

**Inclusion in higher education: an analysis of  
policy, good practice and attitudes at one  
Melbourne University**

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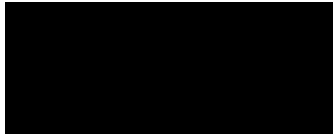
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# Declaration

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# Abstract

This research was based at one university in Melbourne, Australia and examined the stories of four international students with a disability from Hong Kong, China, Sri Lanka and the USA and their experiences of living and learning in a country outside of their own. Four teaching staff who had experienced teaching an international student with a disability were also interviewed to glean insight into their experiences as inclusive practitioners, and one Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) staff member also gave his insight into service provisions at the university. Policy documents for the university were also analysed.

The aims of this thesis were firstly, to represent the student voice, that is, to document lived experiences and insider perspectives with regard to university level education as an international student with a disability; secondly, to explore current practices and staff attitudes regarding working with students with a disability in order to inform future professional development models; and thirdly, to ascertain any gaps between inclusive policy and practices at the research university.

Using thick description and Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) as data presentation and analysis tools underpinned by Bourdieu's critical theory, the study found that contrary to some of the research literature, students had a positive experience at this university. This was attributed to 1) having a positive experience with one staff member and 2) having had a negative experience in their respective home countries in comparison. The study also found that the teaching staff experienced a lack of support through their teaching journey in working with an international student with a disability and that there was much scope for new professional development models. The policy

analysis revealed a number of mismatches between inclusive approaches at the researched university and actual practice.

The major implications from this study highlight the importance of students as active stakeholders in leveraging knowledge and experience in educating staff and informing policy and practice. The findings from this study also underscore the importance of a rigorous whole of systems approach to professional development for staff. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to training which includes information on critical theoretical perspectives on disability, legal issues, appropriate accommodations for students, communicating with students who have a disability and teaching resources were found to be key issues. These implications informed the researcher's thinking on the development of two models – one for future directions in inclusion in higher education and the other for policy development via a flowchart.

# Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

my husband John, my son Ronán, my parents Jennie and Col,

and my grandparents, Nanna and Gang Sheath.

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This thesis has weaved a consistent thread through my life over the past 4 years through a change in job, various house moves, pregnancy, birth, a growing baby son and a number of other upheavals. It has at times driven me to distraction, obsession, frustration and sheer delight. Through the many phases of emotions, challenges and exhilarations I give my heartfelt thanks to the following people:

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Finally, my 6 month old son Ronán, for his smiles, giggles and warm cuddles.



# Chapter 1 Background to the Study

International and Australian inclusive policy contexts are promoting access to university level education for local and international students with a disability in Australia, yet often in these arenas the voice of the student is not heard (Supple & Agbenyega, 2011a, 2011b, 2013). This study utilised Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993), a qualitative method which uses in-depth interpretive, multiple readings of data guided by self-reflective and thought-provoking questions in order to uncover voices which may otherwise not be heard. VRM is further explored in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) and was chosen essentially because of its aim to make participant voices ‘audible’. Making these voices audible was central to my study in carrying out an in-depth exploration of the experience of international students with a disability at one university in Melbourne. VRM is an analysis approach which aligns with Bourdieu’s critical theory and use of conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field. These tools serve as a way of explaining the complexity of student experience of policy effectiveness, resource deployment, support systems, and staff skill sets.

By employing Bourdieu’s theories and the tools of VRM, the aim of this thesis is to give a new perspective to policy, attitudes, and good practice in inclusive education. The impetus for this research stems from two sources. First, is the commitment of international and local stakeholders towards inclusive education of all citizens, and is based on the understanding that barriers are created by society rather than embodied within people. Second, is my previous career as an English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) teacher and my experience of working with a student from overseas who had a disability.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight some of the recent initiatives towards inclusion both internationally and within the Australian context in order to highlight current policy and practice frameworks towards inclusion in Australia. In this chapter I then narrow the focus to look at policy perspectives in the State of Victoria (the State in which this research was conducted) and then the university upon which this research was based. Finally I discuss the significance of this research in relation to key inclusive literature and the political, economic and individual experience, set against the backdrop of some of the deficit discourses surrounding inclusion and the international student experience.

## **Inclusion and the International Context**

In 1994 the Salamanca statement was created with the central aim of placing inclusion high on the agenda of global governmental educational reforms; “a document which has gone on to exert a powerful influence on education policies across the world” (Mittler, 2005, p. 39). There is no question that the most fundamental and important shift in thinking surrounding inclusion which has occurred are the values represented in The Salamanca Statement, that is, how people with a disability are viewed as “subjects [with] rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society” (UN Enable website, n.d.). Moreover, as a result of the Salamanca Statement, policy-makers in both developed and developing countries are now starting to show their understanding of the important links between inclusive education and economic development (Artiles & Dyson, 2005).

Whilst the various UN declarations however, have served as a “catalyst for the development of national policies” (Mittler, 2005, p. 22), achieving the goals laid out by the Salamanca Statement has been a challenge (Byrne, 2013; Inclusion International,

2009; Morton et al., 2012). There is a palpable sense that inclusive education has been “an afterthought on the global agenda for education” (Inclusion International, 2009, p. 42), and that significant gaps still remain between policies and practice (Morton et al., 2012; Slee, 2011). Indeed, this points to a real and apparent lack of focus on the agenda for disability within the context of inclusion (UNESCO, 2009).

### **Inclusion and the Australian context.**

The Disability Standards for Education 2005, based on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1992 states: “it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person’s disability or a disability of any associates of that person” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (DEEWR) 2005, p. 21). This policy situates inclusion as a non-negotiable educational endeavour. As such, universities are required to show their alignment with and commitment to guidelines, procedures and avenues for grievances, for both existing and prospective students, under their policies of equity and diversity. While the DDA however, makes it unlawful to exclude people with a disability, the policy itself is vague. The document refers throughout to educational institutions being expected to provide “reasonable adjustments” for students with a disability (DEEWR, 2005, p. 11) but fails to specify what exactly “reasonable” entails. A recent review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 carried out in 2012 highlighted the apparent nebulosity of the policy. The recommendations are that the relevant government ministers develop materials with practical examples of what a reasonable adjustment actually is (DEEWR, 2012). Uniform approaches to inclusion across the country have been slow to develop due to the fact that policy responsibility and funding for education happens at state and territory levels rather than federally. Issues pertaining to disability and inclusion in education need to be made part of a cohesive national agenda (Imber, 2010). This study

is concerned with the experiences of international students with a disability at one university. Policy provision at a national level for current and prospective students from overseas who have a disability is also governed by the aforementioned DDA which states that it is illegal to refuse acceptance into university of an international student with a disability or to charge additional fees for extra service provisions for those students (DEEWR, 2005). The Migration Act (1958, in AFDO, 2009) however, is exempt from the stipulations of the DDA, so people with a disability can in fact be discriminated against if they wish to come to Australia (Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), 2009).

As a developed nation, Australia is behind other countries both in investment into higher education and in the performance of students at higher education level (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). Also, university education continues to be accessible only to certain sections of society (Armstrong & Cairnduff, 2012). This is perhaps the legacy left by the previous conservative federal government under the Liberal party's (centre-right) Prime Minister Howard from 1996 – 2007 (Gale, 2011). According to Gale (2011) the Howard government's equity policies operated under a medical model - if students had difficulty with access to university this was perceived as a lack of individual ambition rather than as the responsibility of the institution. Government policy under the Howard government failed to take into account the social, cultural and economic circumstances of individuals trying to gain access to higher education. The change of government to Labor (centre-left) in 2007 saw politics move towards more socially just concerns under Rudd/Gillard (2007 – present). Consequently, terminology such as 'social inclusion' is becoming more widespread in Australian policy (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010a; 2010b).

In 2008 the Australian government reviewed higher education in Australia through a panel chaired by Professor Denise Bradley. The resulting paper *The Bradley Review* pointed to the need for focus on various social inclusion initiatives in education in order to increase investment in human capital through education (Bradley et al., 2008) by meeting future economic and social goals (Swinburne University of Technology Social Inclusion Discussion Paper, 2010). Australian Government targets for the higher education sector are to have 20% of graduates by 2020 from low-socio-economic backgrounds (Gale, 2011; Outhred, 2012) and for 40% of 25 – 34 year olds to hold a bachelor degree or above by 2025 (Gale, 2011). As such, universities Australia-wide are now required to demonstrate to government how they are actively seeking to enrol students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

While these initiatives by the federal government are a positive step towards education which is more inclusive, 2013 is an election year. The concern is that this may herald a change of government and a swing back to a more conservative leadership which is less concerned with issues of social justice and equity.

### **Inclusion in the State of Victoria and the city of Melbourne**

The students and staff interviewed for this research all study and work in Melbourne which is the capital city of the state of Victoria. The Victorian state government's commitment to social inclusion is reflected in documents such as *Growing Victoria Together* (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2001) and *A Fairer Victoria 2005: Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage* (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2005). Indeed, it seems that Victoria is somewhat ahead of other Australian states and territories in terms of recognising the importance of human rights. In 2006, The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities was established in Victoria. The aim of the charter means that

public authorities (such as state government departments, local governments and organisations delivering state government services) [are required] to consider human rights when they make laws, develop policies and provide their day-to-day services. (Human Rights Commission Victoria, 2009, p. 1).

Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) are the only two states and territories in Australia which have adopted a Human Rights Charter.

In addition, the Victorian government has published a number of initiatives aimed at promoting a more inclusive society; for example, the *Department of Human Services Standards* (Victorian Government, 2011) and the *Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016*. Organisations such as the Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN) and STAR (a disability advocacy group) are active and vocal contributors to equal opportunity discourse in Victoria.

