry, the recognition she received from the organizations she worked for and the short courses she attended to equip herself with skills for this industry.

After her secondary school education, Whitney wanted to work for the hospitality industry and thus two of her artefacts were from this field. One of the artefacts certified her excellent results with distinction for one of the modules taken and the other a personal letter from the director himself encouraging her to excel. Both documents were date 1980.

Whitney however had other career interest in mind, the events industry. She must have liked the events industry so much that she decided to quit her hospitality studies to concentrate on her new love. There was also a photocopied picture of a plaque which she received from her employer for setting up a family leisure centre in 1984.

One artefact showed her attending a short course which was presumably job related – the handling of difficult people in 1989; and another thanking her for her involvement in Crime

Prevention by the Singapore Police and the National Crime Prevention Council from 1991 to 1993. During the interview, Whitney spoke about her experience in dealing with difficult people and her use of discretion in handling them.

> Well my beliefs are my beliefs you know, so if it is not a corporate culture within the company then I cannot insist on my own ways, that I am very accommodative. But I will not compromise on certain grounds, for example, like many years ago in my previous company, there was this time when some of the retail tenants wanted to burn those joss sticks during the "chit guay" [7th month of the Chinese calendar, known as the 'hungry ghost month'] and I didn't allow it not because I was selfish or whatever but I had this belief we are actually operating in a retail world so it has to be for the general public, whether it is the Muslims, the Christians, the Buddhists who came, so I told the Buddhists retail tenants no you cannot burn because we are not a temple here. So because personally I believe it is a retail place for everybody and not just for Buddhists, so you just have to put your foot down when you are faced with this type of situation. Looking at the parameters my company has given me and of course as a manager you just have to make a stand during this kind of situation.

This episode in Whitney's career has provided evidence of Whitney's determination qualities that even in the face of religious sensitivity in multi-religious Singapore, she was able to stand firm on what she believes is the right thing to do. This belief is synonymous to the stand Singaporean pioneer leaders adopted while building the nation.

Summary

I started this chapter by discussing about how a small Asian country like Singapore, with its unique background of having gone through various stages of colonial rule and now as an sovereign country would have made a difference in characterizing its people in terms of goal

striving and achievements. In other words, I was interested to find out if there were any significant differences between a mature Singaporean versus a young Singaporean in terms of motivation to achieve goals, in relation to the older person's influence through colonialism which the younger set of Singaporeans had no experience of. The answer to this question has since been provided by Chang, et al.'s (2003) research on older and younger generation of Singaporean cultural differences. Chang et al.'s (2003, p. 26) research concluded that:

> Singapore has been found to contain both traditional and modern elements, with the modern elements enjoying higher importance ratings across the generation gap and the language divide. The traditional and the modern values converged with markers of tradition and markers of modernity – individual modernity, respectively, suggesting that these two clusters do meaningfully represent traditional and modernity in Singapore. The most intriguing finding was that the older-generation Singaporean was found to be equally as modern as the younger generation. Additionally, among the educated young Singaporeans, the more Chinese sectors of the society were equally as modern as the more Western sectors; however, they were more knowledgeable in the traditional beliefs and values…

However, according to Chen (2010) who believed that the de-colonization and de-imperialization process in Asian countries has not even started even though many of the Asian countries, including Singapore has been de-colonized for decades now.

> The ubiquity of the postcolonial trajectory, in which decolonization is followed by recolonisation or neocolonisation, shows that the ideological condition that permits the subimperial desire to take place exists precisely because there has been no critical reflection on decolonisation. This is what makes it possible for the imperialist cultural imaginary to be so effortlessly inherited by the colonized (p. 63).

The emphasis and importance in which the five participants placed on their own goal-setting and striving clearly reflects the significant positioning this concept has in their lives as mature students and in their aspiration to be a tertiary-level graduate. Neck, Nouri and Godwin (2003) describes goal-setting as one of the most important aspects of human resource development and this is clearly evident in the cases regardless of whether the case participant is an employee or an employer.

Taking a careful and systematic approach to problem solving was clearly evident in the case of Cynthia. She can also be described as a conformist who does not challenge the establishment. She is a quiet achiever and has been successful in attaining her goals. She believes in harmony and having a good relationship with people around her. Her strongest virtue is her perseverance in guiding herself to a successful academic pathway.

Satsuki prefers others to judge her performance and her goals are set according to external standards. Satsuki is a proud mature student who managed to attain her academic goals at a late age. The nature of her work might have also helped her develop multi-styled leadership traits – that of a self-leader as well as a transformational leader who is capable of influencing other people's lives.

Samuel prefers to be judged not by his own performance but that of the people he is in charge of. According to him, this kind of judgment summons more credibility than the traditional form. Samuel's style and philosophy of management supports the thought self-leadership concept and that has been well translated into positive actions in the way he manages people. Samuel is proud of mature students in their quest for education and has set the example by being one himself.

Timothy believes that people should be persistent in their goal-setting as that is the only way to achieve them. Having gone though many stages of life Timothy is an old hand at running businesses. He shows great empathy with the people he comes across with and is by all measures an outstanding employer. Timothy enjoys the multi-cultural background that he is familiar with and with his charismatic nature has become an influencing self-leader and communicator.

Whitney's style of self-leadership is very similar to that of Cynthia's and Satsuki's. All of them prefer to set small goals which eventually led to the big goal they were aiming for. While not totally confident of her late academic journey, Whitney was however willing to subject herself to pressure by announcing to all her friends and colleagues about it. Whitney believes that goal-setting will guide her in her achievements. She excels in relationship building and has achieved much success though her innovations at work.

My analysis also suggest similarities in terms of gender approach towards goal striving. The three female participants, Cynthia, Satsuki and Whitney prefer to strive for smaller goals before attempting on the main goal, However, the two male participants, Samuel and Timothy do not seem to indulge in such practices. This difference in approach is surprising considering that Singapore ranks very high in terms of Gender Egalitarianism (Li et al., 2008). In addition, Singapore's advanced economic development should also be associated with less traditional and gender-role ideologies (Williams & Best, 1991), however the data collected seem to suggest that Singaporean women still prefer to take a cautious approach towards their goal attainment whereas the men, prefers a direct approach to attain their goals.

From the participants' narrative I have also noticed that each of them was focused in a different aspect of their lives while on their educational journey to attain their tertiary education.

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This observation comes from the frequency the participants touched on these generated categories which eventually formed the four main themes of this research. Furthermore these differences seem to be related to the fact of whether the participant is an employee or an employer. The only two employers in the group were Timothy and Samuel, whom throughout the interview session had focused their attention on the building of relationships, be it with friends, colleagues or subordinates. For Cynthia, she was very focused in goal setting and striving, Satsuki on building skills and knowledge and Whitney's focus was in the encountering of challenges.

My research has indeed given me the opportunity to look beyond my own perception of goal-setting and goal striving. Although similar in many ways, each of the case participants had his or hers own interpretation of what is important and one that holds priority in their lives. Some of the participants were able to see far beyond the horizon in their journey as an adult student while some could only manage the challenges of daily routine that has to be handled well.

In my next chapter, 'In search of the self', I shall discuss about the educational journeys taken by the participants in search of their future selves.

Chapter 7: In Search of the Self

For these adults, ones who delayed the pursuit or completion of college when
they were adolescents, returning to college at a non-traditional age is no easy task.
The decision requires a great deal of motivation and guidance,
and most likely, a transformation of or at least a reflection on identity.
(Babineau & Packard, 2006, p. 109)

Introduction

In the last chapter, Goal Striving, I focused on each participants' application of goal strategies and how these strategies have influenced and assisted them not only in their pursuit of a tertiary education but also as a mature adult living a fulfilling life and with the capacity to bring new strengths to the role of a leader in different contexts in modern Singapore.

The prosperous Singapore of today is one that is often taken for granted by the younger generation. Lee (2013) cited a letter he received in 2012 from a mature Singaporean who was expressing gratitude for his leadership in bringing the country to where it is today. Lee wrote (Lee, 2013, p. 206):

On 22 August 2012, I received a thank-you card from a Singaporean by the name of James Ow-Yeong Kean Hoy. From his elegant, cursive handwriting, I guess he must be in his 50s. Young people these days prefer to type, and when they do write, they simply do not write as beautifully. He wrote:

My family is deeply grateful and has benefitted from your magnificent leadership and solid contributions that have enabled our nation to achieve peace, happiness, progress, prosperity, solidarity and security all these good years. A big thank you! May we have the honour to sincerely wish you, Sir, peace and joy, wisdom

and longevity and all the very best in the coming good years. And may our beloved country be blissfully and richly blessed and be mercifully safeguarded now and always. God bless.

Lee had noticed "the enormity of the mindset shift" (Lee, 2013, p. 206) between the generations of Singaporeans. Disheartened, Lee wrote (p. 206/207):

…People like Mr. Ow-Yeong have seen Singapore develop from the unsettling 1960s, when hardship and poverty were still the rule rather than the exception, to today's vibrant and cosmopolitan Singapore, providing well-paying jobs to a highly educated population. Many older Singaporeans also progressed from living in shanty huts to high-rise apartments with present-day conveniences and surrounded by safe neighbourhoods. They have a good understanding of the nation's imperatives – what it took for us to get here and what it would take to keep our success – as well as its vulnerabilities. The younger generation voters do not share these views. Having been born into a Singapore that had in many ways already arrived, they see all is around them – a working system generating stability and wealth – and they ask: "Where is the miracle?"

The above short narrative describes the mentality of Singaporeans, young and old. Future leaders must note that it is their task to bridge the generation gap, a prospect that is by no means easy. I am pleased that through the examination of data, many related categories emerged in support of the theme for this chapter - In search of the self. This theme denotes a person's ambition to be a better person than what he or she is now and the route taken to achieve this new self.

'In search for the self' is likely to induce different meanings to individual Singaporeans, depending amongst other factors, their age, focus in life, ambition or outlook. This theme implies dealing with the transformation of social identity (Hogg, 2005) with social comparison (Wood & Wilson, 2005) probably being the key motivating factor. Social comparison of one's

status has been described as "a core aspect of human experience" (Suls & Wheeler, 2000, p.15). Comparing one's status to others may be a key factor in creating a social identity (Hogg, 2005), and this is a factor that may be of importance in benchmarking the lives of Singaporeans. According to Wood and Wilson (2005, p. 344) social comparison is about peoples' comparison with one another:

> People may compare themselves with others on all kinds of dimensions, such as physical appearance, abilities, and personal wealth. They do so to serve a number of motives: They may wish to evaluate themselves, to improve themselves, to feel better about themselves, or to feel more connected with others.

Similarly, Hogg (2005, p. 462) define social identity as:

> Human groups lie at the heart of social life. We are brought up in families, we are educated in classes, we affiliate with peer groups, we play team games, we work in organisations, and we make decisions in committees. We also belong to professional groups, and we identify with gender, ethnic, political, and national groups.

Such social comparison seems to be of "paramount importance to self-appraisal and social life" (Wood & Wilson, 2005, p. 344). Similarly, the group or groups that each of us belongs to can profoundly influence the lens through which others view us (Hogg, 2005). It is therefore only instinctive for us to seek the ideal 'self' that we want, so that others can view us the way we wish to be viewed (Hogg, 2005).

'In search of the self' as a constructive thought pattern is closely linked to self-leadership, as constructive thought pattern in itself is one of self-leadership's strategies (Manz,1991; Neck & Manz, 1996; Houghton & Neck, 2002). Supporting this strategy are three thrusts, namely, "evaluation and challenging of irrational beliefs and assumptions, mental

imagery of successful future performance, and positive self-talk" (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 674). These thrusts encourage self-leaders not to be misguided by irrational beliefs or assumptions that affect judgment and sound decision making; it also encourages self-leaders to practise the art of visualising success as this kind of thought patterns can enhance their success rate. Lastly, it encourages self-leaders to practise self-talk, a skill which influences oneself to think on the positive side.

This chapter will discuss various aspects that culminate into the theme of 'in search of the self' and they are:

1. In search of the self, through the solving of challenges
2. In search of the self, through the practise of self-efficacy
3. In search of the self, through educational pursuits
4. In search of the self, through cultural influences

In Search of the Self Through the Solving of Challenges

As mature adults, the participants were born in a Singapore that was quite different from what it is today. Ngiam, (2011, p. 10) a retired head of civil service described Singapore in the following manner:

> In the 1950s, Singapore was the archetypal Third World city. One in every ten citizens was unemployed. Thousands of hawkers eked out a living on the streets. Hygienic conditions were appalling. Some of you in this audience may remember tucking into the famous prawn mee [noodle] on Hokkien Street, oblivious to the rats scurrying around in the open drains. Or enjoying the best satay [barbequed skewed meat serve on a stick] in the world amidst the fumes of

the Tay Koh Yat buses at their Beach Road terminus, Indian rojak [a Indian dish] tasted divine in the back lanes of the Rex Theatre...

Since independence in 1965, Singapore has been in a constant state of development (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011). In order to convert the population into a highly qualified workforce, people's acquisition of knowledge has been regarded as the most important factor contributing and keeping up with the pace of economic growth and competition (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011). This has given rise to opportunities for Singaporeans, both young and old, to pursue their education so as to upgrade their skills and knowledge. This creation of the future 'self', whether in the form of self-attainment of knowledge or self-fulfilment in working in a better job has been Singaporeans' dreams since the country has been transformed from third to first world status (Lee, 2000).

In her teens, Cynthia was already looking after her family and had to cope with work and school at the same time. However, her perseverance saw her through the most difficult periods of her life. She said:

> …I face obstacles and tireless commitment to finish…the journey was not smooth as I encountered new transition in my life and it influences my daily life…when I [am] faced with difficult problems I usually go to a quiet place or corner, sometimes just to stay at home to think carefully… I will ask myself questions like, have I identify the problems, define the problem, redefine the problem, think again and again, and answer the questions in my mind. I will reflect the answer doing self-talk. I will wait awhile if things improve or talk to people who can help me. I feel in this way, I am able to relate my issues clearly.

Solving problems with positive self-talk is one of self-leadership's strategies (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Combining this with careful evaluation of irrational beliefs and assumptions (Houghton & Neck, 2002) have played an important role in the way Cynthia handles her

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challenges. Her optimism is exemplary to Singaporeans, who are known for their blame and 'kiasu' (see Chapter 2) mentality (Chan, 2012). Cynthia said:

> I feel beliefs are the assumptions we make about ourselves, about others in the world and about how we expect things to be. It is also about how we think things really are, what we think is really true and what is expected is likely consequences that will follow from our behaviour. Whereas I feel assumptions is something we have taken for granted? We tend to assume our beliefs to be true and make assumptions about ourselves, our jobs and friends. When I am encountered with difficult situations, I accept and face it with courage. Importantly, I take care of myself and sometimes struggle to cope with such situation. I always tell myself it is a learning curve for me to develop so that I will be able to cope in next difficult situation.

It became clear to me that Cynthia was indeed a self-leader who sought fulfilment in everything she did, regardless of the challenges encountered. She clearly belongs to the generation of Singaporeans described by Lee (2013) as those having a "good understanding of the nation's imperatives" (p. 207). A generation who do not take what they experienced today in modern Singapore for granted. Unlike the younger generation, Cynthia knew that the success of Singapore has been nothing short of a miracle. Cynthia, like Lee, had come from a generation of self-leaders who took pride in helping others as well as themselves to a better life. Cynthia defines self-leaders as those with a vision, who are capable of providing direction and encouragement to others and helping them find their own identities. She elaborated further:

> To me, self-leadership is also self-disciplined therefore in order to pursue my studies, I put in lots of effort in order to recognise my skills and realise my potentials. I feel it is also showing commitment and responsibility for self-development. I have the interest to continue lifelong learning and I feel it is my responsibility to take ownership of my personal growth and development.

The self-leadership strategies practised by Cynthia have also helped her in enhancing her self-regulatory effectiveness (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Through her strong sense of self-observation, self-awareness and self-focus (Neck & Houghton, 2006), Cynthia managed to increase her "task focus and ultimately in task performance" (p. 277).

Like Cynthia, Satsuki also has many challenges. To be promoted from a tourist guide to a tourism industry trainer, she has to be academically qualified. However, before she can embark on a degree course, she has to first obtain a diploma. Describing her incredible educational journey, Satsuki said:

> I did not have the opportunity to pursue studies at the university when I left school. Missing that opportunity, I would encourage my children to pursue it. And while the 2 of them were studying at the university, they, in turn, encouraged me to pursue a degree course too. Doing a quick calculation of the time involved, we could graduate at about the same time! So, why not, I took that as another challenge. The rest, like they say, is history.

Like many mature Singaporean adults, Satsuki's educational journey was one in which social circumstances played an important role. Satsuki's self-leadership combined with her strong emotional regulation (Boss & Sims, 2008) had witnessed how she could convert setbacks into success. Satsuki had not allowed setbacks to affect her "self-esteem and confidence" (Boss & Sims, 2008, p. 136).

Samuel's challenge or perhaps blessing was that he was working in an educational institution and employees' educational qualifications matters. That had probably put some pressure on him, and provided the impetus to upgrade his educational qualifications. Samuel said:

…In a meritocratic society like Singapore, advancing one's life through education is an obvious route to take…I suppose in the context of the Singapore environment, I think there is greater emphasis on paper qualifications.

Samuel also realised how the Singapore educational landscape has changed over time. Having a degree today is no longer an advantage, in fact, for certain industries it has become a requirement. In many ways, this norm of having a degree has become a challenge to many mature adults. Samuel said:

…So given that that is the expectation, then I think the other elements become more important, because if everybody has that qualification then employers will be looking at other factors like your ability to communicate, ability to relate to others, what kind of a social responsibility are you engaged in…So we go beyond the academic qualification…

As a successful entrepreneur, Timothy faces a different set of challenges – Singapore society's stereotyping of entrepreneurs as those less educated. Timothy had wanted to impress his business associates and thus began his pursuit of education. He is also a keen supporter of the meritocratic system practised in Singapore. He said:

But knowledge is necessary if you are interested in a subject – pursue it. But Singapore is different. In Singapore you are the loser if you are out in academic. You have to study to merit, and to merit something you have to study. So there is competition in the intellectual level. And you are living in this society where the system is geared to meritocracy.

However, in his elements, Timothy is in fact a staunch believer of work experience and informal education:

Both are important, when you learn the theory, you must practice. The practice comes from theory and the theory comes from practice…but again success is depending on yourself, how you apply your knowledge, under what circumstance you apply, the application of it causes the success not the knowledge of it.

Whitney faces challenges that are self-generated. Despite having years of work experience and the capability to manage a team of subordinates who largely have tertiary education but little work experience, she felt her job position was threatened. Whitney confessed:

Yes, generally it is true that over here in Singapore, government stressed a lot on degree holders… when I started working in the early 80s, the stress was not so much on qualifications…it was more on experience. Somewhere in the mid-90s, I began to notice that even a diploma holder is quite a common sight. So that is when people start to go overseas if you can't make it in local university. Then in about the year 2000 a diploma is really nothing. Everybody else in the street has one… and of course many people jumped on the band wagon, because it is like going by the back door, because they can't go into the mainstream [university].

So at the age of 49, Whitney decided that she had to pursue her degree. She described her journey as challenging. She said:

…I felt that it was a good time to complete my education to close the loop and I also found that I need to keep up with so call the education times because sometimes when people say certain things and you don't know, I just don't understand what is it they are trying to say…also partly, this company I am working for, everybody is a grad, whether you are a overseas grad, or a Singapore grad, even when we hire foreigners from Philippines they have to be grads, Chinese have to be grads.

Whitney's case is a good example of how social comparison (Wood & Wilson, 2005) takes place in the everyday lives of Singaporeans. The possible common conviction in the case of Whitney is that social comparison "is of paramount significance to self-appraisal and to social life" (p. 344). She initially viewed this as a big threat to her job position and it hurt her self-esteem. However, over time and through the pursuit of her tertiary education, Whitney has learned to overcome these setbacks by not allowing herself to fall into the ills of social comparison. She achieved this by having an "objective, non-social basis for the evaluation of one's abilities" (Wood & Wilson, 2005, p. 345).

In Search of the Self, Through the Practise of Self-efficacy

According to Maddux and Gosselin (2005), the self-efficacy theory provides an understanding that "people actively shape their environments, rather than simply react to them" (p. 218). Self-efficacy is therefore about the belief in one's ability to "organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Such attainment may include the enhancement of the self in order to fulfil one's aspirations.

Cynthia was conscious of her own capabilities. She describes herself as a person having the 'will', the 'integrity' and the 'awareness'. Her self-efficacy beliefs have helped in her search for the self she has always aspired to be:

> Initially, I feel I am taking risks to pursue study at my age. But I took the initiative to begin my self-development despite starting at late thirties. It's better to be late than never… I feel my persistency came from both self-leadership and self-efficacy as they played important roles in my academic journey.

Maddux and Gosselin's (2005) research describe two types of self-efficacy beliefs - that of "task self-efficacy" and "cope self-efficacy" (p.221). I have noticed that Satsuki was more

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inclined towards 'cope self-efficacy' as she sees her pursuit of tertiary education not as a task but as something she had to cope with in order to achieve her goals. The result of achieving 'cope self-efficacy' is likely the realization of wanting to be a better self or overcoming obstacles and challenges. Satsuki said:

> …At this stage of my career, my experience would be more relevant to train the next generation of students. However, without a degree, I would be disadvantaged because of the proverbial glass ceiling which would limit my access…

The 'task self-efficacy', on the other hand, is perceived as the "ability to perform a particular behaviour" (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005, p. 221). This form of self-efficacy was adopted by Whitney:

> …I don't want to take on a task which I know is beyond me…I could check and then I could do some research ahead if I have time, especially for a topic or task I am not familiar with…

Maddux and Gosselin (2005) suggested that self-efficacy should not be viewed as a construct with different types, rather, measures of self-efficacy are tailored for different types of behaviours and performances in different domains and situations. This can be seen from the different displays of self-efficacy beliefs between Cynthia and Satsuki. The source in which self-efficacy beliefs were generated had come from different experiences between the two participants. Cynthia's self-efficacy beliefs seems to have come from her own performance experience (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005) whereas Satsuki's had probably used her imagination in establishing herself behaving effectively or ineffectively in a hypothetical situation.(2005).

In establishing the close relationship between self-efficacy and learning, I have also noted the close link between self-confidence and leadership (McCommick, 2001). This applies very much to the case of Samuel.

Whatever you do, whether you are an entrepreneur or whether you are a professional or whether you want to be a corporate person, I think education is always useful to have. Education is not just about career success I think. It also develops a person you know in the way the person think, how the person live, so I believe education is important not just for career success. So to me I will advocate very strongly that everyone should try to pursue academic qualification to the best of their abilities.

In the Singapore context, the academic route seems to be a more preferred route due to the recognition given to degree qualifications. This is against professional training within the job scope. The participants had wanted education to change their future and to set them on a course towards a better self by increasing their social mobility. However, the journey to pursue a tertiary education after a long lapse of time is a challenge that requires a high degree of self-efficacy (Young & Ley, 2002; Barkley, 2006). While studies have shown that mature students have the benefit of life's experiences, they are still less prepared for college education as compared to traditional age students (Golden, 2003). As such, having "self-efficacy, high self-esteem and high self-confidence" (p. 15) are key ingredients to the academic success of mature students. One of the participants, Whitney found her work experience a much added advantage over younger students. She said:

I found that as an operations manager [and a] marketing and promotion manager in the past, really gave me the edge to understand what the lecturer was saying in class…those were the things I have done so easy to relate, I guess the experience I had prior to attending class really help me.

Whitney's experience as a mature student emphasises the difference between general self-efficacy and occupational self-efficacy (Schyns & Sczesny (2009). Occupational self-efficacy is very much related to Whitney's "personality characteristics" (p. 79) and reflects on her conviction to her work. This form of self-efficacy although relatively stable is still less stable when compared to general self-efficacy as it is very dependent on Whitney's "corresponding experience" (p. 79) such as the different types of jobs or professions and the person's job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

In many ways, the narratives from the participants have provided me with answers to two of my research questions. The question about pursuing a tertiary education as against staying on a successful career pathway with professional development as well as the question about tertiary education influencing the future self and why do career successful adults choose tertiary education to change their future.

In Search of the Self, Through the Pursuit of Education

Mature adult's ability to learn. The participants in this study did not commence their tertiary education until many years after leaving school. Their period of absence ranged between 10 to 30 years. While adjustments were needed in the beginning, the participants in general realised that the experience was not as bad as some had anticipated. According to Macneil (1998, p. 26), the whole myth about the older generation's inability to learn started when the younger generation assumed this to be true. This has resulted in the older generation believing that:

> …the loss of the ability to learn is inevitable, so they interpret the physical signs of ageing, such as fatigue or failing vision, as indications that their intelligence is deteriorating as well.

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Like Macneil (1998), Samuel believes that apart from memory, mature adults can apply strategies to overcome their shortcomings:

I believe it is never too old or late to learn although when you get older perhaps your memory may not be so good. While there are many strategies to overcome that, your other faculties may still be very good – the ability to reason, the ability to relate, ability to apply, I think these are all perhaps equally more important than being able to remember what you learn…and I think with experience, with age, you could have advantage over maybe a younger student.

This belief that mature adults make better students (Manheimer et al., 1995) is shared by all the participants. Their point of argument is that they are studying voluntarily (Boeren et al., 2012) and for the quest of new knowledge (Banes, 2011). Banes (2011) further emphasised that mature students having the relevant life experiences are able to lend complexity and examples to the theory they are learning. Mature adults' ability to juggle work and family life, has made them develop good organizational and time management skills.

According to Brown and Posner (2001), self-directed learning for mature adults has been on the rise across societies around the world. Two outcomes can emerged from mature adults' pursuit of education - one is that their extensive work experience is likely to enhance their critical thinking process and thus adding value to their educational pursuit; and the other, the intake of new knowledge due to their educational pursuits is likely to add a new perspective to their vast experiences (Brown & Posner, 2001).

It is interesting to note that each participant had a different perspective when it came to the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Timothy believes that skills and knowledge need not always have to be acquired through a formal setting such as schools or training institutions (Stahl and Hayes, 1997). Most mature adults acquire skills and knowledge through self-directed

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learning (Roberson & Merriam, 2005) where there are "incentives to learn" (p. 269). Jarvis (2001) pointed out that there is a huge accumulation of one's wealth of knowledge in terms of intellectual, emotional, physical and social context when a mature adult reaches a certain age. Samuel said:

> I believe it is important to have the paper qualification to substantiate my abilities and capabilities for further career enhancement…to excel in your career, I think both work experience and education are equally important. Education provides you the knowledge or know-how, and experience provides you the context to apply this know-how appropriately. Education also opens doors to job opportunities but experience will help you differentiate from the others competing for the job.

Timothy, on the other hand, had a different perspective. He said:

> You cannot stop learning, as it is a lifetime thing, so I am a great reader of books, I have a library and it is all books. I just enjoy reading, and given the time, given the chance, I like to keep educating myself. So I think it is self-drive, hunger for knowledge…

The stories provided by the participants in relation to their perceptions of work experience versus educational qualifications suggested similar societal values (Li et al., 2008) subscribed by all of them. This similarity suggests that while all the participants agree that work experience is important, having the necessary educational qualifications to complement the acquired experiences was equally important, and that the combination of the two will favour a person enormously in their search for better self.

Pursuing education and in search of the self. According to Babineau and Packard (2006), mature students pursue college education in adulthood for various reasons. Firstly, they

wish to reclaim their past selves from adolescence, and secondly, they wish to construct new selves at that particular juncture of their lives. The desire to construct new selves seems to describe the five participants appropriately.

Cynthia wanted to change her future and one way of achieving this was to ensure that she was academically competent to take on new career positions that may be available. She said:

> To change my future, I should say that in this degree I took it that it has helped me to build my strength. And then it gave me resources. You know when I carry on in my life, and feel secure. I did not regret that I have been through all these. Because it is through all these challenges that help me build my strength. I have become a more resourceful person.

For Satsuki, having an academic title to her name has been something she had always hoped for. In many ways, she has found her new self through education. Satsuki said with pride:

> Initially it did not matter but when I decided I wanted a degree and now that I have got it…the immediate change is to revise my profile. Now I hold a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in International Tourism that would further give me more pride. Maybe if I am approached by any head hunters to go train for them, I will be very confident yes I have got a degree I am confident to do the job even more.

While Satsuki's first degree brought much fanfare and celebration, Samuel's was a sombre affair as his educational pathway has been well planned and expected. Samuel's sound and systematic analysis of Singapore's emphasis on education attainment came as no surprise. To Samuel, creation of the future self meant constant upgrading of his own skills and knowledge to keep up with the ever changing landscape. He said:

> Unless you choose to be an entrepreneur, then paper qualification may not be so significant although it can make you a better person. But I think in Singapore to move up in the corporate environment, paper is important. But of course, paper is

the starting point, beyond that you need to show your ability in terms of your performance. Equally, if not more, important is the need for me to upgrade my knowledge and skills so that I am able to take on higher job responsibilities when the opportunity presents itself. Pursuing a tertiary education has enabled me to develop myself and moved up the career ladder.

Timothy has come to a stage where wealth has become secondary to him. Timothy wanted to pursue education to become a better educated person. He said that, "…It just makes me feel comfortable. I mean knowledge, has its own goodness… ."

The above narratives suggest that the participants were all driven by strong "motivation and guidance" factors as described by Babineau and Packard (2006, p. 109). Success would also mean a transformation of the self, from a non-graduate to a graduate, a social divide that carries a great deal of importance in the context of Singapore (Brooks, 2011).

According to Babineau and Packard (2006) the motivation to pursue a college education usually comes during a person's mid-life, a time where many mature adults begin to reflect on their past achievements and focus on their future identity development. Babineau & Packard (2006) further suggested that it is most common for "individuals to construct new identities, even if this meant a divergence from the current work or past selves of adolescence" (p. 112).

While there has been no clear definition or concept of the term 'self', Leary and Tangney (2005) suggested three usages that are applicable to the term. Firstly, 'self' is about "people's experience of themselves" (p. 8), secondly, it is about "their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about themselves" (p. 8) and lastly, it is about "their deliberate efforts to regulate their own behaviour" (p. 8). These three usages were applicable to the participants in different ways.

Cynthia's determination to achieve the self that she had always wanted was not based on herself as the focal point, but that of her family. Cynthia was aware that without the academic

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qualifications, and hence the ideal job, she would not have been able to provide her family with a better quality of life. This sense of responsibility has put her in the right frame of mind and provided her with the self-leadership that transformed thoughts into actions. Her self-leadership also helped her in regulating her own behaviour and outlook which was important to attain the right 'self' image she was targeting for.

Satsuki's experience with her 'self' seems to suggest a certain level of frustration generated through the fact that she could not be a guide trainer even though she had 30 years of guiding experience. Her setback was due to the fact that she did not possess a tertiary education. This frustration may have triggered Satsuki's motivation to improve her self-image. Satsuki's success seems to have been the result of her deliberate efforts to regulate her own behavior.

Samuel's self was regained when he started working for an educational institution. That had helped him to discard his own adolescence self, to pursue his dreams and successes in life. As a filial Asian son, Samuel's cultural beliefs and self-leadership also made it highly desirable for him to make his parents proud of his achievements. While Timothy's success as an entrepreneur had given him the experience of being his own self, he was consistently unhappy with the self that others perceived him to be. By pursuing education he was hoping that the perception of his entrepreneur self will evolve into one where people respect him not only for his entrepreneurial skills but his academic achievements as well. Timothy said:

> Yes in a sense I have both, professional in the business. Academic is not what I aim to achieve, but I would like to be recognised that you can be at the same level, I mean when I mix with people it is easier.

Whitney's self was highly focused on her years of work experience, which gave her a comfortable head start and a leadership role in her workplace. However, her complacency was

disrupted when she suddenly realized that most of her colleagues and subordinates were better educated than her. Whitney knew that with the right qualification and with her experience she would still be ahead of the competition. Whitney had made a tremendous effort to change her self-perception by reflecting on her own actions. These efforts taken collectively had enabled Whitney to "arrive at the human capacity for reflexive thinking – the ability to take oneself as the object of one's attention and thoughts" (Leary & Tangney, 2005, p.8). Whitney said:

> Well I would like to be an entrepreneur and to be my own boss. I don't have to report to anybody, don't need to show my boss, hey boss this is my degree…it is good to show the management of my current company, you know even at this age I am upgrading myself by finishing a degree…

Mature adults are described by Boeren et al., (2012) as those who might face inequality in their participation as adult learners. The reason is because there are educational policies and practices in many countries that do not favour adult learning. Boeren et al.'s (2012) research further established various findings, one of which is that in order for mature adults to exhibit a positive attitude towards learning, learning itself must be voluntary. Money and time were major obstacles or barriers for adults to participate in adult education and these could potentially become dissatisfying factors to the experience.

> Cynthia: Today's adult student study for many different reasons and at different points in their careers, but they often face similar logistical, academic and financial obstacles…I think for mature people wanting to take up a tertiary education, it is important to ask whether their objectives and goals are realistic and important to them…commitment and time management are other consideration factors. Support from family, colleagues and friends help to make learning a meaningful and enriching experience.

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Whitney: If you think you have the financial means, yes have the support of your family, and you are willing to carve out the time, and learn new things, upgrade yourself, then go for it. If you are not prepared, you just want an easy route, you think ah! I have 30 years [of] experience and just go in and pass, than I don't think this is the right journey for you.

Adult learners also want to see legitimacy in the academic courses they pursue. (Boeren et al., 2012). Boren et al.'s (2012) research further revealed that it is pertinent for adult-learners to want to support only formal and well-organized classroom environments. In the Singapore context where the competition for tertiary education is extremely keen among providers, students may be more concern with the legitimacy, quality and recognition of the academic programs and the institutions that provides them. It can be said that because of the proliferation of tertiary programs in the market, students are more attracted to well-recognized degree programs than professional development courses.

Samuel gave his view on this aspect. He said:

I suppose we need to define what is professional development? If this involves a course such as ACCA [Association of Chartered Certified Accountants] or CFA [Certified Financial Analyst], than I think it is as good as a tertiary education. If professional development is about attending a week or a month program, than I would see such program as either skills-based or a keeping up-to-date seminar. I see tertiary education as more than just professional development. It also helps to develop critical thinking, better communication, expanding one's inter-disciplinary knowledge, etc.