These Victorian State policy documents show forward thinking in relation to inclusion compared to other states in Australia (Wu & Komesaroff, 2007). From school to higher education levels, however, problems remain with funding, a lack of systematic approaches to evaluation and assessment, and an apparent knowledge gap in general for classroom teachers (Inclusive Education Network 2006; Wu & Komesaroff, 2007). There are also indications that schools still have some way to go in creating wholly open, inclusive cultures and positive environments (Inclusive Education Network, 2006). At a higher education level, the challenges remain in lifting levels of higher educational attainment in outer-metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, including the need of “reducing the practical barriers to participation” in higher education (Dow, Adams, Dawson, & Phillips, 2009, p. 79).



## **Inclusive policy at the research university**

The equity and diversity policies of most universities reflect the direct relationship between universal ideals of inclusion through an institutional understanding of what it means to be fair and just. (In order to maintain the anonymity of the university at the centre of this study, I refer here to a general quote from its website and use a general citation for the information). The policies explicitly state how they are written within the broader ideologies of “principles of equity and justice” (University Global Equal Opportunity Policy), and make direct reference to a number of declarations, underpinned by the U.N. including The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975). These policies are linked to the service provisions of the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) for both students and staff to utilise for support mechanisms at the research university.

For this research I wanted to find out whether the policies and processes are consistent in reality with what they purport to achieve. The problem statement which is explored further in the following section is concerned with the question of how international students with a disability in particular are supported under these policies.

## **The research problem**

From global and local perspectives, accessibility to higher education for students with a disability seems fragmented and inconsistent. The report on progress since Salamanca (Inclusion International, 2009) states that access to higher education remains “very restricted” (p. 78). In addition, it can be prohibitively expensive for both local and international students to attend university. In its simplest terms, the statement of the problem is the apparent lack of accessibility to higher education for students with a

disability. This is in addition to the fact that, anecdotally, it is often assumed that international students are a relatively homogenous group, and certainly in my experience there are assumptions that students with a disability simply do not travel for education. The long term implications are significant at a variety of levels – individually for the student, economically in increasing opportunities for people with a disability to enter the workforce as empowered, educated citizens, and socially in challenging deficit views.

Part of the research problem also involves becoming engaged in what staff consider issues in teaching students with a disability and in this way, aims to inform professional development and support mechanisms. A consideration of the complexities inherent in policies at many different levels is also part of the research problem as policy can either help or hinder the aims of inclusion, depending on the context.

The aim of this research was to identify obstacles which can be changed, such as accessibility, quality of service and faculty awareness (Dutta et al., 2009), and in doing so, add to literature on the subject which investigates the experiences of students with a disability in higher education, which considers both students and staff within its scope (Donato, 2008; Dutta et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2004; Orsini-Jones, 2009). Furthermore, although participation in higher education is a matter of equal opportunity and empowerment, within the research itself the voices of people with a disability themselves are rarely heard and much of the research thus far has proven to be both inadequate and inequitable (Dutta et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2004).

### **Purposes of this study.**

The purposes of this study were to:

- a. Represent the student voice, that is, to document lived experiences and insider perspectives with regard to university level education as an international student with a disability.
- b. Explore current policies and practices with the aim of identifying gaps in order to inform best practice and policy development.
- c. Discern staff attitudes related to working with students with a disability.
- d. Establish staff professional development needs.

### **Significance of this research.**

#### ***Challenging the controversies: power politics and people, deficit discourses.***

This section highlights what I have identified through the literature as some of the broader controversies surrounding inclusive education, and discusses how these controversies are realised in my research. I illustrate how my research contributes to commentaries on inclusive ideology by the ways in which it seeks to challenge deficit discourses surrounding concepts of ‘disability’ and ‘the international student experience’.

#### ***Deficit discourses.***

‘International students’ and ‘students with a disability’ are treated largely as mutually exclusive ‘groups’ within wider literature. A consideration of the discourses surrounding each cohort of students however reveals some interesting parallels. Most of the literature draws similar conclusions regarding the difficulty in transitioning to university for both ‘subsets’ of student ‘groups’. Cultural differences and/or linguistic challenges mean that international students find it hard to navigate a number of areas such as academic codes, relationships with lecturers, teaching and learning styles and

adjusting to a new life away from family and friends. These are often compounded by stress from financial pressures (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008; Liamputtong, 2011; Pan, Wong, Chan & Joubert, 2007). Similarly, the presence of a disability can further complicate the process for local students adjusting to university in terms of support systems, access to resources and adjusting to a more independent lifestyle (Donato, 2008; Dutta et al., 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

It is suggested in literature regarding migration that there are many reasons which 'push' students away from their own country and to a foreign country in order to study. Altbach (2004) discusses reasons related to a lack of educational opportunities in home countries caused by over-crowding or competition. Other reasons are related to specialist courses which may not be offered in the home country, the desire to become more competitive through gaining qualifications overseas, and political, racial, religious or economic factors. In addition, there are also reasons related to prestige (symbolic capital) and desire to amass cultural capital which can influence the decision (Altbach, 2004). In this way, "industrialized countries are recognizing the need to provide their students with a global consciousness and with experience in other countries in order for them to compete in the global economy" (Altbach, 2004, p. 1). The pervading discourse regarding international students, however, has often been one of deficit, and stereotypes groups of students based on ethnic background. For example, 'Asian' students are often problematised as being passive learners (see Biggs, 1997; Littlewood, 1999, cited in Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Robertson, 2011). Yet a shift is occurring - international student identity and agency are becoming the focus of some studies in exploring the subjective realities of international students adapting to academic practices of universities in 'western' countries (Kettle, 2005; Arkoudis & Tran 2007; Kell & Vogl, 2008; Robertson, 2011). Nevertheless, a gap still remains in terms of the examination of unique lived experiences of students:

Much of the data that describes global student mobility is statistical material that documents the global movement of international students. This is a conventional and established way of viewing the mobility of international students and this tends to be a totalising process that does little to capture the individualised and collective experience of many students (Kell & Vogl, 2008, p. 22).

In a similar vein, historically research related to students with a disability neglected to involve the true voice of the student (Barton, 2007; Donato, 2008; Goode, 2007; Hopkins, 2011; Oliver, 2006; Orsini-Jones et al., 2005; 2009).

Collecting data via interviews in order to gain insights into the student experience, and analysis through Bourdieu's theoretical lenses, allows insight into the uniqueness of the individual experience, challenging our notions of both 'international student' and 'student with a disability'. As Chapter 3 argues, Bourdieu's tools of habitus, capital and field allow real insight into the lived experiences of students, and these methodological approaches are aimed at uncovering the rich and complex individual experiences of a diverse range of students.

This research is situated within a discourse which considers identity and agency as pivotal to both the experiences of international students (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Kell & Vogl, 2008; Kettle, 2005; Robertson, 2011), as well as students with a disability (Goode, 2007; Hopkins, 2011) and how students work as agents of their own change by conscious positioning (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007). The experiences of the student participants in this study will show how individuals change their positioning away from assumed originating and influencing socio-cultural discourses (Bennett, 2010), underscoring their "proactive and strategic engagement" (Kettle, 2005, p. 45) in new relational fields - a point that has been overlooked in much of the literature reviewed for

this thesis (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Kell & Vogl, 2008; Kettle, 2005; Robertson, 2011 being exceptions).

Globalisation, the importance of institutionalised cultural capital and English as the lingua franca have resulted in a large number of students travelling abroad to study with Australia as a popular destination (Supple & Agbenyega, 2011a; 2011b; 2013). Current research focuses on transition, support and integration of these students. The research, however, has neglected to document the experience of international students with a disability. Furthermore, transition, support and integration remain issues for local students, and the presence of a disability coupled with ethnic and or linguistic differences can further complicate the process for students (Dutta et al., 2009).

This study is significant because students with a disability may not in the past have been afforded the same educational opportunities as their peers. It could be argued that as impetus for the Salamanca Statement and other such initiatives grow, so too will the need for inclusive practices within educational institutions. Economic pressures may also dictate the extent to which universities market themselves as places of inclusion.

Moreover, whilst Orsini-Jones's studies (Orsini-Jones, Courtney & Dickson, 2005; Orsini-Jones, 2009) have considered the experiences of students with a disability learning foreign languages in the U.K., a focus on students with a disability from non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia is largely absent from the research.

Through my research I aim to add to the discourse of the paradigm shift away from the medical model towards a Whole Schooling inclusive education model while challenging deficit views - an approach echoed in inclusive education literature (such as Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Acedo, 2008; Comber & Kamler, 2004; Gale & Sellar, 2009). Focussing on only a cohort perceived as a homogenous group of 'students with

a disability' (in the past referred to as 'students with special needs') creates the need for labels, which is what equity and diversity policies should be working to avoid.

However, in order to be defined within a context, this study focused on students who consider themselves as having a disability. In this way, I aim to use a broad inclusive framework, taking a Whole Schooling approach to inclusive practices within the context of students with a disability. This is further explored through the conceptual framework in Chapter 3.

### ***Informing professional development.***

In contributing to the discourse of social inclusion and collaborative teaching practice, this research aimed to consider the current situation of professional development opportunities and further training in inclusion for staff working in higher education, and how the situation could be improved. There is a need for further research to include what professional development in higher education should entail and to establish models around how this can be achieved (Donato, 2008). My experience as a teacher was that research into sufficient and satisfactory professional development of higher education teachers working with students with a disability, is sorely needed. I was not trained in teaching students with a disability, nor was I provided with any professional development opportunities to improve my knowledge and skills and yet I was given the responsibility of being the main 'person in charge' for a number of months. Over that time I also found the attitudes of my fellow colleagues surprising, if not plain ignorant. A key area and priority for research focus, therefore, is into the professional development requirements for individual lecturers (Donato, 2008; Inclusive Education Network, 2006; Kelly, 2008; Lambe, 2007; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Sachs, 2001; Wu & Komesaroff, 2007, and many other authors concur).

The implications here are significant. In my experience, some teaching contexts neglect the identification of students who might be considered to be part of more than one category or sub-category of diversity (for example a woman from Iraq who is blind). This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge which is concerned with challenging concepts of ‘difference’ and the assumptions made about students.

Assumptions about culture may act as boundary markers to frame and/or understand communities of learners who are positioned as the “other” within educational contexts (Clark, 2006; Devos, 2012). Learners who come from one or more ‘equity group’ experience tension and conflict in the relational field of education because labels “mask diversity within groups” (Devos, 2012, p. 961). These tensions exist for example, for people who are deaf and want to learn a foreign language – assumptions have been made about these learners insofar as questioning why a person who is deaf would want to learn a language (Mole, McColl & Vale, 2005). Much remains to be explored in the area which looks at the intersection of perceptions of disability with culture (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Clark, 2006; Johnson & Morjaria-Keval, 2007; Mole, McColl, & Vale, 2005) and further barriers that students might be faced with as a result of being from such “intersectional categories” (Clark, 2006, p. 316).

Consequently there is also the need for educating those working in service provisions such as Vision Australia in terms of facilitating the needs of clients from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Johnson & Morjaria-Keval, 2007). This is certainly the case in my experience of working with staff from Vision Australia who did not seem to understand the cultural or linguistic background of the student I was working with. This led to frustration and stress on her part from not being



understood. Finally, adopting a cross-cultural perspective is also important in informing what happens locally (Engelbrecht, Hess, Swart, Eloff, & Oswald, 2008).

### ***Political and economic significance.***

Australia is one of the top three destinations along with the United States and the United Kingdom to draw international students (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Liamputtong, 2011). Australian universities are becoming ever more reliant on the income generated by international students. From an economic perspective, therefore, it is important that universities start to listen to these students and leverage what can be learnt from their experiences to inform the fostering of a positive academic journey in Australia (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Liamputtong, 2011; Robertson, 2011). The expansion of student populations from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is the continuing challenge for universities in Australia to meet the needs of its diverse cohorts, particularly in light of the increasing dependence on the income generated by international students (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007).

The agenda of the United Nations in recent years has no doubt added to the inclusive discourse for all students, and particularly students with a disability who may not in the past have been afforded the same opportunities as their peers. Furthermore, as impact from the Salamanca Statement and other such initiatives take hold, there will be an even greater need for educational institutions to be accountable for their inclusive policies and practices. It is the untapped diversity which exists within these cohorts labelled as 'international students' which has been largely unexplored in research.

International student numbers in Australia have varied over the last few years. In 2009-10 there was a decrease of 15.8% in international student visas granted, compared to 2008-09 (Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). The

department suggests that various legislative changes, market forces created by the global financial crisis and the strong Australian dollar have influenced these numbers. In the years 2011 – 2012, however, numbers increased again by 0.4%. China and India are the top source countries for student visas (Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012).

At its most fundamental, economic forces may dictate the extent to which universities market themselves as places of inclusion; “with growing competition between universities, disabled students need to be attracted to universities for economic if not moral reasons” (Hopkins, 2011, p. 8). From an economic standpoint, inclusion may become a high priority for the university marketing agenda in seeking to attract students from perhaps previously overlooked ‘niche’ populations, and in the process of doing so, will arguably serve to attract more students in general.

### ***Significance at an individual level.***

My research also aimed to establish how one institution frames their inclusive policy agenda. This was achieved through an exploration of how individual agents experience policies in the relational field of the university in order to explore any undercurrents of misinformation, misrepresentation or discrimination. As such, by looking at the individual experience of policy and the relative microcosm of the university in this study, the aim was to also reflect upon initiatives such as the Salamanca Statement 1994, The Disability Standards for Education 2005, A Fairer Victoria 2005 and The State Disability Plan 2013-2016.

The literature points to the need for research which captures the student voice (Dalglish & Chan, 2005; Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Goode, 2007; Hopkins, 2011; Orsini-Jones et al., 2005, Orsini-Jones, 2009; Rizvi, 2010). Chapter 3 discusses

how this was achieved through an in-depth exploration of the methodological underpinnings for this research. The individual perspective is pivotal in moving away from perceptions which lump students together and assume that their experiences are the same. The belief that “all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate” (Harvey, 1989, cited in Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 439) is central to a critical theoretical stance as articulated by Bourdieu. A Bourdieuan approach to research underpinned by critical theory and the tenets of social justice means:

Starting thought from the lives of those people upon whose exploitation the legitimacy of the dominant system depends can bring into focus questions and issues that were not visible, ‘important’, or legitimate within the dominant institutions, their conceptual frameworks, cultures, and practices (Harding, 1998, in Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 439).

In drawing upon the principles of social justice and equity, this thesis seeks to align itself with the repositioning and reconceptualisation of ‘international students’ and ‘students with a disability’ in problematising homogeneity and deficit. The implications for considering ‘groups’ of students as homogenous:

ignores issues of gender, culture, and power, and places individuals at greater risk for marginalization within our institutions of higher learning...stereotypes are further entrenched and the marginalization of students more likely ...since the impact of the literature tends to make these students appear more homogeneous than they are in reality (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004, p. 128).

As I learned through my professional practice, labels which assume homogeneity are dangerous as Popadiuk and Arthur’s (2004) quote above suggests.

The experience of students with a disability who face additional cultural and linguistic by studying in a different country, has not been extensively explored in research. Studies such as Orsini-Jones (et al., 2005; 2009) and Enjelvin, (2008) have considered students learning a second European language at university, but not non-native English speakers learning and being immersed in an English-speaking environment. Furthermore, of particular importance to this study is the relevance of theories of second language learning (such as those by Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen's theories relate to the existence of an 'affective' filter which can hinder second language learners' emotional 'readiness' to learn a language and differs between individuals (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Because of this:

teaching should be relevant, meaningful and emotionally manageable to the student in order to lower the affective filter through which they learn: learner anxiety has to be reduced for effective learning to take place (Orsini-Jones et al., 2005, p. 4).

It is clear to see how a reduction of learner anxiety is of even more importance to students with disability because of the extra challenges they potentially face. Issues such as trust and safety are especially significant for students with a disability (Matthews, 2009) and it is not difficult to see how these could impact on their anxiety levels, thereby also negatively impacting on their learning.

Relevant to this study is also the transformative effects of studying abroad (Brown, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Dwyer, 2004). Such research shows how study abroad significantly impacts on an individual's cross-cultural understanding and contributes to self-discovery, an increase in self-confidence, critical thinking skills and independence. This thesis is important in looking at the transformative nature of the international

sojourn for international students with a disability and the profound changes they feel it has made to them.

Finally, this research has been highly significant to me at both a professional and personal level. My research endeavours have served as a means of developing my own intellectual and professional practices, particularly within the context of my role since September 2010 as an academic in the area of Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) at Victoria University, Melbourne (not the site for this research). Indeed, my appointment to this role relied heavily on the subject matter of my proposed research and the interest shown by management in its content and aims, particularly in its alignment with and reflection of the aforementioned values of Victoria University. On a personal level I have found myself questioning and challenging my own deficit views in a way of trying to become a more inclusive and reflexive researcher and practitioner. I reflect further on the significance of this study at a personal level in a discussion of reflexivity in Chapter 6.

### **Research questions.**

The central research questions were:

1. What strategies and resources do international students with a disability at the case study university experience as supporting or hindering their academic and social development, and achievements? (That is, what are the facilitators and what are the barriers as conceptualised as part of this study?)
2. What strategies and resources do practitioners at the case study university experience as supporting or hindering the development of

effective inclusive practices for international students with a disability?

3. How can the knowledge gained from this research be applied in other higher education institutions?

## **Personal motivation for this research**

In my previous career as an ELICOS teacher I had little experience in working with adults with a disability. In 2008 I was asked to work with a student who was blind, initially as her in-class aide and eventually as her class teacher. I experienced tensions in this role due to feeling both rewarded and frustrated on a number of levels. I felt rewarded by the challenge this opportunity provided me in needing to adapt my teaching, and scope for developing myself both personally and professionally. I did, however, experience difficulty in coordinating between the disability liaison unit and the language centre. I was at times surprised and shocked by the expectations from examination bodies regarding the expectations of this student. I was disappointed by management who believed that inclusion simply meant ‘treat her like everyone else’, and who were ignorant to more flexible and open views of equity. Perhaps most significantly, my own perceptions of deficit models were also challenged.

From that position I started to question the concept of inclusion. Not being trained in teaching a student with a disability, I wanted to do my own research about how to best support this student, and facilitate her learning requirements. Yet in attempting some internet searches and seeking literature on topics such as ‘how to support students with visual impairments in ELICOS’ or ‘adult multi-lingual learners at tertiary level with a disability’, I was surprised at the sheer lack of information. I found that much of the literature which exists about students with a disability generally fails insofar as representing the context of multi-lingual adults in higher education. Research

has focussed on multi-lingual children in schools or adults from refugee backgrounds with a disability in the community but not at university in an Australian context (Forlin, 2007; Watson, Kearns, Grant & Cameron, 2000). Furthermore, some studies have researched the experiences of students learning foreign languages (Orsini-Jones et al., 2005; Orsini-Jones, 2009) but not on students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Consequently, there is little information regarding current practices for including multilingual adult tertiary students with a disability in higher education which, therefore, provided compelling grounds for this investigation (Supple & Agbenyega, 2011a, 2011b, 2013).

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. This first chapter has introduced the reader to some of important terminology referred to throughout this thesis. Chapter 1 has also given a broad context of the background which underpins this study and introduced some of the different contexts for inclusion from global to local perspectives. Chapter 1 also introduced the research problem and the purposes of the study.