According to Robertson and Merriam (2005), adult self-directed learning has been on the rise in recent times due mainly to the medical advances and a change of personal lifestyle. Mature adults are also living longer and healthier lives. These changes taking place in our

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societies have resulted in mature adults seeking satisfaction through their focus on the pursuit of higher education.

In the case of Singapore, where the official retirement age has been extended, adults may see the need to continue pursuing their education even at a mature age as they strategize their promotion potential given the extended years before retirement. Whitney is an excellent example of this argument. At the age of 49, she still has more than a decade before reaching the retirement age. Perhaps Whitney's motivation would not have been so strong had she been much closer to the retirement age.

While Cynthia may have shared the same train of thought as Whitney, she has however managed to focus on the wholesomeness of learning rather than learning for the sole purpose of attaining achievements. She said:

> I think the difference is, education is a lifelong learning. It can help to build our strengths, with skills and knowledge… We feel confident to stay on a successful career as we are equipped with knowledge and wisdom…Yes because life is never ending, learning is never ending, so lifelong learning is never a stop there.

According to Su (2009), lifelong learning is not simply about extending one's learning period but a lifelong interest in accepting change in the way learning is "structured and interpreted" (p. 705) and that the "notion of learning no longer implies a monopoly over knowledge and truth" (p. 705).   The author had suggested that creativity is an indispensable capability in developing lifelong learning. Su's (2009) focus on "unpredictability and contestability" (p. 705) that people are faced with is clearly demonstrated in the journey that Cynthia had to take to succeed in life. Cynthia recalled her days of struggle:

…Actually when I was young I love to study very much, but I came from a very poor family so I had no chance to study. I had to support the whole family, so when I was 30 plus I realized that it is time for me [to study]… I should not say that it was smooth like many other peoples where the family already planned their career path for them. For me it was not easy as it was always a challenge…

Cynthia's passion in "illuminating the formation of pedagogical practices that encourage creativity" (Su, 2009, p. 705) had indeed extensively promoted her effectiveness in the "development of lifelong learning practices" (p. 705).

Robertson and Merriam's (2005) study had suggested that environment plays a major role in providing the right setting for the promotion of adult self-directed learning. While Singapore does not possess a "rural setting" as suggested by the researchers, Samuel's creativity in generating the right atmosphere in the educational institution he worked for created the inducement to attract adult learners. Samuel said:

I won't say that I was very successful at that point in time in my career, but at least I had a stable career that I was growing with and in this educational institution. So when I begin to explore how I can grow the organization and what we offer, I actually started a degree program for part-time students …I begin to realize that there were also a lot of mature adults coming to class to upgrade themselves. So in that sense I had examples with me and I was the one organizing for them, so it began to make me think if I am doing for them why am I not doing for myself. So that is where I start to say I better do something for myself as well.

Learning experience's influence on self-leadership. Terry's (2006) research on adult literacy programmes revealed many factors that are related to this research. The most significant factor being that the adult participants in Terry's research reported that they

underwent significant personal and academic changes and improvements as a result of their learning experiences. These improvements are in six major areas and they include (1) general attitudes towards life, (2) levels of interpersonal awareness, (3) self-esteem, (4) academic confidence, (5) learning goals and (6) employments plans.

These areas of improvements are well reflected in the participants' narratives, although in varying degrees. There is also evidence to suggest that these improvement areas have similarities with the 'predictable outcomes' of self-leadership (Neck and Houghton, 2006). These predictable outcomes are 1) commitment and independence, 2) creativity and innovation, 3) trust and team potency, 4) positive affect and job satisfaction, 5) psychological empowerment and 6) self-efficacy

Cynthia's general attitude towards life has always been focused on the positive side. Her learning experience in adult life was a tough journey that required commitment and independence on her part. Cynthia has learnt to cope with stress and occasionally she will take a break from the routine to enjoy some brief moments of relaxation.

After [I have] completed an assignment, it is really a relief. I feel happy like a burden being taken off. I will not watch my diet and I will go window shopping.

Throughout her life, Cynthia has taught herself to see things from different perspectives. Cynthia said:

…different people have different opinions. I learn to accept different ideas from one another…I sometimes lead by example. I usually respect their decisions. I think it due to my nature…

It can be said that Cynthia's self-leadership qualities has been developed through the psychological empowerment she is able to provide herself. This has in turn increased her self-efficacy as well as self-esteem levels:

…I need to have confidence and trust to perform…I feel much more confident and mature; mature not in terms of age but mentality. When I compare myself with my colleagues or friend, [they] sometimes they do not have that kind of resources. I am confident to say that I am able to tell them that I am much more mature in mentality.

Cynthia's self-leadership influence over her academic journey had started much earlier when she as attending shorter courses to enhance her educational level. She commented:

Because through these short courses I am able to realize myself, I will be able to like having self-awareness of what I want in life, so this type of short courses, it tells me whether I am moving toward in the right direction.

Satsuki's advice for students is to stay focused. She was in fact the only one among the participants who felt that the choice of academic pathway was not important; what was more important was to stay focus and believe in what you are pursuing. For herself, she had believed that her self-leadership had seen her through a lifelong dream of being a university graduate. Satsuki's self-leadership can be seen through her excellent interpersonal skills and awareness. Satsuki also believes in team potency, by making use of collective strength and expertise. Satsuki said:

Among my colleagues, each of us has certain strong points and areas of expertise. It will be good to draw on their strong points and consult them so that all of us become better as a team.

This self-leadership attitude was only possible through the possession of self-commitment and self-efficacy, admitting mistakes and learning to achieve goals. This attitude supports Maddux and Gosselin's (2005) suggestion that people can actively "shape their environments, rather than simply reacting to them" (p. 218). Satsuki admitted:

I would know, feel it, when I did not do well. I would do a post-mortem on my performance and seek feedback, if it is available, where I went wrong and how I could have handled the situation better. And, of course, do not repeat the same mistake…you can do it! To borrow a quote from David O. McKay: Your Thoughts are the Architects of your Destiny.

Satsuki's self-leadership may also have been enhanced through the job satisfaction she received being a tourist guide. This satisfaction level was further increased when she was selected by the authorities to be a trainer. She said:

I was selected by the Singapore Tourism Board as a trainer and so that was how I became a trainer and I did a lot of research, because as a trainer we are expected to know more than the students. So enjoyed research and that was how for the first time I enjoyed researching into depths culture and history of Singapore… I feel I have a lot of confidence and my confidence motivated me to more things and I am very good in time management as well. In that sense I could do two courses and training two courses on the same day. I manage my time well so that is what self leadership is to me.

Satsuki's energy level in managing multiple tasks seemed to be one of her core strength. At an age where many may begin to show signs of slowing down, she found herself engaged in many activities – guiding, training others and pursuing a tertiary education all at the same time. She relates her story:

Although with my experience the school may give me an opportunity but I just wanted it to be sort of like how you say in life with qualifications and so that was how I went for the degree …being independent all these years and being experienced in tourism line I feel confident that there won't be any problem for me to embark on this degree

When Samuel was much younger, he would set himself to achieve certain material possessions and would work towards achieving them. That was his general attitude towards life then. Despite his success at work, Samuel retained his humble outlook on life. He said he was not overly ambitious and having a good balance in life is more important to him. Samuel said:

…I take my job as a whole, with its good and bad. What is important to me is to accept and embrace them [referring to challenges] as part of the job, and learning to manage and cope with the unpleasant side. How satisfied I am in my job would depend on how well I manage the unpleasantness of the job…I appreciate diversity in opinions and would always encourage colleagues to share their views…

Samuel's advice to mature learners pursuing their tertiary education is:

My advice would be to go for it. You can do it provided you really want it, have self-motivation and the perseverance to see it through…I don't feel pressured to announce to people that I am embarking on an academic journey at my age because I admire and give credit to mature adults doing so… My view on failure is, it is better to fail than failing to try.

Samuel's self-leadership qualities had come from his ability to manage people, recognize their potential and lead by example. He said:

Well I think as I mentioned the workforce is getting more educated partly because I think there are more opportunities for people to upgrade

themselves…So if you need to manage people and run an organization then you better be also be more knowledgeable, more qualified, otherwise you have difficulty doing your job properly. So I think it goes with the environment.

Whitney's attitude towards life seems similar to that of Cynthia and Satsuki; they all wanted to focus only on the pleasant side of things. This attitude supports the self-leadership strategy that people are attracted to doing pleasant tasks, thus increasing the incentives to perform better (Manz & Neck, 1999). However, in contrast, Samuel and Timothy feels strongly that the unpleasant side needs more attention than the pleasant side. This difference in attitude may not have been due to gender. Their narratives seem to argue that it may be due to the position they hold in their work place. Samuel and Timothy are employers whereas Whitney, Cynthia and Satsuki are employees. This difference in attitude may have been the consequence of self–leadership or the sense of responsibilities that comes with certain jobs and position. Whitney said:

> … So I am not ignoring the unpleasantness, but of course I prefer to look at the pleasant so call positive side. And that will actually not hinder me from doing my daily work. You know be a happier person.

Whitney possesses a high level of interpersonal skills. She claims:

> Well, I always pride myself as a person who works pretty well with all the colleagues, young and old, high or lower rank than myself. I would say I am quite an easy person to work with because I am very flexible and because being more matured and quite experienced in the fields that I have come from I am able to relate pretty well with colleagues…

Whitney's years of work experience have also brought her into close contact with people. She does respect the views of others and tries to instil as much professionalism as possible into her work.

…I do lead by example, whether these colleagues are my peers or they are my junior staff. I have always been leading by example

Timothy's narratives offered very little insight into the way he thinks, especially in the context of the attributes or outcomes as presented by Terry's (2006) as well as Neck and Houghton's (2006) research.

However, Timothy's narratives have contributed to this study with a rich lived-experience of a highly philosophical entrepreneur. I personally find the two traits a rare combination in the Singapore context. The things he said was difficult to be discussed under any of the attributes or outcomes as suggested by the researchers. I have therefore decided that I shall discuss Timothy's case through his general attitudes towards life.

Timothy's idea of intelligence is quite different from people I know. In fact, he despises the very well-educated. He worships "street smartness" in people and gave an example of what he meant. He said:

…The definition of intelligence, do you know what intelligence mean? Sometimes we have guys who are very educated, bullshit, I say ask any military guy. If I were a general, I fight through all the war, tell you what intelligent is about. If you on the spot and do not know what to do, what intelligence is that? Does not care whether you have 5 degrees or not, you get slaughter right there, how to escape the jungle… You know your knowledge helps but how to apply. It does not mean you don't go to school you do not know how to apply the knowledge. How you apply your knowledge, that is intelligent when life is at stake…If you have both [referring to education and experience] – ideal!

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Timothy's outlook in life is to be happy and not to allow unpleasantness to overwhelm oneself. However it is through his handling of unpleasant tasks that makes his self-leadership outstanding. On the surface, he would advise people not to be over-focused on unpleasantness, even though he knew that leadership depended a great deal on how well one handles problems and challenges. He said:

> …Time is so short, why are you miserable. Okay some people can't be happy, I can understand because I explain to them and say happiness depend on two things, it depends on the state of mind, it depend on your health and friends surrounding you. So other people's sickness affects you and your love ones. You may be mentally happy and quite healthy but the moment your love one dies it happens. So environment does affect you, so depends on how your attitude towards life. The power to attach and the power to detach, otherwise you will be swallowed by sorrow…

Although Timothy's philosophy is difficult to comprehend, he does make the following very clear, that success can only come with hard work, controlling one's feelings, applying the right intelligence and a little luck. These qualities seem to describe Timothy's self-leadership in the best light.

In Search of Self, Through Cultural Influences

In their later work, Neck and Manz (2013) wrote about their belief that every person is capable of self-leadership. However, the researchers emphasised that the degree in which this capability is demonstrated may largely depend on the individual as not everyone is effective in managing the transformational process. This observation seems to describe the five case study participants most appropriately, as each of them has demonstrated varying degrees of such leadership. The variation further suggests that the participants may have been influenced not

only by factors in their individual lives, but perhaps also by cultural factors that influence Singaporeans as a whole.

From the narratives, it would appear that among the individual influencing factors, family background, position in the work place and personal drive are some of the effects that has a direct influence on the participant's style of self-leadership. On the other hand, social and cultural influences experienced by Singaporeans as a whole, also has an impact. One such example is Lee's (1998) insistence that Singapore should never be a welfare state. Lee believed that under an "egalitarian system each individual would be more interested in what he could get out of the common pool than in striving to do better for himself" (p. 129). Lee said (2000, p. 116):

> We believed in socialism, in fair shares for all…however, because people are unequal in their abilities, if performance and rewards are determined by the marketplace, there will be a few big winners, many medium winners, and a considerable number of losers. That would make for social tensions because a society's sense of fairness is offended.

This sense of self-responsibility and non-dependence on the state for welfare can be said to be well-driven into the minds of Singaporeans. This is perhaps one cultural aspect of Singapore that has an impact on Singaporeans' self-leadership.

Cynthia had always been able to face life's challenges and uncertainties on her own. No matter how difficult situations get, she was prepared to face them by herself. Her style of self-leadership can be said to have been built through the influence of Singaporeans' non-dependence culture. Cynthia said:

I will learn from the experience as it helps me to learn something about myself. I ask for feedback so that I can do it differently. I will do self-reflection of what I have gained and these are valuable experience and knowledge… I believe in this way, it helps to build my strength of character and focus on goals. It enhances my self-confidence and self-worth…

Li et al.'s, (2008) research on cultural aspects of Singapore have revealed two environmental factors that have been responsible for the development of leadership styles. Firstly, the prominence of foreign influence due to the presence of a substantial number of foreigners residing in Singapore and secondly, the heavy government involvement in the country's social life. The first factor seems to suggest that while most Singaporeans continue to uphold their Asian values Western influence in a cosmopolitan society like Singapore has become increasingly inevitable. The second factor is that unlike the pioneer generation of leaders, the political leadership today is much more consensus and opinion seeking, even though, on the whole, the style of the ruling party's involvement in the country's social life remains relatively unchanged.

Timothy is one participant who believed in the wholesomeness of both colonial and Asian cultures. He likes the humbleness of the British people who he knew in the past. In contrast, he dislikes in general, Western culture as he finds it too arrogant. Timothy said:

There are two schools of thoughts, the Eastern school of thought and the old British style is to be humble. Right, don't tell people, you know keep quiet yourself, like the British, they cross the great sea or the great Atlantic - no I just have a small boat across the river. You know very polite and very humble. Chinese also very humble, tell people all these. But the Western education, please announce it. On the rooftop tell everybody you are going for it…

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The younger generation of Singaporeans today may not be able to fully comprehend Timothy's stand; however, his train of thought should be fully understood by people of his generation who have in many ways appreciated the good governance of the British colonizers as well as the generations of local government officials groomed and nurtured by Lee (1998).

Timothy also believes strongly in traditional ethnic cultures. Being educated in English has also helped him to understand the cultures of both the East and the West. This knowledge of multiculturalism has in many aspects made him a true Singaporean. In some ways too, Timothy resembles Lee in terms of their cultural beliefs. Lee, who is known for the ruthless way in which he had run Singapore was sadden by the changing attitudes of the younger generations. According to Lee in his latest memoirs (Lee, 2013, p. 213):

> No, my job is done. I am 89 years old. Do I worry whether the world will come to an end? My job is done. I have put in place a system that is clean, meritocratic and open…I have no worries. I have done my job. I found a successor and handed over to another generation. I can do no more. I cannot live forever as a young, vigorous 40 or 50 year old… to tell you the truth, I am resigned to what will happen. There is no need to be sad. It depends upon the generation that is growing up now, what they will do. Do they share the values of their parents' generation?

For Timothy's generation, the will to strive for a better self meant that they would never settle for less, that to be good enough you basically need to have everything. This is not about the essence of Singaporeans' 'kiasuism', neither is it about the essence of being in a meritocratic society – it is about the self and how best one wishes for it to be reflected in his or her character.

Like Timothy, Satsuki also believes in good governance. She is a firm believer of integrity and fair-play and these cultural influences were provided in abundance under Lee's government.

Samuel's self-leadership began to grow within him as he took on positions of importance. This seems to suggest that a person's self-leadership can be influenced by his or her workplace environment as well as the position he or she holds. My argument for this is that the higher the work position one hold, the more pressurized it may become for the person to remain without the corresponding educational achievements befitting the position. This is of course taken from a Singapore context or perspective and may be a result of culture in a 'kiasu' or 'face' conscious society (Li et al., 2008). The result of such a threat may well trigger a person's self-leadership to engage in educational requisites. Samuel said:

> I have lived through twenty years of changes in my life after attaining my tertiary education. I believe I have become a better person, both at professional and personal levels

> Li et al.'s (2008) research on cultural aspects of Singaporeans revealed that unlike other Asians such as the Taiwanese or the Hong Kong people, Singaporeans display a higher degree of collectivistic leadership culture. This is in contrast to the individualistic cultures displayed by people of Taiwan and Hong Kong. This comparison suggests that Singaporeans are lesser risk-takers than their counterparts in those two countries. Narratives from the participants seem to affirm this observation made by Li et al.. (2008). Cynthia said:

> I think I am not the type who will volunteer doing difficult task and knowing well the chances of success are very slim. This is because I do not have the information on how to perform the task. I need to understand the difficulties that I may encounter and where to seek for help. As the chances of success are very slim I may feel discourage to carry on unless there are others willing to brainstorm and work together.