Chapter 2 is the literature review which includes a brief historical overview of inclusion and contemporary issues in inclusion, and introduces the reader to the Whole Schooling Approach. Chapter 2 considers inclusion from a number of different cultural, educational and linguistic contexts. The consideration of prior research contexts surrounding inclusion are considered in order to highlight what is currently happening both in and outside of Australia. The discussion of this literature also aims to build a compelling argument for the reasons why this research is important. In Chapter 2, specific contexts for inclusion in the U.S., Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and China are discussed in order to situate the reader within the contexts of the student participants in this study.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical drivers underpinning this study. This chapter introduces the conceptual framework which scaffolds the study and outlines the central role of Bourdieu's critical theory in informing my approaches for analysis of the qualitative data. In this chapter, Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) is introduced and its connections with Bourdieu's critical theory are discussed.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the literature has informed the chosen methodology for this study, and includes a discussion of how the methodological approach of interpretative voice relational case studies has been crucial in successfully capturing the essence of the true, lived experiences of the participants.

Chapter 5 provides a thorough explanation of the data collection stages and the steps involved in creating workable chunks from large, rich and thick descriptions in order to create a manageable process for analysis.

Chapter 6 explores the results of the data analysis by employing a rigorous approach to interpreting these data chunks through lenses informed by social theories embedded in a Voice Relational Analysis and discourses of inclusion and social justice.

Chapter 7 highlights the connection between the findings and the extent to which the research questions at the heart of this study have been answered through discussion and limitations of the research. Chapter 7 concludes with recommendations for future research and directions for inclusive practices.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter where the conclusions reached from this thesis are discussed surrounding the importance of a transformational and Whole Schooling approach to inclusion in higher education.



## Definition of terms

While many of the terms used throughout this thesis are widely discussed in the literature, it is necessary to point the reader to their conceptualisation at this point for the purposes of this study.

**Agency:** capacity for individuals (agents) to act autonomously and make choices freely, as opposed to acting in ways dictated by social structures and relations in the field.

**Agents:** Bourdieuan term which refers to people – any of us - who operate within relational fields. (See definition of **fields** below).

**Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD):** The acronym ADD for Attention Deficit Disorder is used in this thesis (as opposed to ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). This is in accordance with the interview participant for this study who referred to himself as having ADD. ADD is defined as the consistent display of some of the following: “distractibility (poor sustained attention to tasks), impulsivity (impaired impulse control and delay of gratification) and hyperactivity (excessive activity and physical restlessness)” (Attention Deficit Disorder Association, n.d.).

**Barriers:** Factors which limit, seriously impinge on, or restrict equal access or an equitable opportunity for educational success. These can be created by cultures, (both within the institution itself as well as different countries), institutions (such as policy), and knowledge (staff attitudes, beliefs, assumptions).

**Capital:** “Accumulated labour” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46) which gives an agent value in a field. Capital manifests itself differently in different fields and consists of

that which is economic, social and cultural (Bourdieu, 1986). Forms of capital are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

**Deaf:** This thesis uses terminology used by Deaf Australia to describe people with different degrees and types of deafness or hearing loss as stipulated in their terminology policy:

deaf (with a small letter d) is a general term used to describe people who have a physical condition of hearing loss of varying degrees irrespective of which communication mode they use such as Auslan [Australian sign language] and lip reading for example (Deaf Australia, 2010, para. 3).

**Disability:** Defining disability is somewhat contentious. The term ‘disabilities’ as used in legislation for example, can be very broad and sometimes includes some conditions not usually thought of as disabilities (Loreman, Deppeler & Henry, 2005). The discourse of disability has moved away from medical models which equate disability with illness or deviance (Carrington et al., 2012) and towards social models which see barriers as socially constructed (Ballard, 2012; Soresi, Nota, & Wehmeyer, 2011). In other words, barriers are created by society rather than embodied within people. The advantage to perceiving disability as something socially constructed, rather than as the fault of an individual, is that it makes all of us responsible for positive change, taking the pressure off students to fit the system and placing the pressure instead on the institution to fit the students.

In terms of language this thesis follows the principle of ‘people first, disability second’ (Foreman, 2005; Soresi, Nota, & Wehmeyer, 2011). ‘People with a disability’ or ‘students with a disability’ is the terminology used in this thesis in alignment with principles of seeing the person before the disability and avoiding labels such as ‘the

disabled’ or ‘disabled people’. Similarly, ‘students who are blind’ and ‘students who are vision impaired’ or ‘visually impaired’ will be used in accordance with terminology defined by Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) (BCA, 2010).

Literature in the U.K. uses the term ‘disabled people’ in accordance with the Office for Disability Issues (2010). Any direct quotations used from literature published from the U.K. will maintain this wording in order to correctly cite the author.

**DLU:** Disability Liaison Unit – the unit at the research university which is responsible for providing academic support to students with a disability.

**Doxa:** “a set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles on which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. xi). This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

**ELICOS:** English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

**Emancipatory research:** underpinned by the social model of disability.

Emancipatory research principles:

require that researchers adopt the social model, surrender any claim to scientific neutrality, focus on political action for practical benefits to people with disabilities, and render themselves accountable to people with disabilities (McColl, Adair, Davey, & Kates, 2013).

**ESOL:** English as a Second or Other Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**Facilitators:** understood to be factors which enable the successful education and inclusion of a student. Facilitators can be structural as well as material. Facilitators can be related to resources as well as people.

**Field:** relational and social contexts in which agents operate. This does not refer to a geographical positioning (such as research in the field) nor is it a synonym for area (for example the field of education). Field in a Bourdieuan sense refers to a complex interplay of relationships and contextual elements. For example, students operate within certain fields in relation to their lecturers and other students. They may experience a lack of cultural capital in one field (for example in social contexts in their own country) but may find the reverse in a new country's relational fields.

**Habitus:** how people position themselves in the field. The habitus is determined by internalised, embodied social structures such as beliefs, dispositions, values and hierarchy (that is, 'where do I position myself in relation to others?') A close analysis of how people talk about themselves can reveal where they position themselves in the field.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is a difficult term to define. Higher education institutions invariably define inclusion differently depending on their context. Generally in higher education one broad definition states that inclusion is:

The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and

institutions (American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), 2009, para. 2).

For the purposes of this research, inclusion in education reflects a ‘Whole Schooling Approach’ (see Figures 2.2 and 3.2 in Chapters 2 and 3) that considers policy, infrastructure, staff attitudes and practices, and their relationship to how these impact on students with a disability at one university in Melbourne. Considering a Whole School approach provides insight into how inclusion has the capacity to challenge educational boundaries which are “political, epistemological, pedagogical and institutional” (Acedo, 2008, p. 8). A Whole School approach also prompts the critique of social values, social priorities and how these are manifested within wider social structures and institutions (Barton, 2003).

Inclusion in this thesis has been researched from both school and university perspectives. I argue that it is difficult to conceptualise higher education in isolation without considering the bigger picture systems of wider educational institutions and practices, particularly in relation to the Whole School approach. As such, I would argue that the terms ‘teacher’ and ‘lecturer’ can in fact be used to mean ‘educators in general’.

**International students:** “students who are pursuing a degree at an Australian institution but are not citizens or permanent residents of Australia” (Arkoudis & Tran 2007, p. 158).

**I.T.:** Information Technology. This abbreviation is used in this thesis to refer to the part of the university which deals with technology-related issues.

**JAWS:** Accessible software program used with Microsoft Windows which converts text on screen to speech.

**NESB:** Non English Speaking Backgrounds

**Special consideration:** Alternative arrangements made for exam or assessments at university in cases where the student is unable to complete the exam on the scheduled date or assessment by the due date. According to university policy, students apply for special consideration due to illness, injury or disability which prevents them from completing the task on the scheduled date. Applications are submitted via the DLU at most universities.

**Symbolic violence:** “the violence which is exercised upon individuals in a symbolic, rather than a physical way. It may take the form of people being denied resources, treated as inferior or being limited in terms of realistic aspirations” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. xvi).

**TESOL:** Acronym for Teachers/Teaching of English to Speakers of other languages.

**Transformative:** An experience which prompts a profound change in a person’s beliefs, behaviour and/or psyche.

**VRM:** Voice Relational Methodology which is the method of analysis employed for this thesis. VRM involves multiple readings of the text using a number of different guiding questions for the data, as a way of uncovering voices and perspectives that may not be discoverable by other approaches.

**Western:** “living in or originating from the West, in particular Europe or the United States” (Oxford Dictionary online). In this thesis Western culture also refers to the culture in Australia, as spoken about by one of the interviewees.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

This chapter reviews the pragmatic and educational shifts which have occurred in inclusive practices by looking at changes which have taken place over the past 70 years. This historical perspective allows the contextualisation of contemporary issues in inclusion. The discussion of contemporary issues also includes an introduction to the Whole Schooling framework which has been used to conceptualise inclusion in this research. In this chapter I discuss prior literature which looks at the various facilitators and barriers to inclusive education. I then present the inclusive policy objectives from The United Kingdom and The United States in order to draw comparisons with Australian approaches. Literature from the U.S. as well as Hong Kong, China and Sri Lanka gives a context for the student participants who were interviewed for this research and also serves to locate Australia within a global inclusive agenda.

### **A Brief Historical Overview of Inclusive Education**

This section presents a brief historical timeline of educational policies in selected western countries. A more in-depth discussion of policies specific to the U.S., U.K., Australia, China, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka follows later in this chapter.

A historical snapshot of educational policies can be summarised as following this timeline of approaches: exclusion, mainstreaming, integration, inclusion.

In the 1940s and 1950s the approach to education for students with a disability was reflective of “the policy of assistance” (Aguerrondo, 2008, p. 53), the aim being to make all students educable by focusing on the apparent failings of the individual student rather than the education system. In the following two decades, students were blamed for any perceived educational failures. During this time, a diagnosis was sought for

problematic students who were then transferred to ‘special’ schools or prescribed treatment from psychologists (Aguerrondo, 2008). The responsibility of the school in educating students was perceived very much in terms of ‘normalisation’ of the student (Kisanji, 1999). Normalisation here implies that having a disability was abnormal and the education of a student was seen in terms of righting this perceived wrong.

The establishment of ‘special schools’ was an approach to relieve teachers of the ‘burden’ placed upon them by students who were “unable to learn from normal instruction in the regular class” (Kisanji, 1999, p. 5; Michaud & Scruggs, 2012), where students were excluded in separate classrooms (Michaud & Scruggs, 2012). This approach to education proved problematic in a number of ways such as unfair assessment methods, perpetuation of deficit models of teaching, and relinquishing the responsibility of *all* teachers in educating *all* students in moving students onto ‘specialists’ (Kisanji, 1999, my italics). In the U.S. this resulted in teacher knowledge and skills becoming disjointed and in certain student populations a quasi-racial segregation in cohorts where a high percentage of students with a disability were from multi-lingual or non-Anglo-Saxon backgrounds (Kisanji, 1999; Michaud & Scruggs, 2012).

It is at this point where perhaps the most significant shift in attitudes occurred (Ainscow & Miles, 2008) when terms such as ‘mainstreaming’ came to the fore (Crossley, 2000). The definition of mainstreaming was based on the idea that students with a disability were educated in “regular classes” (Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010, p. 8) and assumes that students will ‘earn’ the opportunity to be mainstreamed if they demonstrate that they can keep up with the rest of the class. (Thompkins & Deloney, 1995). In this way, the 1980s and 1990s were “compensatory” (Aguerrondo, 2008, p.



53) in an attempt to address the weaknesses caused by unfair assessment methods. This perpetuated deficit models of 'special' education (Kisanji, 1999).

Inclusion came at a time when the mobilisation of advocacy groups started driving for a change away from integration. In the Salamanca Statement of the mid 1990s proponents for inclusion argued for:

a restructuring of the school to accommodate all learners and advocate radical changes to the curriculum, claiming that current curricula were perpetuating exclusion, dividing those learners who could meet their objectives as they are from those who could not (Ainscow, 1991, 1994; Jenkinson, 1997, cited in Kisanji, 1999, p. 8).

This heralded an important shift in thinking from integration to inclusion and away from that which held the student accountable in adapting to the institution, towards the institution adapting to both current and prospective students (Slee, 2011). Important changes in terminology, away from mainstreaming and towards inclusion, reflected a much needed paradigm shift from an agenda which was needs-based to one which is rights-based (Pirrie, Head, & Brna, 2006; Topping, 2012).

Inclusion is a difficult concept to define (Slee, 2011; Topping, 2012). Literature by Lindsay (2007) illustrates this – the author talks of mainstreaming as equivalent to inclusion, using the terms interchangeably. However, inclusion and mainstreaming are not the same. Inclusion is more of an ideology, and is about changing societal and school structures to accommodate learners rather than requiring learner assimilation as mainstreaming and integration do. Inclusion is also a dynamic process (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Slee, 2011; Topping, 2012).

The degree to which higher education institutions have encouraged the attendance of a diverse cohort of students has also been influenced by the policies developed since the 1990s such as the Salamanca Statement and The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (Basit & Tomlinson, 2012; OECD, 2011). Indeed, the increasing receptivity of tertiary education institutions to students with a disability is reflected in the increase in numbers of students were are enrolling at universities in many of the OECD countries between 1995 and 2007 (OECD, 2009; 2011).

## **Contemporary Issues in Inclusion**

The socio-cultural and socio-political positioning of inclusion situates practitioners and indeed all stakeholders (as represented in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3) on the edge of an exciting and challenging new paradigm which is providing the impetus for a change in fundamental thinking about disability and the concept of inclusion. Because inclusion is not so much ‘defined’ as it is ‘believed’ or enacted depending on the habitus (beliefs, dispositions) of agents, current broad cultural and political scales need to be deconstructed, that is, critically examined and interrogated, in a way that allows consideration of exactly *why* inclusion is important (Poplin & Phillips, 1993; Slee, 2011; Topping, 2012).

A review of the literature suggests four key areas under which the importance of inclusion can be grouped – socially, economically, politically and individually.

### **The social importance of inclusion.**

It is not difficult to see the potential for education to drive change at a societal level. A Bourdieuan perspective argues that social processes in education contain, maintain and promote values and beliefs around inclusion, exclusion and social justice

(Aguerrondo 2008; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Bourdieu, 1999; Griffiths, 2009; Halinen & Jarvinen, 2008; Topping, 2012). The influence of education is so great that “educational reform begets societal reform” (Zuna, Turnbull, & Brown, 2004, p. 212).

There are a number of benefits for all students in higher education from learning amongst a diverse student population including “greater relative gains in critical and active thinking...greater intellectual engagement and academic motivation... [and] greater relative gains in intellectual and social self-concept” (Millem, 2003, p. 142). Students who learn with a diverse range of peers are, therefore, more likely to do well academically (Gale, 2011).

### **The economic and political importance of inclusion.**

The effect of globalisation and the increase in wealth of certain countries means that many students are now being given the opportunity to study abroad – an opportunity that perhaps was not available to previous generations. For example, in the past few years I have taught students who were on scholarships funded by their home governments, from countries such as Iraq, Vietnam, Mozambique and Chile. This “shift from elite to mass systems across virtually all developed countries” (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002, p. 309) is arguably pivotal in shaping new political ideologies based on the concept of inclusion. The knowledge that more students in general are being given the chance to study abroad also leads to the assumption that in alignment with changing policies in inclusion, more students with a disability are also being offered this opportunity.

The successive effects of these societal changes are manifold in terms of the different kinds of capital (economic and symbolic capital for example) that education generates for all students. In terms of students with a disability, those who are graduates

of a university are “63% more likely to be employed than their counterparts without post-secondary education” (Dutta et al., 2009, p. 10). That is, students become empowered by the symbolic and cultural capital education provides. In turn, it is not difficult to see the connection between how a highly educated population will help drive the wider economic capital of a community, town or nation. Degree-level education impacts on the capacity for the population to make significant long-term economic contributions to society (Fuller et al., 2004) and the potential of wage earners to “pump money into the economic stream of society” (Malakpa, 2007, p. 12). Ultimately, the costs associated with inclusion are more economically viable than the alternative which is borne out of discrimination and exclusion – education, training, support and access to employment as opposed to welfare entitlements (Basit & Tomlinson, 2012; Klinger, 1996 cited in Gadbow & Du Bois, 1998).

Societal and economic factors are important elements in influencing and maintaining issues at a political level. Domestically, the shift in movement towards inclusive education has resulted in countries such as Australia, the U.S. and Israel implementing legislation for the integration of students with a disability into universities (Basit & Tomlinson, 2012; Fuller et al., 2004). Political factors (access to education, or political tensions) are also a reason why some students undertake study outside their country of origin.

### **The individual: staff and students and the importance of inclusion.**

Perhaps the most powerfully persuasive argument of all regarding the importance of inclusion is its impact at an individual level. Inclusive practices and adherence to non-deficit models for all students is vital in that:

when students are regarded as experts rather than disabled and when they experience success both as individuals and as a group, satisfaction with their achievements and performance levels escalates while levels of stress, anxiety, low self-esteem and social isolation decrease (Roer-Strier, 2002, p. 38).

The statistics are reflective of this - the academic and social results of students with a disability who are taught within the same contexts as other students are significantly greater than those students who are taught in isolated settings (Jordan et al., 2009). Furthermore, inclusive practices can serve as a way of empowering students, and not just in the case of students who have a disability. Inclusive environments work to foster self-development and self-advocacy which are powerful skills that enable students to be successful learners (Gadbow, 2002; Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Encouraging self-advocacy leads to feelings of empowerment and achievement while serving as a means of changing perceptions of deficit (Gadbow, 2002; Salend & Whittaker, 2012).

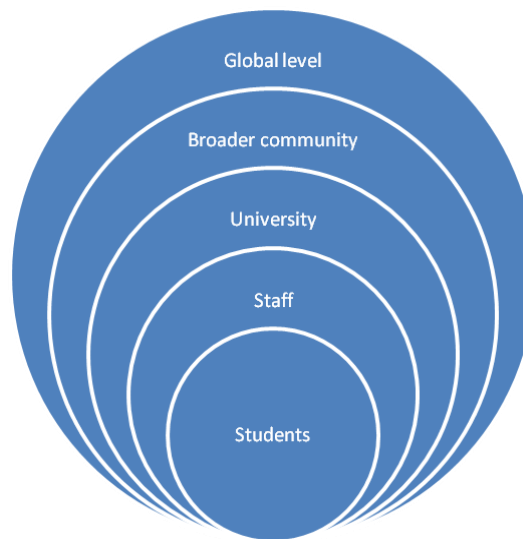
An inclusive approach means training all students in self-advocacy so that they are able to negotiate, navigate and solve problems on their own, which potentially results in a reduced workload for support staff, teachers and lecturers. This empowerment once again has a positive impact on how students can build up their cultural and symbolic capital. Positive impacts can then be experienced by the individual beyond university in both the workplace and the wider community (Carrington et al., 2012; Gadbow & DuBois, 2002; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

Excluding students with a disability from university education means limiting their opportunities to become globally engaged citizens through access to overseas study (OECD, 2011). This is significant in that many students who wish to study abroad

do so in order to improve job prospects in their home country (Gill, 2010) or to seek jobs internationally (Lu, Mavondo, & Qiu, 2009). Many students wish to study abroad simply for the experience of living and studying in a different country (Lu et al., 2009). Furthermore, exposure to a new culture is a transformative experience for students. By transformative I mean an experience which prompts a profound change in a person's beliefs, behaviour and/or psyche. Undertaking a journey away from the familiarity of home results in a journey of self-discovery (Brown, 2009; Dwyer, 2004; Gill, 2010). Students who study abroad show increased levels of self-confidence, resourcefulness, greater levels of independence (Brown, 2009; Dwyer, 2004; Gill, 2010) and a more in-depth understanding of their own cultures (Brown, 2009). Despite the challenges that study abroad poses for any student, the anxiety provoked by homesickness and culture shock "demands an exploration and reconstruction of the self" (Giddens, 1991, in Brown, 2009, p. 505). In other words, negative experiences are ameliorated by the transformative power caused by intense self-reflection whilst living in a new country.