It is unfortunate that 'kiasuism' seems to contradict the very essence of self-leadership, which focuses among other things, the ability to focus on self-talk, a strategy of self-efficacy (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005) increasing a person's ability to perform certain tasks. It would appear that despite Cynthia's self-leadership, she chooses to only perform tasks that carry no risk or low risk.

Satsuki however is more neutral in her treatment on tasks having a mix of collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Satsuki said:

> I will leave it to people more capable.   When there are no takers, I will take on that challenge.

This self-leadership trait however is not displayed by Whitney who is less willing to take on tasks which she was not confident of success. She remarked:

> In the work environment I would say maybe out of 10 times I will volunteer maybe 3 times, if it is a difficult task and knowing that I have very little chance to succeed.

According to Hofstede (2001, p. 146), "extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety, and the human society has developed ways to cope with the inherent uncertainty of living on the brink of an uncertain future". This finding may have explained only one facet of the Singaporean 'kiasu' culture, where people are afraid to lose out and therefore go to the extreme to secure their own advantage over a situation.

The other facet is that the Singapore society in general believes in hard work and being achievement oriented (Durai, 2012). This emphasis on individual performance outcome, which

differs from individualism culture, is often embraced by Singaporeans. This finding has been pertinent to my study as the taking up of tertiary education by older successful adults can be seen as a significant risk taking activity. In other words, Singaporeans are selective in terms of their risk-taking. If it is a risky task that may provide low or no individual incentives, then they would rather have someone else perform it. However, if it is a task which provides high incentives, such as the attainment of a tertiary education, then they are prepared to take all the risk that comes with it.

Hofstede (2001) further suggested that 'uncertainty' is experienced in difference ways by different societies and this is because "ways of coping with uncertainties belong to the cultural heritages of society" (p. 146). These heritages can be non-rational and may be "reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society" (p. 146). In most cases, these values are "incomprehensible to members of other societies" (p.146).

The self-leadership qualities of the participants can be identified in the way each of them narrates their story especially in the handling of difficult problems and crises:

I do not believe there is a problem that is insurmountable. It is how satisfactorily a problem is resolved given the resources available and how well they are used… (Satsuki).

…whenever I have an objective…I work towards this objective and I am able to have a better focus and go the right direction. I feel this is very important. (Cynthia).

…In any small company, two things cannot happen, one you cannot have a crisis, two you cannot make mistakes. So someone told me, you make mistakes you can try again, but in a crisis you cannot… (Timothy).

Of course I feel very frustrated [in solving problems]and the first thing to do is I have to really sit down with somebody…to do a rundown or check with me and see what went wrong so that I can do it right… (Whitney).

I suppose self means personal to you and so self-leadership will be perhaps how you direct yourself, you know to develop, to be better than what you are. So I would say in a nutshell that is the sense my understanding of self-leadership, means self-motivated, self-directed [referring to how self-leadership can solve problems and crises].   (Samuel).

One difference I noticed in my participants is that the two male participants, Timothy and Samuel tend to look at the subject matter in a much larger context, that of Singapore or national level as a whole, whereas the three female participants tend to focus more on the self and the family when discussing their educational pursuits. This finding seems related to Li et al.'s (2008) research on culture and leadership where the qualities of leadership were discussed. Among the attributes mentioned for capable business leadership were "hardworking, knowing how to identify and capitalise on opportunities, and overcoming great difficulties to achieve great successes (p. 960). The research added that interestingly no female business leaders were mentioned.

Culturally, most Singaporeans have adopted an impatient attitude towards success. This attitude can be seen in all the participants including those who were already quite successful in their careers. Spending time mastering one's trade skills has never been Singaporeans' preferred choice as many want to taste success in the shortest time possible. It is therefore not surprising that Singaporeans' preference has always been to arm oneself with the right academic qualifications. To many Singaporeans, the society is such that without the right qualifications one would not even be given the opportunity in the first place. The factor supports the popular

belief that the participants may have pursued their tertiary education because of 'kiasuism', "the fear of failure or losing out to others" (Li, et al., 2008, p. 954).

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed a few important aspects that are real to many mature adult scholars. The challenges he or she faces along the academic journey and the type of skills and knowledge needed to acquire or utilize them. While these subject matters seem to be common place in the lives of young university students, they are not the same for the mature adult students. After years of absence from the classrooms, the mature adult student need time to adjust and absorb. These are not feats to be taken lightly.

This chapter also includes several matters that were taken into consideration and these include self-comparison, self-identity, self-determination and the 'kiasu' factors. Narratives from the participants were also highlighted to provide a deeper understanding of how each of them dealt with these challenges.

In the next chapter, Chapter 8, Self-leadership in uniquely Singapore – a cultural insight on the self-leadership questionnaire, I shall conclude my analysis of this thesis by emphasising on two main areas. Firstly, addressing the four research questions and provide findings from this study and secondly, my contribution to knowledge through the recommendation for a re-framing of the revised self-leadership questionnaire or RSLQ (Houghton & Neck, 2002) through the proposed country specific cultural extension to the questionnaire.

Chapter 8: Self-leadership in Uniquely Singapore – A Cultural Insight on the Self-leadership Questionnaire

Despite the popularity and potential of self-leadership strategies in modern organisations, no acceptably valid and reliable self-leadership assessment scale has heretofore been developed
(Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 672)

Introduction

As earlier mentioned (see Chapter 1), the concepts of self-leadership were largely developed as a Westernized form of leadership (Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009; Ho et al., 2012). Self-leadership was conceptualized within an American cultural context (Ho & Nesbit, 2009), the country where the concept originated (Manz, 1992). However, in recent years, there has been an increase in research conducted to address the application of the self-leadership measuring scale in other cultures (Alves et al., 2006; Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009; Quinteiro et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012). The outcome of this research has indicated that the earlier versions of the self-leadership measuring scales developed by Anderson and Prussia (1997) and revised by Houghton and Neck (2002) were inappropriate in reflecting the cultural values (Alves et al., 2006) of people from other nationalities, and in particular, those from Asian countries. According to Hofstede (2001), Asians or Easterners subscribe to a more collectivistic culture rather than an individualistic culture by the Westerners. As a result, some researchers have since approached this inappropriateness by conducting research that reflects the cultural values of their respective nationalities and how these cultural values have affected the self-leadership qualities of its people. These cultural studies included the Chinese (Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009; Ho et al., 2012) and the Portuguese (Quinteiro, 2012). Till today

however, there has been little inter-cultural research conducted. One reason cited was the lack of an acceptable self-leadership measuring scale that was applicable across cultures (Alves et al., 2006; Ho et al., 2012).

This research, while pursuing the same objectives in terms of seeking cultural understanding of the self-leadership concept, took on a different route, one that was qualitative in nature. Instead of the usual quantitative approaches used by other researchers so far, this research is in fact the first qualitative study made on self-leadership. The results provided by this research are therefore in-depth and enriching (Merriam, 2009) and able to contribute in terms of new knowledge with respect to the understanding of the self-leadership concept in the Singapore context. Instead of trying to establish cultural differences between two groups of nationalities using the same measuring scale, this research sought self-leadership qualities valued by the Singapore participants and then compared them to the ones used by Houghton and Neck (2002). As a result of this initiative, this research was able to make a new contribution through the re-framing of the self-leadership questionnaire to suit the benchmarking of self-leadership qualities in Singaporeans.

This chapter will discuss two important areas of this research. Firstly, addressing the four research questions, and secondly, the creation of a country specific cultural extension to the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire or RSLQ (Houghton and Neck, 2002) through the re-framing of self-leadership measurement scales.

Overview of Questions and Link to Houghton and Neck's Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ)

The overarching research question. *How are the pursuits of a first degree tertiary education by career successful mature adults influenced by self-leadership in the Singapore setting?*

Within Singapore culture, the practice of meritocracy and 'kiasuism', has had major impacts on all the five case studies participants. This was regardless of their age or gender, and perhaps would have included race as well, had the research been able to include other races apart from ethnic Chinese Singaporeans. Born in an era where university education was only available to a small fraction of their cohort, the meritocratic system practised widely had been a challenge confronting them (Moore, 2000). Findings from all the case studies have shown that despite their seniority in age as well as work experience, all five case studies have found it necessary to pursue their tertiary education, not just for the sake of knowledge enhancement, but also to be in a position of not losing out to others who were university graduates. Four of the participants had wanted a tertiary education to enhance their career prospects, while the fifth participant, despite being a successful entrepreneur and an employer, had found a tertiary education important to impress his business associates and partners.

While it was difficult to identify their true motivation, findings have indicated that all five case studies participants achieved their tertiary education through their self-leadership. In other words, they were able to lead and motivate themselves into achieving their long harboured ambitions, even though some took up to 30 years to finally realise them.

This study identified several aspects of self-leadership that are linked to the self-leadership construct. However, in order to address this research question in an adequate manner it was necessary to ensure that the participant in each case study had a good understanding of what the concept of self-leadership was. Firstly, the participants were left to assign meanings of their own to the concept. Secondly, the participants were able to articulate what their beliefs were and to explore how self-leadership assisted them to realise their academic goals. Lastly, they articulated the ways that the Singaporean cultural context had influenced them in the development of self-leadership.

The findings have suggested that the participants' perceptions and interpretations of the self-leadership construct were significantly different from that of Houghton and Neck (2002). This was despite the fact that the interview questions used for this research were adapted from Houghton and Neck's (2002) Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire or RSLQ. However, despite these differences, the participants in general have acknowledged that self-leadership, based on their own understanding of the construct, had been the main thrust and motivation behind their educational pursuits.

Findings also showed that the participants were influenced by self-leadership in different ways as far as educational pursuits were concerned. A participant with entrepreneurial spirit sees self-leadership differently. He was not keen in the pursuit of education but saw self-leadership in other forms, like understanding harmony and discretion, relationship building and skills in handling people. Interconnectedness was important to him. One particular self-leadership quality was his belief in work experience and informal education. This entrepreneur was also a risk taker who would venture into unchartered territories. Confronted with challenges he will do things differently. Although entrepreneurship was found to be correlated to voluntarism, it might also be linked to 'kiasuism' in the Singapore context. Although entrepreneurs were often viewed

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as generous in terms of voluntary and charity work, their 'kiasu' syndrome might still prevail. Surprisingly,   the said entrepreneur also wished he could give up everything just to pursue education and knowledge. This suggested that entrepreneurs may also be keen to pursue education if given the opportunity.

Findings from the participants' approach to goal-striving seem to be overly focused on end results. This form of self-leadership seems to emulate the style of the Singapore government, being always careful, well-informed, never leaving anything to chance, and outcome focused. However, on the other hand, private sector employees tend to embrace Western corporate cultures like self-management systems, KPIs, team-work and supervisory trust. These findings suggested a divide in terms of cultural differences between the public and private sector employees (Liu, Du, Wen & Fan, 2012).

The older participants seem to possess the perception that going back to school after a long lapse of time was very challenging. Their preconceived ideas were in fact largely unsupported by their experience. Constructive desirable thought pattern (Neck & Houghton, 2006) was in fact a self-leadership quality displayed and shared by all the participants. The participants believed that their ability to visualise achievements and successes, have enhanced their self-efficacy to a level where the right frame of mind will see them through difficult tasks.

The study also identified several aspects of Chinese culture. The issue of 'face' was of concern only to one of the participants. However, while all the participants claimed that they were not afraid of losing 'face' should their educational pursuit fail, I had in fact thought that 'face' was of great significance to them. My reason for saying this is because each of them had in fact publicly announced their intentions to pursue a tertiary education. This gesture meant that

the pursuit was so important to them that they had to 'place' their 'face' to the challenge. 'Face' had become an aspect of their journey and that success had to be achieved at any cost.

Findings have also shown that the exposure to multiple cultures has strengthened the self-leadership of the participants. Growing up in a traditional Chinese family environment; being educated in English; and working for multinationals might have broadened the participants' worldviews and outlook. Exposure to multiple cultures just within Singapore alone might have also helped strengthen their self-leadership resolve as they see daily happenings with different lenses. Singapore, being a microcosm of the world might have also broadened their sense of urgency, their quick reactiveness and their closeness to fellow citizens, all being part of living in a small country.

Self-leadership also implies having a vision, and this encouraged the case study participants to find their own identities (Hogg, 2005). It was also about ideas and experiments and finding the self-direction to reach goals. It showed the commitment and responsibility for self-development. Pursuing education after a long lapse of time requires self-efficacy as the participants were less prepared for college than traditional-age students (Golden, 2003). Findings have also indicated that family background, position in the work place and personal drive were strong influencing factors that motivated the participants to pursue their tertiary education.

Singapore being far from a welfare state had also moulded the participants in terms of their independence from government assistance and other social welfare schemes. Findings have suggested that all the participants believed strongly in hard work as well as taking responsibilities for their own well-being. Their non-dependence on the state, are self-leadership qualities built through Singaporeans' welfare-free culture. This culture may also contribute to fear of failure or losing a place in the ladder in terms of workplace positioning.

Ironically, findings have also shown that the participants were able to switch from a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2001) to an individualistic culture (Hofstede, 2001) depending on the task demanded of them. Personal tasks like the pursuit of education seemed to attract their individualistic characteristics, whereas groups tasks, especially dangerous ones, attracts their collectivistic characteristics, where they preferred to share the task with others within the community. In many ways, these characteristics have manifested the participants' attachment to a 'kiasu' culture or uncertainty avoidance characteristics (Hofstede, 2001).

In contract or perhaps in agreement with the 'kiasu' characteristics of the participants, findings have also shown that the participants excelled in the area of Performance Orientation (Hofstede, 2001), the desire to perform well and achieve. This was again in-line with Hofstede's (2001) research which concluded that Asians in particular are high in the societal value of performance orientation. However, individual variations did exist even within the small group of participants as I discovered that some were not as 'kiasu' as others and had displayed sound assessment of their own needs without being influenced by others.

The implications of self-leadership in the Singapore context were many and those involving the mature generation have been discussed and analysed above. Each mature adult seems to possess a differing strength of self-leadership, good in certain aspects but certainly not in all aspects. Self-leadership was a strong motivator for their achievements - a highly focused societal value in meritocratic Singapore. The participants have all made the right move by focusing their self-leadership qualities into self-achievements. There was also no better way to express this focal point than to pursue their tertiary education. The mature participants have also proven that age was never an obstacle and this finding should provide relieve to potential future mature students who might be thinking of taking the same route. The participants have also

shown that social status or comparison should not be a hindrance to people who are already successful in their careers.

Related sub-question A. *What is different about pursuing a tertiary education instead of staying on a successful career pathway with appropriate professional training?*

Findings have suggested that the participants' choice of pathway was highly dependent on the pathway's perceived value. The pathway that could enhance their career advancement or increase their social mobility would be their preferred choice. On the whole, the participants were mostly in favour of pursuing tertiary education as against the pursuit of a professional development program in the workplace. This had suggested that a higher perceived value was being attached to a degree, than to a professional training qualification. A degree was considered a commodity that they could keep for life, whereas professional training was associated with their job capability enhancements. It also appeared that the participants regarded a tertiary degree as an official attainment of 'education', whereas professional trainings were just skills development or upgrading for the purpose of job competency, and that these qualifications due to their industry focused nature have lesser transferability value in the event of a career switch.

This phenomenon had in fact strengthened my belief that Singaporeans were extremely sensitive or 'kiasu' on the prospect of employment and this might support an instant transformation from a collectivistic culture to an individualistic one (Hofstede, 2001). This was unlike some other Asian cultures, where workers looked at employment from a group interest point of view, and that the survival of the self was very much dependent on the collective wisdom of the group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 1994).

Another reason for Singaporeans' preference in pursuing tertiary degree might have been created by Singapore's emphasis on meritocracy which generally focuses more on academic qualifications and perhaps less on work experience and trade skills. However, this does not apply to all trades and professions. For example, one of the participants, a tourist guide, and another, a business entrepreneur gave equal weighting to professional development as they did the pursuit of a tertiary degree education, even though both had acknowledged the significance of having an academic qualification. Their perception of pathways seemed more neutral to them than the rest of the participants. This might have been due to the fact that work experience and trade skills and not academic education were more regarded by tourist guides and entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the rest of the participants, an education institution senior executive, a civil servant and a mid-level management executive have all stated that taking the academic pathway was preferred. This might have been due to the fact that they all came from large organisations where academic qualifications were highly regarded and used as a gauge for entries, assessments and perhaps even promotions. However, there was a qualification made by one of the participants that if the professional training involved was about the pursuit of professionally recognised qualifications, than the perceived values of such qualifications may not be viewed as inferior to that of an academic degree.

In summary, the choice of pathways is a subjective matter that concerns the relevancy of such courses to the individuals. I was delighted that in spite of basing their preferences more towards the attainment of a tertiary degree, the participants were also adamant about the fact that education as a whole is not just to attain career successes, but also about personal development such as the way we think and live. In terms of self-leadership, paper qualifications can only bring a person so far, but the rest still lies in his or her ability to perform.

Related sub-question B. *How does tertiary education influence the future selves of mature adults and why do career successful adults choose tertiary education to change their future?*

Interestingly, the participants seem to have displayed very diverse views as to how their future 'self' could be changed as a result of attaining a tertiary education. One of them simply wanted to have an academic title printed onto his business card so as to impress his business associates and acquaintances. The educational qualification will at the same time, generate 'face' for him, something he felt was of great importance being a Chinese entrepreneur businessman. It makes him feel good to be associated with the educated. This mentality can be said to be typical of self-made businessmen who rose from rags to riches. There were also others who aspired to be their own boss one day, but for the time being, a tertiary degree will keep their jobs secure. A degree is also seen as a stepping stone for lifelong learning, to gain new career opportunities and a sense of security. Others view a degree as an enabler to move up the career ladder. All of them seem to want to change their future, and the possession of a tertiary degree is looked upon as a stepping stone towards such a reality.

Harbouring an ambition since they were young, and keeping that ambition alive throughout their adulthood seems to me the strongest self-leadership virtue displayed by the participants, and this is none other than their ambition to earn a university degree. This ambition may have been harboured since the colonial days or perhaps during the early days of nation building. There was much less job opportunities and schooling opportunities. The ambition to do well and be successful must have been overpowering. This is what that distinguishes a self-leader from a follower (Manz, 1992).

The attainment of a degree seems to attract different reactions from the participants. One of them was hoping to change her future self through education by securing her inner strength and resources to cope with the new challenges. Another was simply proud to display her new profile and hoped that some 'head-hunters' [executive search companies] would soon be interested in her. Yet another thought nothing about a degree, saying that it is just part of his skills and knowledge upgrading to keep up with the changing world. The fourth participant believed that a degree would not change or influence his future, but it will make him feel comfortable. The last participant had felt strongly that a degree would maintain her leadership role and help her cultivate a new self-image in the work place.

These multiple reactions about the 'self', suggests that although each participant had his or her own perception of what self is to them, the overarching transformation was that they moved from a non-graduate status to that of a graduate, and as mentioned in my analysis chapters, carries a crossover in social status (Brooks, 2011) so empowering, it is difficult to ignore within the Singapore context.

Related sub-question C. *How does work experience and a successful professional life enhance (or not) the educational experience of mature students?*

One of the objectives of this research was to have a better understanding of the correlation between work experience and its effect on the pursuit of higher education for mature adults. Findings from the five case studies clearly indicated that work experience did enhance their educational pursuits. While it could be seen that factors affecting individuals were complex and different, for the most part, the inference from the narratives indicates that work experience will highly compliment a person in his or her pursuit of education. One of the reasons provided was that their work experience could provide them with a better understanding of the theoretical

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aspects of a subject matter, as well as being in a privileged position of knowing real-life situations that were related to such theoretical propositions.

Findings have also indicated that work experience can generate intellectual, emotional and social strengths (Chang & Wong, 2008) and these qualities were displayed by the participants through their self-leadership. These qualities also suggested a strong correlation between the participants' work experience from a successful professional career, their self-leadership intuitions and their academic abilities, all being part and parcel of each other. With Singaporeans scoring high in terms of Performance Orientation (Li et al., 2008) in an Asian context, it is time for society to acknowledge that work experience is as important in a person's job performance as is his or her academic abilities.

The creation of a country specific cultural extension to the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire. According to Houghton and Neck (2006, p. 675) there has been no "psychometrically-sound" self-leadership measurement scale developed so far. The earliest attempt to design or develop a measurement for self-leadership was made by Manz (1986). This was followed by a 34 item self-leadership questionnaire (SLQ) designed by Cox (1993) with an eight factor scale which emphasizes on 1) self-problem solving initiative, 2) efficacy, 3) teamwork, 4) self-reward, 5) self-goal setting, 6) natural rewards, 7) opportunity thought and 8) self-observation/evaluation.

Anderson and Prussia (1997) then offered an enhanced 50 item self-leadership questionnaire based on 10 factors. The factors were 1) self-goal setting, 2) self-reward, 3) self-punishment, 4) self-observation, 5) self-cueing, 6) self-withholding, 7) focusing thoughts on natural rewards, 8) visualising successful performance, 9) self-talk and 10) evaluating believes and assumptions.

The self-leadership questionnaire designed by Anderson and Prussia (1997) was further revised by Houghton and Neck (2002) to a 35 item, 9 dimension questionnaire. The questionnaire was re-named as the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire or RSLQ. Reasons cited for the revision was the lack of reliability and stability in Anderson and Prussia's version (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Houghton and Neck's (2002, p. 672) revised scale claimed "reasonably reliable and valid instrument for the measurement of self-leadership skills, behaviours, and cognitions".

The introduction of the RSLQ in 2002 saw self-leadership research being conducted more regularly. Among the research were a few cross-cultural studies on the appropriateness in using Houghton and Neck's (2002) 'westernised' version of RSLQ. For example, Neubert and Wu (2006) discussed the generalizability of the RSLQ to the Chinese context, while Ho and Nesbit (2009) made an attempt to further refine and extend the self-leadership scale for the same context and renamed the RSLQ as the MSLQ or Modified Self-leadership Questionnaire. Ho et al., (2012) then used the MSLQ to conduct further research between Eastern and Western cultural differences in self-leadership. Meantime, a research by Quinteiro et al., (2011) used the RSLQ to measure self-leadership on a group of Portuguese participants and found Houghton and Neck's (2002) RSLQ to be inappropriate in two of the nine self-leadership dimensions. As a result, only 21 of the 34 items on the scale were preserved resulting in a good model fit for the scale's usage in the Portuguese context. These research sums up what have been conducted using various versions of the self-leadership measuring scale to date.

This research therefore suggests that the self-leadership construct not be viewed from a fixed standpoint or perspective as it could generate different meaning to people of different nationalities or cultures and under different social context. Above all it is dependent on the context in which the discussion takes place and can be varied and far reaching. Seeing it through

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different lenses can extend the complexity of the construct in terms of coverage, clarity and focus.

Singaporean self-leadership qualities. As mention earlier, participants' interpretations of self-leadership were wide ranging. None of the participants had heard of the term 'self-leadership' before and were unaware of any theoretical or academic knowledge attached to the construct. Each of the participants initiated their own definitions of what self-leadership had meant to them.

Through a thorough analysis of the case studies, a total of 37 self-leadership qualities valued by the participants were identified in this study. These qualities were either articulated directly or indirectly by the participants, and were deemed to be of importance to them in their pursuit of self-leadership. These Singapore self-leadership qualities are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1

Self-leadership qualities valued by the Singapore participants

1. Understanding harmony and discretion
2. Constantly improving relationship with others and building rapport
3. Providing opportunities for others to lead themselves
4. Leading by example
5. Always acquiring knowledge and wisdom
6. Believing in work experience and informal education
7. Perseverance
8. Generates sound work-plans
9. Keen interest and balance in life
10. Practise of self-discipline
11. Believing in meritocratic systems

12. Visualizing achievements and successes

13. Self-motivating

14. Engaging in self-direction and development

15. High integrity and fair play

16. Believing in self

17. A strategic thinker

18. Always opening to new ideas

19. Taking risk and moving into unchartered territories

20. Demanding but fair

21. Respecting diversity of views

22. Good time-management

23. Can make effective but unpopular decisions

24. Consistency in work

25. Keeping everybody's confidence level high

26. Always evaluating possibilities, alternatives and opportunities

27. Living by faith

28. Team building that generates confidence and trust

29. Creating impressions

30. Strong sense of awareness

31. Constantly evaluating the self

32. Possessing non-stereotypical attitudes towards 'face' and 'kiasuism'

33. Non-believer in luck despite luck being culturally important

34. Engaging in self-talk

35. Facing difficult situations with courage

36. Practises filial devotion

37. Engaging in self-rewards

In comparison, Houghton and Neck's (2002) revised self-leadership questionnaire or RSLQ consisted of nine self-leadership dimensions with 35 items (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2

Houghton and Neck's Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ)

Dimensions	Items
Visualising Successful Performance	1. I use my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks 2. I visualized myself successfully performing a task before I do it 3. Sometimes I picture in my mind successful performance before I actually do the task 4. I purposefully visualized myself overcoming the challenges I face 5. I often mentally rehearse the way I plan to deal with a challenge before I actually face the challenge
Self-goal setting	6. I established specific goals for my own performance. 7. I consciously have goals in my mind for my work efforts. 8. I work towards specific goals I have set for myself. 9. I think about the goals that I intend to achieve in the future. 10. I write specific goals for my own performance.
Self-talk	11. Sometimes I find I am talking to myself (out load or in my head) to help me deal with difficult problems I face. 12. Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations. 13. When I am in difficult situations I will sometimes talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to help me get through it.

Self-reward	14. When I do an assignment especially well, I like to treat myself to something or activity I especially enjoy.
	15. When I do something well, I reward myself with a special event such as a good dinner, movie, shopping trip, etc.
	16. When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like.
Evaluating beliefs and assumptions	17. I think of my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation.
	18. I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with.
	19. I openly articulate and evaluate my own assumptions when I have a disagreement with someone else.
	20. I think about and evaluate the beliefs and assumptions I hold.
Self-punishment	21. I tend to get down on myself in my mind when I have performed poorly.
	22. I tend to be tough on myself in my thinking when I have not done well on a task.
	23. I feel guilty when I perform a task poorly.
	24. I sometimes openly express displeasure with myself when I have not done well.
Self-observation	25. I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (school).
	26. I usually am aware of how well I am doing as I perform an activity.
	27. I pay attention to how well I am doing in my work.
	28. I keep track of my progress on projects I am working on.
	29. I focus my thinking on the pleasant rather than the unpleasant aspects of my job (school) activities.
	30. I try to surround myself with objects and people that bring out

Natural rewards	my desirable behaviours.
	31. When I have a choice, I try to do my work in ways that I enjoy rather than just trying to get it over with.
	32. I seek out activities in my work that I enjoy doing.
Self-cueing	33. I use written notes to remind myself of what I need to accomplish.
	34. I used concrete reminders (eg. Notes and lists) to help me focus on things I need to accomplish.
	35. I find my own favourite way to get things done.

Matching of Singapore self-leadership qualities with Houghton and Neck's self-leadership dimensions. Some of the self-leadership qualities valued by the Singapore participants turned out to be similar or consistent in terms of meaning, concept or perception with the nine self-leadership dimensions in the RSLQ. A matching chart (Table 8.3) illustrates their similarities despite differences in terminology or expression.

Table 8.3

Matching of RSLQ dimensions with Singapore self-leadership qualities

RSLQ's self-leadership dimensions	Singapore self-leadership qualities that are matching to the RSLQ dimensions
1. Visualising successful performance	1. Visualising achievements and successes
	2. Living by faith
	3. Creates impressions
	4. Team building that generates confidence and trust

		5. Providing opportunities to others to lead themselves
2. Self-goal setting		6. Self-motivating 7. Believing in self 8. Engaging in self-direction and development
3. Self-talk		9. Engaging in self-talk 10. Perseverance 11. High integrity and fair-play 12. Taking risk and moving into unchartered territories 13. Facing difficult situations with courage 14. Leading by example
4. Self-reward		15. Engaging in self-rewards 16. Keen interest and balance in life
5. Evaluating beliefs and assumptions		17. Respecting diversity of views 18. Always opening to new ideas
6. Self-punishment		19. Practise of self-discipline 20. Demanding but fair
7. Self-observation		21. Constantly evaluating the self 22. Always evaluating possibilities, alternatives and opportunities
8. Natural rewards		23. Generates sound work plans 24. Consistency in work
9. Self-cueing		25. Always acquiring knowledge and wisdom 26. Keeping everybody's confidence level high

	27. Good time-management
	28. Strong sense of awareness
	29. A strategic thinker

Houghton and Neck's (2002) first self-leadership dimension *Visualising Successful Performance* had focused on self-leaders' ability to visualise successful performance, thus increasing their self-efficacy (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005) to complete a task. This includes mental preparedness and the rehearsing of plans to overcome the challenges faced. Five self-leadership qualities generated by the participants bear similarities with this dimension (see Table 8.3). These qualities were matched based on their visionary values, foresightedness in approach and link with leadership qualities.

The first Singapore self-leadership quality *visualising achievements and successes* was in fact completely similar to Houghton and Neck's (2002) dimension, *Visualising successful performance*. This reflects the importance for self-leaders to value-add and enhance their chances of success for a task by psychologically preparing themselves through positive thought patterns (Neck & Houghton, 2006) and enhanced self-efficacy (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005). As for the second self-leadership quality, *living by faith*, I see close similarities between beliefs, visions and faith, as they are answers for the future and not about the present. The third and fourth qualities, *creates impressions* and *team building that generates confidence and trust,* can be regarded as having similarities in meaning as well as in intention and are linked very positively with visionary skills as suggested by Houghton and Neck (2002). The fifth quality, *providing opportunities to others to lead themselves,* must be seen from the angle of forward self-leadership planning where self-leaders are expected to help others to lead themselves (Manz

& Sims, 2001). This requires not only visualisation of success but the ability to lead others. Without success of the self, it may be difficult to provide for others.

Houghton and Neck's (2002) second dimension, *Self-goal setting* deals mainly with one's ability to establish goals and consciously planning and setting them. This includes present and future goals (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Three Singapore self-leadership qualities were deemed to be of the same focus and thinking behind the setting of goals. A good goal achiever requires qualities such as *self-motivation, believing in self* and *engaging in self-direction and development* to execute and achieve the goals set.

The third dimension, S*elf-talk* attracts the most similarities between Houghton and Neck's (2002) dimensions and the Singapore self-leadership qualities generated. The Singapore self-leadership qualities are 1) *engaging in self-talk*, 2) *perseverance,* 3) *high integrity and fair-play*, 4) *taking risks and moving into unchartered territories,* 5) *facing difficult situations with courage,* and 6) *leading by example*. Self-talk relies largely on a person's ability in providing self-reminders for tasks to be achieved, as well as the ability to self-analyse difficult problems and situations (Houghton and Neck, 2002). As this particular dimension requires people with strong internal qualities in terms of problem solving and self-abilities, I thought it was appropriate for those with *perseverance, high integrity and fair-play, risk-taking, courageous and one who leads by example* to be associated with *self-talk*, a silent strategy commonly practised with leaders.

The fourth dimension, *self-reward*, only manages to attract two similar qualities in the Singapore list of self-leadership qualities. The first was *engaging in self-rewards,* which was again totally similar to Houghton and Neck's (2002) dimension, again demonstrating the thoroughness of the RSLQ. The second self-leadership quality also suggested a close implication

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to the dimension, *keen interest and balance in life*. Houghton and Neck (2002) define self-reward as a treat to oneself for performing well in tasks. The acts of self-reward according to these researchers generate good feelings which in turn promote well-being and enhanced performances. These factors are closely related to how one looks at life and also how one maintains a balance between work & leisure.

Evaluating beliefs and assumptions is Houghton and Neck's (2002) fifth dimension. This dimension calls for self-leaders to think of their own beliefs and assumptions whenever they encounter a difficult situation (Houghton and Neck, 2002). It also requires them to evaluate these beliefs and assumptions for accuracy before attempting to solve their problems. Two particular Singapore self-leadership qualities seem to describe this situation well. Before one decides on the accuracy of his or her evaluation of problem, having the respect for *diversity of views* and *opening to new ideas* would help in achieving accuracy of situation and views before executing one's actions.

Houghton and Neck's (2002) sixth dimension is *self-punishment*. This dimension as earlier mentioned in my literature review is the reverse of the self-reward dimension. This dimension requires a self-leader to be vigilant and serious about his or her own mistakes and sets out tough guidelines to deal with these shortcomings.   I found two Singapore self-leadership qualities very close in concept to this dimension and they are *practice of self-discipline* and *being demanding but fair*. These two qualities share similarities in terms with the *self-punishment* dimension. Being demanding on the self is a form of self-discipline and punishment. However, being demanding does not necessarily mean one has to be unreasonable. In the end, justification and being fair in one's demands will always be respected.

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The seventh dimension, *Self-observation* is relatively simple in concept. It discusses about keeping track of one's progress so as to be aware of one's performances. In order to achieve this, a self-leader has to be on a constant *evaluation of possibilities, alternatives and opportunities.* This can only be achieved if one is also *constantly evaluating the self.* .

The *Natural rewards* dimension is Houghton and Neck's (2002) eighth dimension. This dimension focuses on the pleasant instead of the unpleasant side of one's job or activities by doing tasks that are enjoyable and seeking out activities that one enjoys doing. I have matched the Singapore self-leadership qualities of *generates sound work plans* and *consistency in work* under this dimension. My argument for this is relatively simple, that with a good work plan and the consistency in executing them will one be able to enjoy doing the tasks related to the plan.

Houghton and Neck's (2002) final dimension is s*elf-cueing.* This dimension requires the self-leader to remind him or herself of what is to be accomplished. To accomplish this, a self-leader needs to be first of all, *acquiring knowledge and wisdom*, *keeping everybody's confidence level high, good time-management, strong sense of awareness* and lastly being *a strategic thinker*. These qualities cover more than just self-cueing and describe self-leaders as professionals who manage their responsibilities well.