The importance of access to opportunities to study abroad for any individual cannot be understated when considered in such terms but particularly in relation to students with a disability. This final point by Giddens (1991) cited above I would argue is the most pertinent for students with a disability in experiencing what may be a new construction of identity outside a home country where perhaps the level of support has not been adequate.

## *The layers of influence in inclusion.*



*Figure 2.1.* The layers of influence in inclusion.

Literature from Du Bois and Miley (1999) has informed my thinking for figure 2.1. These authors argue that working as a co-ordinated group and as part of a wider social network, students will raise awareness of equity issues at a ‘student level’, which impacts upon facilitating awareness within and across faculties, over the university and up to national level. Further, there is no denying the potential empowerment that study at university can afford any student (Fuller et al., 2004; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010) and the employment opportunities that access to higher education can provide. If students with a disability are entering higher education and achieving academic success comparable to their peers, it sends a positive message to the broader community in terms of student *ability* as opposed to *disability*. Awareness-raising at these different levels has an impact on teacher self-awareness and reflection on their understandings of themselves as inclusive practitioners.

Staff often report a sense of enjoyment and achievement in working with a diverse range of students, which adds to their feelings of ongoing professional development and intrinsic motivation (Shaw, Brain, Bridger, Foreman, & Reid, 2008).

This has been reported as a “warm inner glow that I might be meeting the needs of students with disabilities” (Disability Services, 2003, p. 33). In reference to Figure 2.1, it can then be argued that these attitudes drive social change outside the educational setting (this will also be explored further within the contexts of cultures). Staff can act as “agents of change” (Swart & Oswald, 2008, p. 92; Ballard, 2012, p. 79) in using their teaching practice for the purpose of social justice. Teachers and lecturers as agents of change have the power to encourage inclusive practices both within the university contexts as well as out into the community beyond (Ashman, 2012; Ballard, 2012; Boyle, 2012; Deppeler, 2012).

This has definitely been something that I have experienced through becoming engaged with this research. While the benefits of this study to me as a practitioner, researcher and as a person will be covered in greater depth in later chapters, I think the following adapted quote from Brown and Gilligan (1992) summarises my change in habitus:

*My claim, therefore, in presenting this work is not that the students I spoke with are representative of all students with a disability or some ideal sample...but rather that I learned from this group, and what I discovered seemed worthy of others' attention.*

(I have substituted the word ‘girls’ from the original quote from Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p. 23 with ‘students’ and ‘students with a disability’ in italics).

### **The Whole Schooling Approach to inclusion.**

The concept of Whole Schooling is defined as: “an approach to creating schools that combine equity and excellence, creating good schooling for all children” (The



International Journal of Whole Schooling, n.d.). The Whole Schooling approach to inclusion is situated within the wider context of theories of social justice and transformation, as articulated by critical theorists such as Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1999) and Apple (2004; 2005). Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion of the Whole Schooling approach and conceptual framework as underpinned by Bourdieu's critical theories and applications of his conceptual tools of capital, habitus and field.

Although the definition of Whole Schooling refers to "children", I argue that the eight guiding principles can also be applied to higher education in creating the best outcomes for all students. Indeed, the theoretical underpinnings of literature from the U.K. and the U.S. reflects the shift towards the fundamental principles of Whole Schooling in recognising and embracing diversity (Ashworth, Bloxham, & Pearce 2010; Collinson & Penketh 2010; Norwich, 2012; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010; (U.K.); Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010; Landin, 2010; Salend & Whittaker, 2012 (U.S.)). In the Australian context this is also reflected within recent university initiatives. For example, the value statement of Melbourne's Victoria University (not the site of this research) states:

We value knowledge and skills, and critical and imaginative inquiry for their capacity to transform individuals and the community; equality of opportunity for students and staff; diversity for its contribution to creativity and the enrichment of our lives; cooperation as the basis of engagement with local and international communities; integrity, respect and transparency in personal, collaborative and institutional action; sound environmental stewardship for future generations; and the pursuit of excellence in everything that we do (Victoria University, 2008).

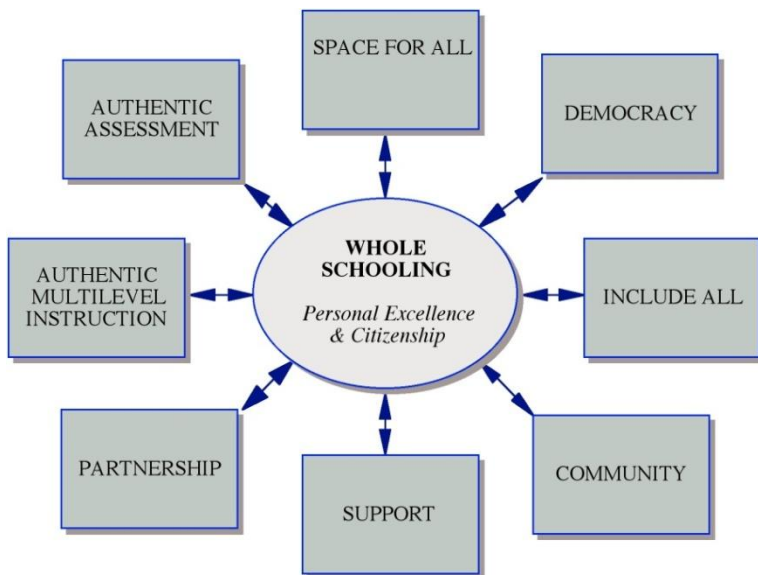


Figure 2.2. Diagram of Whole Schooling.

(Retrieved from

[http://www.wholeschooling.net/Journal\\_of\\_Whole\\_Schooling/IJWSIndex.html](http://www.wholeschooling.net/Journal_of_Whole_Schooling/IJWSIndex.html)).

The diagram above shows the reciprocal relationship role between “The Eight Principles” (support, partnership, authentic multi-level instruction etcetera), in building effective practices in inclusion and how in doing so, the approach seeks to eradicate deficit models of disability. How this is realised is further explored through the theoretical framework in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3 I also expand on the Whole Schooling approach in higher education and how this approach strives to produce graduates with greater symbolic capital.

This thesis aims to add to the discourse surrounding how inclusion will be conceptualised in the future - much of the literature underscores how societies are influential in maintaining deficit views, and how as Bourdieu argues, education is important in reshaping these views (Aguerrondo, 2008; Ballard, 2012; Bourke & O’Neill, 2012; Halinen, & Jarvinen, 2008; Poplin & Phillips, 1993).

In light of this, the importance of a Whole Schooling approach as guided by the theoretical framework is fundamental to the processes of readjusting perceptions of deficit and creating new paradigms which embrace access for all. In this way, the focus of creating these new paradigms needs to consider two different visions:

The first of these is retrospective, insofar as it explains the solutions generated in the last century: equity means giving the same to all, which, in the case of education, amounts to offering “equal opportunities” of access to schooling. The second, prospective point of view, sees equity as giving to each according to his or her needs; that is, giving something different (and possibly more) to whomever is different (and possibly has less) (Aguerrondo, 2008, p. 54).

The challenge is then for educational establishments to respond to questions such as “how can the new society meet the need for an equitable distribution of knowledge?” (Aguerrondo, 2008, p. 57).

### **Prior research – education, disability, barriers and facilitators.**

Research into the experiences of students with a disability and their perceptions of barriers and facilitators has been carried out across a number of different countries (North America see Donato, 2008; Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010; Sachs & Schureuer, 2011; Salend & Whittaker, 2012; the U.K. see Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Fuller et al., 2004; Norwich, 2012; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010). Various commentators are also now entering a discourse which critically examines the idea of inclusive education, and how it must seek to involve all students and avoid creating labels (such as Ainscow, 2008; Boyle & Topping, 2012; Higbee et al., 2010; Slee, 2011; Topping, 2012). Despite differences in context and culture, the general recommendations and suggestions borne out of both qualitative and quantitative

research in these contexts has reached some very similar conclusions and underscores considerable controversies regarding the concept of inclusive education and its successful implementation.

### **Facilitators for inclusion in higher education.**

There are a number of practical ways in which lecturers, teachers, and support staff at a university may help foster an inclusive university environment which encourages the participation of all learners. In Chapter 3 I show how this collaboration is an integral part of inclusion through my conceptual framework.

The literature reviewed for this research has identified major facilitators of inclusion in higher education which relate to my study - the importance of flexible and adjustable approaches, knowledge and attitudes, policy, and cultural influences.

### ***Flexible and adjustable approaches.***

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) reflects the tenets of the social model of disability in recognising barriers to learning as inherent in the system rather than within the learner (Ashman, 2012; Carrington & Sagers, 2008; Gadbow, 2002). Flexible and adjustable practices are at the heart of the universal design approach which is a non-deficit approach to learning and teaching and encourages student autonomy in allowing independence over accessing information (Ashman, 2012). The seven key principles of UDL are equitability, flexibility, simplicity, perceptibility, low physicality, approachability and accessibility (Disability Services, 2003). It is argued that following these principles maximises the potential learning benefit for all students. In practice UDL is realised by accessibility of materials (making materials available in different formats and often online), engagement of students by designing coursework that addresses different skills levels and alternative formats for tasks (such as choice over

oral, written or multi-media presentations) (Ashman, 2012; Carrington & Sagers, 2008; Disability Services, 2003).

Bourdieu argues that researchers need to interrogate the social systems that we agents form and which in turn form us (Mills & Gale, 2007; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Further to this argument, Gadbow (2002) also addresses the importance of recalibrating perceptions and recognising the inherent potential of every student as the following quote illustrates:

Perhaps most important, considering all learners as special means seeing the possibilities, as well as the problems or particular needs. It means seeing first what can be for a learner, as well as a realistic assessment of special needs to be addressed. Joe, [a student who is blind] may not be able to use his eyes, but he can be helped to discover the possibilities and consider himself a competent independent learner, with many opportunities to contribute to his community (Gadbow, 2002, p. 53).