Culturally unique Singapore self-leadership qualities. At the end of the matching exercise, there were eight Singapore self-leadership qualities that were conceptually or culturally different from Houghton and Neck's (2002) dimensions. These unique self-leadership qualities were country specific and implied that local culture did played a role in the participants' perception of self-leadership. While Houghton and Neck's (2002) RSLQ seem to be generally applicable in capturing self-leadership levels based on generic factors, it was not possible for

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these researchers to envisage cultural differences of individual nationalities of people (Alves et al., 2006).

The eight culturally unique Singapore self-leadership qualities are:

1. Believing in work experience and informal education
2. Believing in meritocracy
3. Practises filial devotion
4. Understanding harmony and discretion
5. Constantly improving relationship with others and building rapport
6. Non-believer in luck despite luck being culturally important
7. Possess non stereotypical attitude towards 'face' and 'kiasuism'
8. Can makes effective but unpopular decisions

The first quality, *Believing in work experience and informal education*, was somewhat expected, as the participants were all mature age Singaporeans with many years of working experience. Naturally, they found this self-leadership quality important. However, despite their belief, they were supportive of Singapore's *meritocratic* policies, even though meritocracy's focus on academic achievements seems to contradict that of work experience. The participants suggested that unless one is an entrepreneur or a self-employed person, attaining a tertiary education in Singapore was essential for everyone including mature adults in order to attain social recognition and mobility. These are strong incentives attracting Singaporeans to pursue their tertiary education.

The next four Singapore self-leadership qualities valued by the participants were perhaps the most representative of their Asian heritage. These qualities were *practice of filial devotion, understanding of harmony and discretion, constantly improving relationship with others and building rapport* and *non-believer in luck.* These qualities were closely associated with the teachings of Confucianism (Fernandez, 2004; Westbrook, 2012; Wei & Li, 2013).

The *practice of filial devotion* was most profound in Samuel and Cynthia. Samuel claimed that the two reasons why he pursued tertiary education at a mature age was firstly to advance his career, and secondly, to make his parents proud. This act of filial devotion may have been Samuel's way of expressing not only his self-leadership qualities but also his respect for the Chinese culture (Westbrook, 2012). Samuel had wanted to show his strict parents that he was capable of attaining his tertiary education in spite his playful childhood. In the case of Cynthia who experienced poverty at a young age, taking a home leadership role in her teens was her way of showing filial devotion to her parents. Cynthia's understanding of filial devotion was displayed in true Chinese tradition, where parents are placed in the highest order of Confucian stratification (Westbrook, 2012).

On the other hand, *understanding harmony and discretion,* together with *constantly improving relationship with others and building rapport* were best displayed by Timothy, the oldest of the participants, even though the others seem to have a clear understanding of the importance of this aspect of Chinese culture as well (Wei & Li, 2013). In a Chinese society, harmony is viewed as the cardinal cultural value and is the main essence of Confucian theories of social interaction (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Chen, 2001; Chen & Ringo, 2002).

Non-believer in luck, portraits many mature adults' belief that hard work and perseverance, not luck, are the right attitudes toward goal achievements and success.

The last two self-leadership qualities valued by the Singapore participants could be classified as very Asian or Singaporean in nature – *possessing non stereotypical attitude towards 'face' and 'kiasuism'*, and *makes effective but unpopular decisions.*

Since the phenomenon of 'face'and 'kiasuism' have been widely discussed throughout this thesis, I shall not indulge in providing more information on these constructs. While the act of saving 'face' or being 'kiasu' were behaviours commonly practiced by Singaporeans, they were regarded as the ugly side of social grace. It was therefore not surprising that having the right attitude towards saving 'face' or 'kiasuism' were regarded as important and valuable self-leaders qualities. The participants must have felt that a good self-leader should have the ability to refrain from such practises and is able to hold him or herself with high esteem and grace. However, that being said, the act of saving 'face' should not be confused with that of giving 'face' to others, which is considered a self-leadership quality as well – *Understanding harmony and discretion*.

Finally, the self-leadership quality of *making effective but unpopular decisions* was again an admirable quality believed by many older Singaporeans. This particular style of management has been the trademark of national leaders governing Singapore since the prime-ministership of Lee Kuan Yew (Lee, 1998; 2000; 2013). The participants must have felt that the ability to make such decisions requires the person to be of certain authoritative standing, is confident that such decisions are made correctly and for the better good of all even if it is not for some. The vision behind tough decisions is what makes a good leader.

While the above discussions sum up the participants' articulation of self-leadership qualities that were important to them, findings from this research have suggested that the perception of self-leadership not only differs within cultures, it could also differ within people of different social backgrounds and standings, professions, age, family upbringing or environment within the same culture.

Proposed country specific cultural extension to the RSLQ. Houghton and Neck's (2002) RSLQ (see Table 8.2) consisted of nine dimensions and 35 items. Each dimension is presented by a grouping of three to five items. The items within each dimension are similar in context but worded differently. A respondent has to choose from a scale of one to five as to how well these items describe him or her. One represents "Not at all accurate", and five, "Completely accurate".

This research, on the other hand, found eight Singapore self-leadership qualities that were deemed to possess cultural significance to Singaporeans. In order for these qualities to be incorporated into the RSLQ, I would like to suggest the development of a cultural extension to the RSLQ to further refine and enhance the measuring of self-leadership levels when administering the RSLQ to Singaporean respondents. I proposed that the content of this extension be named a new Dimension – *Evaluation of local cultural beliefs.* Table 8.4 shows a sample of my proposed extension based on the eight self-leadership qualities generated by this research.

Table 8.4

Proposed country specific extension to the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ)

Instruction: Read each of the below statements carefully and try to decide how true the statement is in describing you.
Not at all accurate =1; Somewhat accurate = 2; A little accurate = 3; Mostly accurate = 4; Completely accurate = 5

	I believe in work experience and informal education

Evaluation of local cultural beliefs (Singapore)	I believe in Singapore's meritocratic system
	I practise strong filial devotion to my parents and elders
	I understand social harmony and discretion and practices them extensively
	I am constantly improving my relationship with others and is always building rapport
	I do not believe in luck despite luck being culturally important
	I possess non-stereotypical attitude towards 'face' and 'kiasuism'
	I can make effective but unpopular decisions

Through the development of a cultural extension to the self-leadership measuring scale, it is hoped that a certain level of customization can be accomplished when conducting future self-leadership studies.

Research on the development of this cultural extension can be first conducted using a sampling of local participants. These participants can then brainstorm what is important to their culture and determine the self-leadership qualities to be featured in the extension. Once this is completed and attached to the RSLQ, the main research can then begin.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the two areas that were significant to this research, the first being the research questions and the second, being the development of a cultural extension to the self-leadership measuring scale which will enable future self-leadership studies to capture the essence of cultural differences in individual countries.

In the next chapter, entitled Self-leadership Re-framed, I shall conclude this research by summarizing what has been accomplished.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: Self-leadership Re-framed

*'Societal culture' in Singapore can be understood as an evolving mix of 'traditional'
and 'modernizing' cultural stands, complexly related to dominant political and economic
processes and aligned in the pursuit of a wider national vision*
(Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2000, p. 87)

Overview

In one of Charles C. Manz's earliest books, the man who conceptualised the construct of self-leadership wrote (Manz, 1983, p. xi):

> This book is about self-leadership. It emphasizes that we choose what we are and what we become. It recognizes that the world does not always cooperate with our goals, but that we largely create that personal world with which we must cope. It also points out that we influence our actions in countless ways, which we may not even be aware of.

> The world is experiencing a knowledge explosion. It is frightening to realise that what we learn often becomes obsolete in a short time. What doesn't change, however, is our need to effectively deal with this complex world and to lead ourselves to fulfilment in life. If we can develop the ability to continually renew ourselves and to overcome our obstacles on our way to life's exhilarations, we can become what we choose for ourselves.

I was interested to know how the self-leadership concept was interpreted and practised by a group of mature Singaporeans, all of whom were born during the country's colonial era. Despite having successful careers, these mature Singaporeans have found their pursuit of a tertiary education at mid-life, irresistible. This thesis reflects their unusual journey, made at a time when Singapore was transformed into an independent first world country (Lee, 2000). My

understanding of Singapore as a distinct cultural setting has also provided me with new perspectives on how adult learning is viewed.

My own initial definition of self-leadership was that of self-motivation, however, findings from this research have revealed that it involved many other elements and aspects. Self-leadership is seen as an internal dynamic force that propels people to overcome obstacles and make new achievements. Self-leadership may also differ with age, profession, social standing, family upbringing, culture or environment, just to name a few. In fact, self-leadership is a process that can be incorporated into many aspects of everyday life and can be practiced by a range of people.

This research had been specific in terms of period and context. It relates specifically to the Singapore context and was conducted during the period between 2009 to 2014, a time when Singaporeans, like the rest of the world, were faced with the aftermath of a global recession, and had to work hard to earn a livelihood in an extremely competitive and challenging economic landscape.

The changing landscape has also made me looked upon self-leadership as an influencing factor for the younger generation of Singaporeans, who have been brought up in a totally different world as compared to that experienced by their parents and grandparents. Having taken their well-being and privileges for granted (Lee, 2013), today's Singapore youths are asking, "Where is the miracle?" (p. 207). Mature adults on the other hand, having dealt with the harshness of the old era and experienced foreign cultural dominations (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996) have learned to cope with life's uncertainties. Memories of widespread poverty (Ngiam, 2011) have probably also given mature Singaporeans a very different outlook and gaze. To many of them, living and being successful is about hard work, perseverance and determination.

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Self-leadership was probably not a politically driven agenda in the old regime. Lee (1998, 2000, 2013) had preferred Singaporeans to be subservient to the authoritarian government he created (Chua, 2004). Lee's era was not unlike the colonial era where the British had acted supremely in every sense. Lee's hard-line stance, however, has turned into a culture most mature Singaporeans have accepted. They have supported Lee's belief that good and effective governance is not always popular (Lee, 1998).

The qualitative construction of this thesis has given me the benefit of in-depth understanding and reflects the lived experiences and the values associated with the pursuit of education, self-leadership being a source of motivation.

Although there is a significant volume of literature relating to self-leadership and adult leaning, relatively few studies have examined the influence of one factor over the other and conducted in different cultural settings. Given the increase in focus on the globalisation of higher education today (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011), this study has been timely in addressing the concerns of mature adults. To guide the study, a theoretical framework within the post-colonial theory helps to depict self-leadership and mature adults' pursuit of tertiary education in a different cultural context.

Lastly, this study looked at the self-leadership construct, and suggests that in order to capture the cultural differences in each country setting, a country specific cultural extension to the revised self-leadership questionnaire or RSLQ (Houghton and Neck, 2002) be developed for future self-leadership studies under different cultural settings.

The Research Questions

The four research questions addressed by this thesis asked how self-leadership might have influenced the case study mature participants in their pursuit of a tertiary education; their preference for a degree programme over other forms of professional or trade training; tertiary education's influence on their future selves and work experience's possible enhancements to their educational journey.

The participants, who coped with the challenges of educational pursuit, career development and family commitment culminated into one, were invited to tell their stories, and semi-structured interviews have supported this process. A range of responses and attitudes permeated their thoughts and the narratives were presented in Chapter 5 to Chapter 8 under the themes of Leading and motivating, Goal striving, In search of the self and Self-leadership in uniquely Singapore – a cultural insight on the self-leadership questionnaire. These themes were generated as a result of data analysis. The stories told by the participants would have facilitated readers into becoming familiar with the five case studies and provided an understanding of their challenges which naturally came with success.

During the progress of this research and as different views emerged, it became clear to me that although the overall vision and aspiration of the participants may have appeared similar from the exterior, each of the participants in fact had a different internal worldview which was very much influenced and dictated by their diverse social and cultural backgrounds, professions and social standings. These aspects have in fact emerged as findings underpinning this study and make each case study unique (Stake, 2006).

As each participant told their story, I began to be conscious of my own position as a fellow adult learner and was careful not to allow my own thoughts to influence or guide their beliefs or assumptions (Neck & Houghton, 2006). I was also cautious and reflexive on issues that may be sensitive to each individual participant especially those involving 'face' or 'kiasuism'. I was relieved that the interview sessions went without much distress to the parties. The fact about qualitative interpretive research is that researchers must be ethical in his or her approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and I was personally prepared for the research to change my own perception of self-leadership and adult learning.

While the five case studies featured came from the same setting, the participants took on the research questions with different attitudes and significance. I could tell that some were truly passionate about adult learning and what it meant to them, while others tend to treat the subject matter simply as a task to be accomplished.

Implications Between Self-leadership, Adult Pursing Education and Post-colonialism

The concept of post-colonialism has been a central focus across a range of multi-disciplinary research fields (Williams & Chrisman, 1994; Ashcroft et al., 2002). It also has a strong implication on this research. Throughout the history of Singapore, post-colonialism is a term often written or spoken about but is selfdom understood adequately in the way it should have been by Singaporeans. The reason perhaps is due to Singaporeans' belief that colonialism ended some five decades ago when the country became independent. It is therefore natural for Singaporeans to regard the consequences of post-colonialism as insignificant. This misconception, as suggested by Chen (2010) is particularly disturbing when seen from the cultural context of post-colonialism. Chen (2010) cited many countries having undergone

political and military de-colonisation, however, none has yet to fully de-colonised themselves from the cultural and psychological effects passed down by the colonizers. Chen (2010) further iterated that decolonization is not simply the acts of anti-colonialism by establishing a sovereign country, but is in fact a long term relationship with the former coloniser to "reflexively work out" (p. 3) a culturally, politically and economically sound solution involving "self-critique, self-negation, and self-rediscovery" (p. 3). These cultural, political and economic factors would have a strong implication and influence on the way a mature adult Singaporean view his or her leadership in terms of self-enhancement to cope and complete within this challenging landscape.

This landscape change is particularly important to countries within the South East Asian region, where colonisation by the European colonisers (Chen, 2010) have lasted centuries for some. Their road to independence has been far from smooth. Many fought for decades with the colonisers, championed by outstanding national heroes. In the case of Singapore, who first became independent under Malaysia (see chapter 5) it was no exception. Singapore's national hero was none other than Lee Kuan Yew (Lee, 1998; 2000; 2013), a distinguished political figure whose writings and thoughts has been featured extensively throughout this research.

The three concepts, self-leadership, adults pursuing education and post-colonisation as seen from a mature Singaporean's perspective seem to have complemented each other in strange but positive ways. From Singapore's pioneer generation of leaders to their exemplary and exceptional display of self-leadership in the face of post-colonisation, to the mammoth task of nation building (Chen, 2010), one would instantly see the link between these concepts, which naturally included the provision of education in the aftermath of colonisation.

In the Singapore context, Lee's preference for English education and retaining many aspects of colonial culture were initially met with great resistance, especially from the Chinese

community (Lee, 1998). However over time people have learned to accept his decisions and begin to understand and see the thinking behind his foresighted strategies. Today, Singaporeans are perhaps one of the most fluent in the English language within the Asian nations (Kirkpatrick, 2008) and this have facilitated and value added to their high level of connectivity between the East and the West (2008). Many Asian countries have since followed suit in trying to educate their younger generation to be proficient in the English language (2008). Colonization and with it the command of the coloniser's language seem to have favoured generations of Singaporeans in their quests for tertiary education. Such opportunities for mature adults would have been very limited due to their proficiency in the English Language had Singapore not embraced the English language the way it had.

Methodological Implications

This study adopted a case study approach using five case studies with each involving a mature participant. The participants were from different professions and social backgrounds; however they were all ethnic Chinese Singaporeans. This study explored the various factors that may influence their educational experience including their exercise of self-leadership, cultural influence generated by the post-colonial Singapore setting.

Aspects of the study also adopted a two prong approach in terms of data examination, semi-structured interviews and analysis of artefacts provided by the participants. This study therefore benefitted from the usual advantages of a case study approach in terms of being a rich source of relevant, real-world information but also benefitted from the confirmatory evidence of the artefacts.

The qualitative adaptation of my interview questions from Houghton and Neck's (2002) Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire turned out to be effective in enticing the participants to answer the questions in an in-depth manner. This qualitative approach also encouraged the participants into interpreting the self-leadership concept in the way they had believed in. They were able to reflect on their achievements and think about their decision making in terms of self-leadership.

I would also like to make a few points about what has been special about this research. Firstly, Singapore is a multi-racial society but all the case study participants were of Chinese ethnic origin. The study would have been different had I been able to obtain the views of Indian, Malay or Eurasian Singaporeans into the research. However, the dominance of ethnic Chinese in this research in itself reflects a shift in Singaporean society

Findings

On self-leadership. A quantitative approach using the self-leadership questionnaires as presented by past researchers (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009, Ho et al., 2012) would have been able to capture the Singaporean participants' level of self-leadership and provide this research with hard facts and figures. However, in contrast, through a qualitative approach, this research was able to attain in-depth understandings of how a culturally varied concept like self-leadership is understood and interpreted by mature Singaporeans. What does the self-leadership concept mean to them and how it is being defined?

Self-leadership was defined in many different ways in this research, but on the whole, there were a few focuses that were common to the participants. All the participants see self-

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leadership as a form of improving employability skills through the acquisition of education. This is especially important in the context of Singapore where meritocracy is widely practised. However, education is seen only as a stepping stone, whereas self-leadership covers a lot more ground than just employability skills.

Self-leadership dictates certain achievements and survival skills, qualities not necessarily acquired through education. This includes how certain tasks are executed and how knowledge and intelligence are applied. Self-leaders will resolve problems in unconventional ways, and yet when the problem is beyond them, will not hesitate to seek divine intervention when all possibilities and alternatives are exhausted.

A good self-leader sells his or her ideas instead of imposing them. This requires good planning and strong strategic thinking. The ability to absorb new knowledge, skills and information is therefore vital to his or her success as an individual or as a member of an organisation. In other words, a self-leader takes full responsibilities for all aspects of his or her life. The self-leadership discipline is therefore multi-faceted. It covers from visionary, motivational to directional and disciplinary abilities as well as a whole array of leadership qualities that culminates into goal achievements.

In the larger context of Singapore, self-leadership may be viewed as a powerful quality that has been passed down from the generations of political leaders to ensure the island nation's survival - commencing from the pioneer spirits of the older generations in overcoming adversities and hardship to managing today's youths with high expectations. In the process of this research, it is believed that the eyes of Singaporeans have become open in realisation that their ability to command education has gone beyond just hard work and perseverance.

On mature adults pursuing tertiary education. This research was also able to identify a few aspects of mature adults' aspiration to earn for themselves a tertiary degree education. Against many common beliefs and assumptions that mature adults' journey to pursue tertiary education might be very challenging, this research have shown that this might not always be the case.

With years of work experience, mature adults were able to demonstrate their sense of adaptation into new environments and adjust their own expectations of situations accordingly. Work experience had in fact enhanced their understanding of theoretical concepts and understandings, and given them the complexity to undertake tasks that are demanding in nature. The only area found wanting by these mature adults was their lack of memory power, which many felt was inevitable due to age.

Not all mature adults look upon the pursuit of tertiary education at a mature age with a clear purpose or intention, even though many had wanted their new educational achievements to change their future in terms of securing better jobs. Many seem to be doing it out of interest or simply pursuing a life-long dream of becoming a university graduate. There are also others who wanted to know and test their own academic capabilities. A tertiary education is something money cannot buy regardless of wealth and this has added to the challenge career successful mature adults are willing to undertake.

In the Singapore context, it is unfortunate that many mature adults pursue tertiary education due to their 'kiasu' nature, of not wanting to lose out to others who have degrees, regardless of the necessity. This culture is not confined to the pursuit of education alone but is in fact evident in many other aspects of Singaporeans' life. However, many critics have said that this in fact is part and parcel of a competitive society.

In conclusion, this thesis, a study of self-leadership and mature student's pursuit of tertiary education in Singapore, has made the influence of cultural identity and heritage visible. It contributes to the theoretical, methodological, and empirical literatures, and presents forward new dimension of self-leadership based on a Singaporean perspective. This thesis was framed by post-colonial perspective and positions self-leadership as an important leadership construct in Singapore.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study makes several new contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it integrates the literature of four related fields of study, namely Culture and education from a Singapore perspective, the concept of self-leadership, in search of the self and adult as learners, thus providing a fresh perspective and the basis for a coherent study of self-leadership's influence on adult learning. Secondly, the research confirms the importance of cultural context when self leadership studies are conducted in different countries, thus addressing gaps in the previous literature. It also confirms the influence of factors that have already been given significant levels of attention in the cultural studies literature. Finally, the study highlights the fundamental importance of adult learning process and principles.

With globalisation and increasing levels of interdependence and interaction between countries and cultures, the importance of adult learning that is conducted in different cultural context is likely to continue and perhaps increase substantially. This study seeks to highlight these differences and provide a basis upon which academics and practitioners can more effectively study and conduct self-leadership or adult learning research in different cultural contexts.

On the re-framing of the self-leadership questionnaire

This re-framing is important as the concept can be used as motivating factors to enhance individual or employee performances in organisations (Manz, 1986; Neck & Manz, 1999; Prussia et al, 1998), a strategy the concept was originally designed for. It will also inform ideas about leadership in its wider sense in Singapore. Furthermore, self-leadership in its Western conceptualised form may not be totally comprehensible or relevant to Singaporeans due to their cultural differences (Alves et al., 2006; Neubert & Wu, 2006; Ho & Nesbit, 2009; Ho et al., 2012). Self-leadership can also act as a critical factor in encouraging mature-age Singaporeans in overcoming resistance to change (Neck & Manz, 1999). Lastly, self-leadership can also serve as an addition for leadership (Neubert & Wu, 2006) in a country where leadership nurturing is a serious but challenging national matter (Lee, 2013).

Framed in the context of a Post-colonial perspective, this thesis therefore argues that the self-leadership theory as proposed by Western authors be re-framed to suit discussions in an Asian and in particular, a Singapore post-colonial context. This thesis also argues that the self-leadership concept need not be limited to or explained exclusively by a Western outlook. This re-framing was influenced by cultural imagery and that of using *Asia as Method* (Chen, 2010) as inspiring analysis.

This study proposes that self-leadership qualities articulated directly or indirectly by the participants through their interpretation of the concept under a Singapore cultural context be used in the reframing. This process involves identifying the self-leadership qualities generated by the participants and comparing them to the ones from Western researchers such as Houghton and Neck (2002). Similarities in self-leadership qualities or dimensions are then taken out with

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the remainder being Singaporean centric self-leadership qualities. These Singaporean centric qualities are then used to develop a country specific cultural extension to the RSLQ.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations commonly associated with qualitative research. Qualitative research is "subjective" and "personalistic" (Stake, 2010, p. 29) and "its contribution toward an improved and disciplined science are slow and tendentious" (p. 29). There is also the impossibility of precisely measuring factors that are pertinent to the study; a lack of objectivity and standard procedures; problems with duplication, reliability and validity (Neumann, 2003).

However, according to Yin (2011, p. 7) qualitative research is about "studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions" and "representing the views and perspectives of the participants". Yin (2010) further elaborated that a good qualitative research should cover the "contextual conditions with which people live" (p. 8) as well as being able to contribute "insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behaviour" (p. 8). Lastly Yin (2011) stressed the importance of "striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone" (p. 8). I am delighted that this research has fulfilled all the above requirements.

This research is also about theory generation and not about theory testing and as such, factors like external validity or generalizability are not important considerations (Eisenharbt & Graenbner, 2007). In terms of reliability, referring to the extent in which this research findings could be replicated, Merriam, (2002, p. 27) stressed that "reliability is problematic in the social sciences", based on the fact that "human behaviour is never static". There is also no justification that many or multiple experiences are "more reliable than what one person experiences" (p. 27).

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The qualitative approach is innovative and suggests a new methodology to the study of self-leadership. It is also important in Singapore where surveys are very over used and not popular.

Future Research

Being one of the first to indulge in a study about self-leadership and culture behind mature adult's motivation in pursuing higher education using the qualitative approach has enabled me to demonstrate the depth of such an inquiry. Future studies based on the same approach or different approaches with different age groups, settings and social backgrounds may prove interesting to further the understanding of the self-leadership concept or the pursuit of education. It is therefore important for future researchers to pay particular attention to the composition of participants, that it should be more culturally well represented.

In terms of subject matter, I believe more research can be conducted to understand other aspects of self-leadership, in particular its relation to self-motivation of management staff and employees in organisations. Such studies should be made taking into account the cultural differences and inclinations amongst nationalities, for example, between individualistic as against collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001). As Singapore enters a new and dynamic phase in terms of economic development and growth, it is important that leaders and employers learn to handle the cultural diversity of the Singapore workforce well. It is time that more cultural and leadership studies be made in order that Singaporeans might understand themselves better.

Studies that will encourage citizens and employees to indulge in self-leadership and developing it into a national culture are equally important. This is especially so in countries like Singapore, where citizens' reliance on government leadership has sadly developed into an aspect

of national psyche. Self-leadership research in the context of Singapore can also be made to address the control mentality of Singapore political leaders and may be an aspect that supports citizens to move forward towards personal autonomy in their own sense of leadership. More research of the self-leadership concept in relation to personal goal attainment and confidence building in a highly globalised world is needed to minimise the complexities of technology and communication change, this may be especially relevant to the mature generation of citizens.

Another possibility for future research may be in the area of development in refining my proposed self-leadership cultural extension to Houghton and Neck's (2000) Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire or RSLQ. This should take into consideration the areas of influence local culture have on the self-leadership concept as well as significant leadership qualities determined through the research process within individual countries.

Lastly, it is my hope therefore that future research on self-leadership be conducted using a culturally appropriate approach to determine additional self-leadership qualities based on important cultural aspects that are specific to the country of research.

My Final Reflection

The narratives as provided to the readers within this study deals with the context of mature adults pursuing tertiary education. While the participants came from all walks of life, of different professions and backgrounds, they nevertheless had this common belief of wanting to do better in life and thus the beginning of their journey to pursue higher education. The most inspiring part of their stories surely must have come from the fact that they were all successful in their careers even before they started on their journey and were willing to take a risk. Their ability to visualise success while standing on success itself is something many of us can emulate.

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I hope these stories will encourage more mature adults who are doubtful about their own abilities in re-engaging in the process of learning, to do so without fear or anxiety.

In writing this final reflection, it is also timely for me to look back at my own academic journey, which started miraculously some 10 years ago in 2004. I was then 53 years old and pursuing my first tertiary degree education. Looking back, I am glad that after spending the first 3 decades of my working life building a career and having a family, my self-leadership finally heeded to one of my father's advice, to pursue education.

My academic journey, although started late, has been the most fulfilling in my life. Words cannot simply express my pride that I am about to cross the grand finishing line and what lies ahead is a new horizon led by a new self.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Explanatory Statement

Date:

Explanatory Statement

Target participants: Career successful mature adults who have recently completed their first tertiary degree education.

Research title: Self-leadership and mature adults pursuing tertiary education: 5 case studies

This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Robert Khoo Boo Hor and I am conducting a research project with Dr. Jane Bone, a lecturer in the Department of Education, towards a PhD at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. The data collected may be used to supplement other research project in the future.

Invitation to be a research participant

I will be recruiting my research participants either through informal networking or through advertisements placed at Kaplan Singapore Campus. If you receive this Explanatory Statement from a friend of yours it means that this person is our common friend and he or she is recommending you to be my research participant. Upon receipt of this statement and if you are keen to participate, you may contact me at my email, telephone number or address that is provided at the end of this statement.

Why have you been chosen as a participant to this research?

You have been invited to participate in this research as you fall into the group of people I am focusing my research on – career successful mature adults who have recently completed their first degree tertiary education

The aim/purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to understand the concept of self-leadership and how this concept and its applications can play an instrumental role in enriching the experience of mature adult students in their pursuit of a first degree tertiary education.

Possible benefits

This research seeks to add to the growing body of literature on self-leadership by investigating the beliefs of mature people in an academic context and setting.

Participants to the research will be able to share their unusual academic journeys with the researcher and relate their lived experiences with other participants.

Its contribution to society may not be in the form of policy making or practice improvement but seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of those interested by providing a rich description that may foster action taking.

What does the research involve?

The study involves audio taping in-depth interviews with each participant as well as a group sharing session with all participants.

How much time will the research take?

Each in-depth interview session with each participant may last from an hour to a maximum of 2 hours. Two interview sessions are required for each participant – one a self-interview session and the other an interview session by the researcher.

The research will obviously take up some of your precious time, however, Interview sessions will be conducted at the convenience of each participant. Participant's identity will not be reviewed in my thesis.

Can I withdraw from the research?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to the self-interview session.

Confidentiality

During data analysis, the researcher will code the data systematically according to themes of the research and will not divulge any personal details. The use of pseudonyms will further protect the identity of each participant.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Robert Khoo Boo Hor at ████████████████████ The findings will be available from July 2011 to March 2012.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research, Self-leadership and mature adults pursuing tertiary education: 5 case studies is being conducted, please contact:
Dr. Jane Bone ████████████████	Executive Officer Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 ████████████ ████████ ████████ ████████████

Thank you.

Robert Khoo Boo Hor

████████████████████████ Address: 14 Jalan Limau Bali,

Singapore 468485

Appendix 2: Participant's consent form

Consent Form

Title: Self-leadership and mature adults pursuing tertiary education: Five case studies

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NOTE: **This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records**

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required ☐ Yes ☐ No

I also agree to the following:

- I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate at the beginning of the research project.

- I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / focus group for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

- I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

- I understand that data from the interview, focus group, transcript, audio-tape will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Advertisement to invite participants

Research participants needed

Date:

To whom it may concern

My name is Robert Khoo and I am currently a PhD candidate with Monash University Singapore Campus at Kaplan.

I am doing a research on career successful mature adult students who are currently pursuing their first degree tertiary education.

My research title is: Self-leadership and mature adults pursuing tertiary education: five case studies

I need volunteer participants for my research

1. Participants must be

- 40 years and above

- Holding a successful career with a senior job position or a self-made entrepreneur

- Currently doing or within the last 3 years completed his or her first degree (bachelor degree) tertiary education

2. Time and commitment required of participants

- A total of 3 in-depth interviews to be conducted for the research

- The first interview is a self-recorded interview, the 2nd is an interview by the researcher and the last interview is a group interaction session amongst the participants

Those interested please contact me either by email or phone as listed below:-

Thank you.

Robert Khoo

Appendix 4: Interview questions Set A

Self-recorded interview with Cynthia, Satsuki and Samuel

1. Do you often imagine yourself at various stages of success, be it in your career or other achievements and how does this prompt you to work even harder?

2. Do you set or establish specific goals for yourself so that you can improve your own performance?

3. Have you ever thought of setting goals for your life and not just setting goals for your job and career?

4. When you are faced with difficult problems what do you do?

5. When you complete an assignment well, how do you reward yourself?

6. Can you tell me something about your beliefs and assumptions and how do these play a part when you are faced with difficult situations?

7. During times when you performed badly, what do you do?

8. How do you keep track of your own performance at work?

9. There is always a pleasant and an unpleasant side of everyone's job. Which side do you focus on and why?

10. How do you remind yourself of what is to be accomplished?

11. Before you actually perform a task, what is the most likely thing you will do to ensure its success?

12. Tell me something about your relationship with your colleagues and what are the areas that make you feel good?

13. What do you do when your opinion differs from that of your colleagues?

14. How often do you practice discretion with your friends and colleagues – do you lead by example?

15. When there is a very difficult task to perform – do you volunteer even knowing well that your chances of success are very slim?

16. What does the term self-leadership mean to you and how has it assisted you in the pursuit of your tertiary education?

17. What was the most significant factor that motivated you to return to school and finish your tertiary education after such a long lapse of time?

18. What is different about pursuing a tertiary education against staying on a successful pathway with appropriate professional development?

19. Tell me about your academic journey and what are the strategies you have applied to assure yourself of success? Do you have reasons to believe that your persistency came from self-leadership and self-efficacy qualities?

20. How has your academic journey been different from that of your career journey? What are some of the physical challenges you face as a mature adult student? For example: Fatigue, poor memory?

21. How do you see a tertiary education influencing your future self and why do you choose a tertiary education to change your future?

22. Your years of work experience, how has that helped you in your academic journey?

23. Some people say that work experience is as important as education, what are your views on this?

24. If I ask you to provide me with 3 adjectives that best describe yourself, what would they be and why so?

25. What would be your advice for mature people wanting to take up a tertiary education?

26. In a Singapore context where it is a risk adverse country – does this make you feel pressured to announce to people that you are embarking on an academic journey at your age? How do you feel about failures?

Appendix 5: Interview questions Set B

Interview with Timothy

1. Do you often imagine yourself at various stages of success, be it in your career or other achievements and how does this prompt you to work even harder?

2. Do you set or establish specific goals for yourself so that you can improve your own performance?

3. Have you ever thought of setting goals for your life and not just setting goals for your job and career?

4. When you are faced with difficult problems what do you do?

5. When you complete an assignment well, how do you reward yourself?

6. Can you tell me something about your beliefs and assumptions and how do these play a part when you are faced with difficult situations?

7. During times when you performed badly, what do you do?

8. How do you keep track of your own performance at work?

9. There is always a pleasant and an unpleasant side of everyone's job. Which side do you focus on and why?

10. How do you remind yourself of what is to be accomplished?

11. Before you actually perform a task, what is the most likely thing you will do to ensure its success?

12. Tell me something about your relationship with your colleagues and what are the areas that make you feel good?

13. What do you do when your opinion differs from that of your colleagues?

14. How often do you practice discretion with your friends and colleagues – do you lead by example?

15. When there is a very difficult task to perform – do you volunteer even knowing well that your chances of success are very slim?

16. What does the term self-leadership mean to you and how has it assisted you in the pursuit of your tertiary education?

17. What was the most significant factor that motivated you to return to school and finish your tertiary education after such a long lapse of time?

18. What is different about pursuing a tertiary education against staying on a successful pathway with appropriate professional development?

19. Tell me about your academic journey and what are the strategies you have applied to assure yourself of success? Do you have reasons to believe that your persistency came from self-leadership and self-efficacy qualities?