After all, a university may be equipped with the most state- of- the- art resources and funded to provide excellent support, but without a change in perspective about the inherent strengths of every student (as highlighted in Gadbow's quote) these are arguably useless if not utilised in a way that builds on the existing strengths of the student.

### ***Knowledge (capital) and attitudes/personality (habitus).***

Knowledge and attitudes are pivotal in creating successful inclusive environments. Without knowledge there is ignorance, and in my experience this works to create and perpetuate negative attitudes. From a Bourdieuan perspective, knowledge

is a form of capital and attitudes are part of the habitus. The importance of these ideas in guiding this thesis are discussed further in Chapter 3.

One type of knowledge capital is pedagogical knowledge - what a teacher knows about how to be inclusive in their teaching practice. Pedagogical knowledge is not necessarily restricted to what official qualifications a teacher might have or training they may have done. Literature suggests that there is a direct correlation between the ability and level of willingness shown by teachers to accommodate students with a disability and previous experience and knowledge in this area (Eloff, Swart, & Engelbrecht, 2002; Enjelvin, 2008, Orsini-Jones, 2009; Ryan & Struths, 2004; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Furthermore, the ideals of inclusion are related to 'bigger picture' values and concepts, and are often reflected in deeply ingrained individual beliefs or habitus. The facilitation of inclusion in education is inextricably linked to a "change in attitudes, beliefs, values and habits" (Agbenyega, 2007, p. 54). Staff awareness training which focuses on the issues behind inclusive practice has been found to significantly contribute to the academic success of students with a disability at university (Donato, 2008).

Pedagogical knowledge does include having knowledge of the existing support systems for students, requirements for the student and an understanding that generally students want to be given the same opportunity to achieve academically as their peers (Holloway, 2001; Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). Furthermore, educators who teach students with a disability later reported that their confidence in teaching grew, which had a significant effect in reducing negative attitudes (LeyRoy & Simpson, 1996 in Agbenyega, 2007). Pedagogical knowledge also means teachers avoiding making assumptions about learners (Gadbow & Du Bois, 1998; Graham & Macartney, 2012). Knowing about avenues for support and avoiding assumptions about learners helps students gain access to the most appropriate assistance for their situation

and saves time and energy (Swart & Greyling, 2011; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

Hence, teachers who can actively pursue a teaching pedagogy which is openly inclusive will have a positive effect not only on their own professional development as practitioners, but also with all of their students as well as other staff members.

Flexible and adaptable approaches in terms of assessment, curricula and teaching practice are also an important part of pedagogical knowledge. Making alternative arrangements for exams can be stressful and time consuming for students (Holloway, 2001). As Redpath et al. (2012) argue, “the assumption of normality concerning assessments” that is, that everyone should do the same, no matter what, “does in itself create a barrier” (Redpath et al., 2012, p. 3). In other words, setting everyone the same task is seen as the ‘norm’ and any deviation from this (the inability to complete the task) is, therefore, a deviation of the norm, or ‘abnormal’. If all students are consulted about their preferences for the format of assessment tasks, students can be prompted to recognise their strengths, often feel respected as individual learners and can be empowered by their choices as learners (Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

This collaboration between staff and students regarding assessment has been shown to not only benefit students with a disability, but has been proven to increase general student grades and encourage attendance to classes (Redpath, et al., 2012; Waterfield & West, 2010). A flexible curriculum is, therefore, needed which takes these assessment options into account, as well as makes room for the different learning styles seen within the classroom (Morton et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

Technology is also a viable mechanism which can be harnessed in creating an environment which is conducive to the goals of a universally designed curriculum

(Basham, Israel, Graden, & Edyburn, 2010; Matthews, 2009; Poth & Winston, 2010; Swart & Greyling, 2011). For example, a lecturer might ensure materials such as lecture recordings, handouts and notes are readily accessible to all students (via tools such as Blackboard or other such similar means). Programs with voice-recognition and other assistive technologies also now allow people with a disability access not only to education but also to the workforce (Gadbow, 2001, 2002). These “anticipatory shifts in teaching practice” may “eradicate some ...students’ ‘special needs’ altogether” (Tinklin, Riddell & Wilson 2004, p. 649).

Lecturers are generally positive in embracing flexible delivery techniques such as those used online (Disability Services, 2003). However, anecdotally I do know of some lecturers who refuse to give online access to lecture slides or to record the lectures for students to access online, claiming that they want to see students in their lectures. Their belief is that if they provide these materials to students outside of lectures that the already dwindling attendance levels at their lectures will decrease even more. There is never any mention made, however, of students who may not be able to attend a lecture because of accessibility issues, work or family commitments, etcetera. It seems strange to me to want to deny a student access to materials to do well in order to satisfy one’s ego. This is one example of how universities and certain individuals within universities continue to construct students as the problem, and as such are functioning in the medical model (Holloway, 2001).

The knowledge a student has about themselves and the university is also fundamental in assisting with successful university transition and academic trajectory. Pre-entrance information is vital for students – they need to know about the level of support which exists at the university and how this support is mobilised (Redpath et al., 2012). Students who have a good understanding of their learning style and are clear in



what works best for them in terms of support are also more likely to find the transition both to and through university easier (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Individuals who have a clear idea of what they need are more often better able to articulate their needs to others (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Much of this knowledge is shaped by the habitus (attitudes and personality) of the student. A belief in one's own inherent potential to achieve correlates with a student's self-determination and motivation which, therefore, also impacts on student success (Swart & Greyling, 2011).

The habitus of the staff also plays a vital role in influencing the supportive and inclusive environment of the students (Agbenyega, 2007; Boyle, 2012; Donato, 2008; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Swart & Greyling, 2011). As Swart and Greyling (2011) point out:

Positive attitudes from lecturers and accommodative teaching are experienced as very supportive, and intrinsic qualities such as patience, kindness and a caring attitude make a difference (Swart & Greyling, 2011, p. 100).

In other words, these qualities in a lecturer can either 'make it or break it' for a student's academic success.

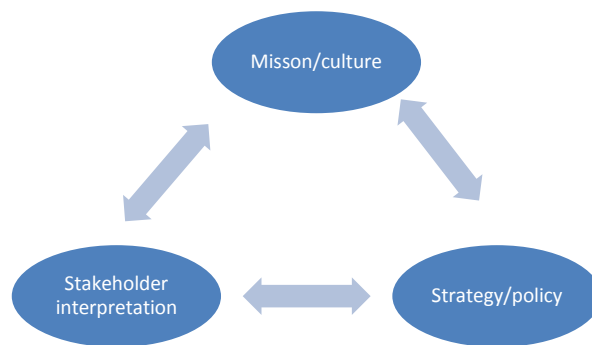
### ***Policy.***

Policy and legislation are vital in facilitating inclusion. As I see it, good and rigorous policy implementation provides a direction for educational institutions and is an essential mechanism which (ideally) ensures adherence to quality. Indeed:

The benefit of having a disability policy in place cannot be sufficiently emphasized, since it reflects and reinforces the ideology and ethos of the institution. Equally important is that it shapes the development of strategies and procedural guidelines for implementation of service design and delivery

(Foundations of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis [FOTIM], 2011, p. 81).

Policy which is guided by legislation is important in determining key elements such as staff ratios and resources, but involves more than just the implementation of rules and procedures or making buildings physically accessible. Educational institutions can actively become part of the policy discourse which focuses on how to shift thinking towards inclusion, thereby encouraging a much needed paradigm shift from ‘equal opportunity’ to ‘diversity’ (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). This is reflected in the diagram below:



*Figure 2.3. The process of interpretation.*

(May & Bridger, 2010, p. 29)

Figure 2.3 above (from May & Bridger, 2010, p. 29) illustrates how stakeholder engagement and interpretation (that is, how staff and students understand the policies), the mission and culture of the university (such as the desired reputation of the university) impact upon strategy and policy, as part of an ongoing process. The implication here is that stakeholder interpretation can and does influence the mission and culture of the university.

Policy is largely context-specific despite the fact that inclusive education is part of the global agenda (Agbenyega, 2007). Halinen and Jarvinen's (2008) analysis of education in Finland shows the success of an inclusive system. Education in Finland is publicly funded, and highly resourced. As a result, students benefit from a number of provisions such as study materials, meals at school, and free dental and health care. Higher education is free. In this way, the authors argue, Finnish society can enable and ensure that everyone has an equal and fair chance to participate in schooling to their full potential (Halinen & Jarvinen, 2008). Indeed, the authors argue that the main goal for the education system in Finland is to eradicate exclusion.

Hence the change in policy direction is different depending on contextual variables which, it could be argued, are reflective of the wider social goals of the country. However, regardless of these differences, the common underlying factor appears to be how schools might successfully draw on the community at large to meet inclusive policy goals. In Northern Ireland this has been realised in social inclusion goals in a policy document entitled *Towards 2016* (Kelly, 2008). Kelly (2008) highlights how universities, colleges and schools in Northern Ireland are working towards practice which will see a number of different institutions and workplaces in collaborate on policy and goal-planning, thereby creating seamless and positive transition for students.

### ***The cycles of cultural influence on inclusion.***

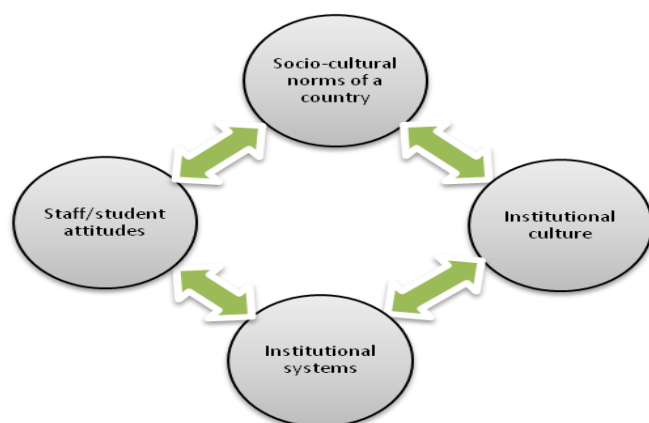
Culture also plays a role in either acting as a facilitator or as a barrier to inclusion. The culture of a particular country will exert a strong influence over its interpretation of inclusion; that is:

education systems are not developed in isolation. Rather, such development has to be understood in relation to particular geographical, political and economic factors, as well as culturally and contextually specific values and beliefs (Aguerrondo, 2008, p. 31).