20. How has your academic journey been different from that of your career journey? What are some of the physical challenges you face as a mature adult student? For example: Fatigue, poor memory?

21. How do you see a tertiary education influencing your future self and why do you choose a tertiary education to change your future?

22. Your years of work experience, how has that helped you in your academic journey?

23. Some people say that work experience is as important as education, what are your views on this?

24. If I ask you to provide me with 3 adjectives that best describe yourself, what would they be and why so?

25. What would be your advice for mature people wanting to take up a tertiary education?

26. In a Singapore context where it is a risk adverse country – does this make you feel pressured to announce to people that you are embarking on an academic journey at your age? How do you feel about failures?

Appendix 6: Interview questions Set C

Interview with Satsuki and Cynthia

1. At what age did you commence your first degree tertiary education?

2. Was there any particular reason why you did your tertiary education at this age?

3. Can you briefly describe your academic journey thus far?

4. Can you briefly describe your career journey thus far?

5. At the point when you were making a decision to pursue your first degree, you were already a relatively career successful person, so what was the most significant reason that jolt you up to tell yourself that you need a degree?

6. What do you understand of the term "self-leadership"?

7. In what way has self-leadership contributed to your decision to pursue a degree education?

8. You could have chosen to further your career by going on a professional development pathway, but instead you chose to pursue an academic qualification, why?

9. As a career successful person, how has tertiary education influenced your present "self" and how will it further influence your future "self"; in other words why did you choose tertiary education to change your future?

10. How does your years' of work experience or a successful professional life enhanced your educational journey as a mature student?

Appendix 7: Interview questions Set D

Interview with Samuel

1. You did your first degree at the age of 32, was there any reason or reasons why you chose to do it at a late age?

2. How was your experience as a mature student?

3. Were there other mature students as well?

4. Can you briefly describe your academic journey thus far, maybe starting from the time you were in primary school?

5. At the point when you were making a decision to pursue your first degree, you were already a relatively career successful person, so what was it that jolt you up and told you that it was time to pursue a degree? Perhaps you could recall a particular incident or situation that motivated you?

6. What do you understand of the term "self-leadership"?

7. In what way has self-leadership motivated you in your academic and career journeys?

8. You could have chosen to further your career by taking other routes like going on a professional development pathway, be an entrepreneur or even be your own boss and so forth. However, you must have believed that an academic qualification could change your future, why?

9. As a career successful person, how has having a tertiary education been able to change your present "self" and how will it further changed your future "self". In other words why did you choose tertiary education to change your future?

10. In the Singapore context, would you say that too much emphasis has been put on a person having academic qualifications as against having other qualifications and soft skills?

11. In what ways do you think that the Singapore education landscape has changed dramatically over the last few decades?

12. Many people harbour the belief that as a person ages, his or her ability to pursue a academic studies diminishes. What is your opinion on this and has your years' of work experience enhanced or not enhanced your academic journey as a mature student?

13. You have been a group director working in an established university for some time now. Over the last few years you must have seen many mature students coming through your way. What kind of feeling do you get seeing them do what you did?

14. Can you recall any particular mature student who has truly made an impression on you?

15. In your opinion, what are the qualities or characteristics that make a person a good self-leader?

Appendix 8: Interview questions Set E

Interview with Whitney

1. Do you often imagine yourself at various stages of success, be it in your career or other achievements and how does this prompt you to work even harder?
2. Do you set or establish specific goals for yourself so that you can improve your own performance?
3. Have you ever thought of setting goals for your life and not just setting goals for your job and career?
4. When you are faced with difficult problems what do you do?
5. When you complete an assignment well, how do you reward yourself?
6. Can you tell me something about your beliefs and assumptions and how do these play a part when you are faced with difficult situations?
7. During times when you performed badly, what do you do?
8. How do you keep track of your own performance at work?
9. There is always a pleasant and an unpleasant side of everyone's job. Which side do you focus on and why?
10. How do you remind yourself of what is to be accomplished?
11. Before you actually perform a task, what is the most likely thing you will do to ensure its success?
12. Tell me something about your relationship with your colleagues and what are the areas that make you feel good?
13. What do you do when your opinion differs from that of your colleagues?
14. How often do you practice discretion with your friends and colleagues – do you lead by example?
15. When there is a very difficult task to perform – do you volunteer even knowing well that your chances of success are very slim?
16. You did your first degree at the age of 49, was there any reason or reasons why you chose to do it at a late age?
17. How was your experience as a mature student?
18. Were there other mature students as well?

19. Can you briefly describe your academic journey thus far, maybe starting from the time you were in primary school?

20. At the point when you were making a decision to pursue your first degree, you were already a relatively career successful person, so what was it that jolt you up and told you that it was time to pursue a degree? Perhaps you could recall a particular incident or situation that motivated you?

21. What do you understand of the term "self-leadership"?

22. In what way has self-leadership motivated you in your academic and career journeys?

23. You could have chosen to further your career by taking other routes like going on a professional development pathway, be an entrepreneur or even be your own boss and so forth. However, you must have believed that an academic qualification could change your future, why?

24. As a career successful person, how has having a tertiary education been able to change your present "self" and how will it further changed your future "self". In other words why did you choose tertiary education to change your future?

25. In the Singapore context, would you say that too much emphasis has been put on a person having academic qualifications as against having other qualifications and soft skills?

26. In what ways do you think that the Singapore education landscape has changed dramatically over the last few decades?

27. Many people harbour the belief that as a person ages, his or her ability to pursue a academic studies diminishes. What is your opinion on this and has your years' of work experience enhanced or not enhanced your academic journey as a mature student?

28. In your opinion, what are the qualities or characteristics that make a person a good self-leader?

29. If I ask you to provide me with 3 adjectives that best describe yourself, what would they be and why so?

30. What would be your advice for mature people wanting to take up a tertiary education?

31. In a Singapore context where it is a risk adverse country – does this make you feel pressured to announce to people that you are embarking on an academic journey at your age? How do you feel about failures?

Appendix 9: The Refined Self-Leadership Questionnaire (Anderson & Prussia, 1997)

1. I make a point to keep track of how well I'm doing at work (school).

2. I write specific goals for my own performance.

3. I used written notes to remind myself of what I need to accomplish.

4. When I do something well, I reward myself with a special event such as a good dinner, movie, shopping trip, etc.

5. When my performance is not up to par I withhold things I like from myself.

6. I look for and try to increase the activities in my work that I enjoy.

7. I articulate (vocalise) my images of seeing myself successfully performing a task.

8. Sometimes I talk out loud to myself to work through a difficult situation.

9. I keep track of my progress on projects I am working on.

10. I work towards specific goals I have set for myself.

11. I use concrete reminders (e.g. notes, lists) to help me to focus on things I need to accomplish.

12. When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like.

13. I sometimes openly express my displeasure with myself when I have not done well.

14. I often physically rehearse the way I plan to deal with a challenge before I actually face the challenge.

15. When I have a choice, I try to do my work in ways that I enjoy rather than trying to get it over with.

16. I sometimes try to describe out loud my mental images of successfully performing tasks.

17. I openly articulate and evaluate my own assumptions when I have a disagreement with someone else.

18. Sometimes I find I'm talking out loud to myself to help me deal with difficult problems I face.

19. I keep a record of my progress on tasks.

20. I establish specific goals for my own performance.

21. I try to surround myself with objects and people that bring out my desirable behaviours.

22. When I do an assignment well, I like to treat myself to something or activity I especially enjoy.

23. I restrain myself from doing things I enjoy when I am not satisfied with my performance.

24. I try to build activities into my work that I like doing

25. I try to verbalized or write down my beliefs about difficult situations I face and evaluate whether they are valid.

26. When I am in difficult situations I will sometimes talk out loud to myself to help me get through it.

27. I usually am aware of how well I am doing as I perform an activity.

28. I think about the goals I intend to achieve in the future.

29. I feel guilty when I perform a task poorly.

30. Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do the task.

31. I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation.

32. I consciously have goals in my mind for my work efforts.

33. I used mental reminders to help me remember what I need to do.

34. After I perform well on an activity, I feel good about myself.

35. I tend to get down on myself in my mind when I have performed poorly.

36. I try to be aware of which activities in my work I especially enjoy.

37. I purposefully visualize myself overcoming the challenges I face.

38. I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problem with.

39. I deliberately try to think about what I am saying to myself.

40. I pay attention to how well I am doing in my work.

41. I set specific goals in my mind for my immediate task efforts.

42. I sometimes use mental tricks (e.g. forming a word from a task's initials) to help me remember what I need to get done.

43. I mentally congratulate myself for my success.

44. I tend to be tough to myself in my thinking when I have not done well on a task.

45. I focus my thinking on the pleasant rather than the unpleasant feelings I have about my job (school) activities.

46. I used my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks.

47. I think about and evaluate the beliefs and assumptions I hold.

48. I seek out alternatives for action that provide opportunities rather than dwelling on potential obstacles.

49. I give myself pep-talk to convince myself I can do it.

50. I like to act to solve problems by myself.

Appendix 10: The Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire (Houghton & Neck, 2002)

Instructions: Read each of the following items carefully and try to decide how true the statement is in describing you.

Not at all	Somewhat	A little	Mostly	Completely
Accurate	Accurate	Accurate	Accurate	Accurate
1	2	3	4	5

1. I use my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks.
2. I established specific goals for my own performance.
3. Sometimes I find I am talking to myself (out load or in my head) to help me deal with difficult problems I face.
4. When I do an assignment especially well, I like to treat myself to something or activity I especially enjoy.
5. I think of my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation.
6. I tend to get down on myself in my mind when I have performed poorly.
7. I make a point to keep track of how well I am doing at work (school).
8. I focus my thinking on the pleasant rather than the unpleasant aspects of my job (school) activities.
9. I use written notes to remind myself of what I need to accomplish.
10. I visualized myself successfully performing a task before I do it.
11. I consciously have goals in my mind for my work efforts.
12. Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations.

13. When I do something well, I reward myself with a special event such as a good dinner, movie, shopping trip, etc.
14. I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with.
15. I tend to be tough on myself in my thinking when I have not done well on a task.
16. I usually am aware of how well I am doing as I perform an activity.
17. I try to surround myself with objects and people that bring out my desirable behaviours.
18. I used concrete reminders (eg. Notes and lists) to help me focus on things I need to accomplish.
19. Sometimes I picture in my mind successful performance before I actually do the task.
20. I work towards specific goals I have set for myself.
21. When I am in difficult situations I will sometimes talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to help me get through it.
22. When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like.
23. I openly articulate and evaluate my own assumptions when I have a disagreement with someone else.
24. I feel guilty when I perform a task poorly.
25. I pay attention to how well I am doing in my work.
26. When I have a choice, I try to do my work in ways that I enjoy rather than just trying to get it over with.
27. I purposefully visualized myself overcoming the challenges I face.
28. I think about the goals that I intend to achieve in the future.
29. I think about and evaluate the beliefs and assumptions I hold.
30. I sometimes openly express displeasure with myself when I have not done well.
31. I keep track of my progress on projects I am working on.
32. I seek out activities in my work that I enjoy doing.
33. I often mentally rehearse the way I plan to deal with a challenge before I actually face the challenge.

34. I write specific goals for my own performance.

35. I find my own favourite way to get things done.

Appendix 11: Sample of RSLQ modification to open-ended questions

Example 1: RSLQ question: I used my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks.	My question: Do you often imagine yourself at various stages of success, be it in your career or other achievements and how does this prompt you to work even harder?
Example 2: RSQL question: I establish specific goals for my performance.	My question: How do you set or establish specific goals for yourself so that you can improve your own performance?
Example 3: RSQL question: When I do an assignment especially well, I like to treat myself to something or activity I especially enjoy.	My question: When you complete an assignment well, how do you reward yourself?
Example 4: RSQL question I think about my own beliefs and	My question Can you tell me something about your

assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation. .	beliefs and assumptions and how do these play a part when you are faced with difficult situations?

Appendix 12: Sample of Artefacts (documents) collected

Case study: Cynthia (pseudonym)

No of documents provided: 9 documents plus 4 photos

Description of documents

Doc. No	Date of document	Description of document	Analysis notes by researcher
1	18 August 2003	Academic transcript from Edith Cowen University certifying Cynthia's academic results for Diploma in Counselling Skills	The Diploma in Counselling Skills from a renowned Australian university was a course attended by Cynthia some 10 years ago. This must have been one of her early attempts to be involved with counselling work. The results showed her scoring distinctions for two modules - Interpersonal skills and Helping skills in Community Settings. Scoring well in these two modules seems to suggest the human relations side of Cynthia. As for the other modules which seem more academic in nature, Cynthia only managed to pass them with low scores of between fifty to fifty-eight marks. Getting this diploma must have become the foundation for her to move

			on later to a degree course in Psychology and a finally a Master's in counselling.
2	Date not present in document but estimated to be during the same period as her transcript which is August 2003	Diploma in Counselling Skills awarded to Cynthia from Edith Cowen University (related to document 1)	After a year and a half (estimated), Cynthia was finally awarded with this Diploma. Although during our interview conversation she did not mention about herself working full time in any counselling job immediate after getting this diploma, I had reason to believe that this was the first of her self-planned path to eventually be a counsellor. However, she did mention that she wanted to test herself in the field of counselling and probably that is how she got involved with voluntary work with the prison services.
3	11 November 2006	Long service award certificate presented to Cynthia in recognition of her dedicated support and contribution towards the	This long service award presented to Cynthia by the Singapore Prison Service is testimony to the long years she had served in voluntary services. Volunteerism in any context is not only a noble thing for anyone to be involved in, but a test of self-sacrifice, selflessness and a passion for the welfare of other fellow human beings.

		rehabilitation of offenders for the year 2006. Award presented by The Singapore Prison Service. Participant was represented through the Singapore After-Care Association (SACA)	Many people shy away from volunteering in the prison services, especially if contacts with inmates or ex-inmates are required. Definitely not the case with Cynthia as on several occasions she spoke about her volunteer work and how much she enjoyed them.

Appendix 13: Sample of the analysis process

The Cynthia Case Study The disassembling process after compilation (Yin, 2011)	Illustrative words (Yin , 2011) from original interview text	Category code (level 1)	Category code (level 2)	Generation of themes
Self-recorded interview data Q1: Do you often imagine yourself at various stages of success, be it in your career or other achievements and how does this prompt you to work even harder? Cynthia: I do not often				

imagine myself at various stages of success in my career or other achievements. But I do imagine achievement because it helps me to reach my goals. For example, I have KPI to meet in my nature of work. I ensure I have time frame to meet. I usually plan ahead achievable goals and monitor closely where I have gone wrong in order to achieve my target. It is stressful but it prompted me to work harder. I feel it is important to have goals in order to achieve the various stages. Once achieved, I feel the satisfaction may be that is success to me.	Do not often imagine stages of success

But do imagine achievements

Meeting goals and KPI are very important

Plan ahead achievable goal | Not a dreamer

Task oriented

A conformist | Typical Singaporean culture – achievement oriented, results oriented | Kiasu Singaporean culture |

	Self-monitoring Important to have goals	Too afraid to fail		
Q2: Do you set or establish specific goals for yourself so that you can improve your own performance? Cynthia: Yes, that is very important by setting goals are like a list of to-do tasks. I				

monitor closely on my performance. I usually start with small measurable goals and observe the progress. In this way, I can then recognise my goal so that I can see forward my own ability. During the process, it builds my self-confidence and self-awareness. In addition, I ask for feedback how to do differently to improve myself.	Important in setting goals Self-monitoring of performance Handling small goals to achieve big ones Doing things differently	Achievement oriented person Over consciousness in own performance Over consciousness in own performance	Idea of establishing goals is through multiple small attempts and hoping that this will take care of the big challenges	Self-efficacy

		Requires support from others		
Q 3: Have you ever thought of setting goals for your life and not just setting goals for your job and career? Cynthia: Yes, I feel goal setting is a powerful process to set my ideal future because I can then motivate myself to choose where I want to go in life. For example, I created a "big picture" of what I want to do with my life in next ten years. I will then break these down into smaller targets which are a must for me to achieve. With that, I will start	Goal-setting is a powerful process			

working on my to-do-list so that I can achieve my SMART goals.	Setting ideal future Using "big picture" motivation Achieving smart goals		Setting targets and goals	Goal Striving
Q4: When you are faced with difficult problems what do you do? Cynthia: When I faced with difficult problems I usually go to a quiet place or corner, sometimes just to stay at home to think				

carefully. I will consult or call my close friends for help. Before doing that, I will ask myself questions like have I identify the problems, define the problem, redefine the problem, think again and again, and answer the questions in my mind. I will reflect the answer doing self-talk. I will wait awhile if things improve or talk to people who can help me. I feel in this way, I am able to relate my issues clearly.	Facing difficult problems Solutions to facing difficult problems -close friends for help -identifying the problem -reflection through self-talk -seating it out	Self-reflection Creating self-leadership	organization of self	In search of self

Q5: When you complete an assignment well, how do you reward yourself? Cynthia: After completed an assignment, it really a relieved. I feel happy like a burden being taken off. I will not watch on my diet and I will go window shopping	Self-reward Removing self-imposed punishment as a form of reward -stop dieting -start shopping	Roles of Self-leadership being played – self-reward and self-punishment based on short term foresights	Organization of self	In search of self