Finland is arguably a case in point; the robust nature of social policy means that inclusion is respected as a fundamental pillar of not only education but society as a whole. It is perhaps the culture of Finland which allows this to prosper. The cycles of cultural influence show how socio-cultural norms perpetuated in a particular country can be linked back to its educational culture. This is discussed later in this chapter in relation specific countries (the U.S., U.K., Australia, China, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka).

Yet culture is more than just about the country. The culture of the school or university will also affect the nature of how successfully inclusive it is. Agbenyega (2007) argues that schools can (and indeed need to) effectively communicate diversity through awareness which can in turn transform traditional teaching cultures. In pragmatic terms, this may result in ‘‘reforms to the deep structure of schooling, namely the organisation of schooling, pedagogy, assessment and curriculum’’ (Slee, 2003, p. 217). Furthermore, the culture of inclusion in schools has now been more widely accepted as a whole of community approach which prepares all students for the ‘real world’ in which a variety of people with different abilities, backgrounds and languages must live and work together (Shaw, Brain, Bridger, Foreman, & Reid, 2008; Topping, 2012).

I conceptualise these ideas as per Figure 2.4 below:



*Figure 2.4.* The cycles of cultural influence on inclusion/exclusion.

Figure 2.4 reflects what I term ‘The cycles of cultural influence’. This is my identification of the pivotal intricacies involved in either facilitating inclusive environments or creating and maintaining fundamental barriers in a disabling society. The diagram can be interpreted by initially referring to any point and following the links both clockwise and anti-clockwise. The arrows indicate the exertion of influence as discussed in the literature as pertaining to socio-cultural norms of a country, institutional cultures, institutional systems and staff/student attitudes. This approach has helped me simplify some of the complexities culture brings to inclusive/exclusive discourses, and has enabled me to identify common themes in alignment with my overall conceptual framework.

Whilst it is apparent that there are a number of positive indicators of movement towards inclusive environments in education in a number of contexts, there is clearly also much that can and needs to be done. Furthermore, whilst the facilitators for inclusion can seem educationally sound, viable and largely accessible, they are by no means a “universal panacea” (Matthews, 2009, p. 234).

The following section details some of the issues which are apparent barriers to inclusion with a reflection of contemporary dilemmas in inclusive education gleaned from research undertaken in the last five to ten years. The chapter concludes with a summary of the apparent gaps in the literature and how this study works in addressing some of those gaps.

### **Barriers to learning in higher education.**

The following section considers possible barriers in higher education for students with a disability by considering issues surrounding culture, physical, logistical and social barriers, barriers created by policy and language, and the culture of self-disclosure, and how a lack of coordinated services across the university can create barriers for students. The role staff play in either removing or creating barriers for students is also discussed.

There is no doubt that all students will face some kinds of barriers when making the transition from high school to tertiary education. Common barriers to education for all students may be financial and social as well as problems which arise naturally as part of the transition to independent living (Dutta et al., 2009). These difficulties, Dutta et al. (2009) argue, are compounded when a student has a disability. Further complexities then exist with ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences. Watson, Kearns, Grant, and Cameron (2000) suggest that there are certain “target groups” particularly vulnerable to exclusion and educational difficulties. These ‘groups’ include those who are indigenous, have a disability, are unemployed, are from a Non-English speaking background, are from rural areas and women. The presence of a disability coupled with “ethnic/linguistic difference further complicates the transition process” (Dutta et al., 2009, p. 11). The fact that international students with a disability belong to two and possible three of these

subgroups (disability, Non-English speaking background, women) makes the reason for this research all the more important.

### ***Culture.***

Whilst cultures play a significant role in cultivating positive attitudes towards inclusion, conversely, culture also impedes the degree to which inclusion is embraced at schools or universities. Differences between countries are important in understanding how contributory social and cultural elements help drive a change in attitudes (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006; Lambe, 2007). This is discussed later in this chapter by looking at the context of inclusion for a number of different countries. The literature also suggests that these cultural fields may be recognised from within the educational system itself (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Donato, 2008; Forlin, 2007; Gadbow, 2002; Jordan, Schwartz, McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Bourdieu suggests a consideration of these educational systems helps us to attain perspective of systems which are either conducive to inclusion or implicit in creating power struggles (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2004).

### *Socio-cultural norms of a country.*

Despite the impetus for change provided by the implementation of global policies and frameworks such as The Salamanca Statement for Special / Inclusive Education: A Framework for Action, (1994) and The Disability Discrimination Act (1995), “there is still a lack of definitive understanding for the term that is both recognised and accepted across international boundaries” (Lambe, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, , “the successful acceptance and implementation of inclusive policies will very often depend on historical and social precedents that are embedded in the existing systems of individual countries” (Lambe, 2007, p. 2).

Research suggests that more inclusive cultures seem more common in ‘Western’ countries compared to those in ‘the East’ (Forlin, 2010; Forlin & Rose, 2010; Gilson & Dymond, 2011; Sharma, Forlin, Lorman & Earle, 2006). These perceptions are of particular interest in this research as the students who were interviewed come from China, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and the United States.

The literature also reflects the differences between countries and the extent to which inclusion is realised. For example, within an Asian context, Forlin (2007) discusses how inclusive models necessitate approaches shaped by a country’s culture. This is consistent with the guiding principles of the conceptual framework for this study. Forlin (2007) suggests that Hong Kong is not considered “a society that is friendly to people with a disability” as it allows systems to “collude in creating an exclusion zone” (Pearson, et al., 2003, p. 490, cited in Forlin, p. 277). In addition, Forlin argues that the concept of inclusive education is one that is relatively new in most of Asia, and that values embedded in Confucian philosophy inherent in Hong Kong and Chinese cultures are also a likely contributor to the willingness to thoroughly embrace inclusion (Forlin, 2007). As an interesting aside, there is an interesting contrast between Forlin’s observation that Confucian philosophical approaches can potentially limit approaches to inclusion. Yuen (2002), for example suggests that deeply-rooted Confucian beliefs mean that teachers focus on the whole person, and view every student as “teachable” (p. 16).

There are also many challenges being faced by those striving for a more inclusive society in Sri Lanka where “it is argued that although the new curriculum aims to construct an inclusive notion of national citizenship, the influence of politics on education in reality creates dominant experiences of discrimination and marginalization” (Sorenson, 2008, p. 423).



Cultural values also manifest themselves in the attitudes to inclusion in Ghana. Some Ghanaians believe illnesses or a disability is caused by curses from gods and spirits (Agbenyega, 2005; Obeng, 2007).

Because attitudes can be seen as intrinsic to a cultural psyche, it is likely that models of inclusion such as those from Europe or the United States are not appropriate for other countries because they may not be contextually and culturally relevant (Raver, 2007). There is also danger in inclusion being promoted as a universal panacea for the education of all students regardless of context (Forlin, 2007; Matthews, 2009).

Taking a cross-cultural perspective, that is, undertaking an examination of the contextual differences between countries and not in isolation can serve to “help researchers, practitioners and families better understand their own practices and the results of those practices by looking at the differences between systems and experiences” (Kozleski et al., 2008, final paragraph; Swart & Oswald, 2008). In other words examining practices of other collective habituses and relational fields within a country will help us better understand our own.

#### *Institutional cultures.*

Culture which is particular to an institution is also an important factor in developing and encouraging an inclusive approach to education (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Donato, 2008; Forlin, 2007; Gadbow, 2002; Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Indeed, Ainscow and Miles (2008) suggest that “it is easy for educational difficulties to be pathologised as difficulties inherent within students” (p. 25). The extent to which inclusion is actually put into practice and maintained by institutions is also questionable. While educational institutions may try to be seen as openly embracing and promoting inclusion, in reality it is “an integration concept that is

fostered, whereby, the [student] must meet the requirements of the system” (Forlin, 2007, p. 280; Holloway, 2001).

### ***Physical, logistical and social barriers.***

Barriers are also physical or logistical. In terms of academic life, a student with a physical or sensory disability may experience difficulty and waste time in navigating the university campus. This is because often the physical environment of the university has been designed by and for people who do not have a disability. Walking from class to class across a large campus or accessing high shelves in the library may be taken for granted by some students but can cause major difficulties for others (Holloway, 2001; Redpath et al., 2012; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Students may also have difficulties with logistical barriers of university bureaucracy which dictates access to note-takers, adjustments to exams and exam conditions as well as barriers which may arise from difficulties in communicating with lecturers (Donato, 2008).

The culture of the institution will dictate location, transportation options, testing systems and how widely available assistive learning tools are all of which will have a significant effect on the extent to which students can participate in learning, particularly those with a disability (Gadbow, 2002). The rigidity of assessment tasks at university level reflect the belief that there is only one way to learn and to be tested (Gadbow, 2002; Swart & Greyling, 2011; Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). Unfortunately it is sometimes the belief that flexible approaches will somehow compromise the standard of the educational institution (Gadbow, 2002). However, the suggestion that flexibility requires a lowering of standards seems an unfair parallel to draw. In addition, there is something inherently wrong with assuming that students with a disability require lower standards (Gadbow, 2002). The result is a necessary shift in attitudes away from equating inclusion with lower standards. This is particularly

pertinent to higher education in Australia where the sector is one that is driven by competition and hierarchy. The Group of Eight (Go8) for example are a selection of the top eight universities in Australia (Australian National University, University of New South Wales, The University of Adelaide, The University of Queensland, The University of Western Australia, The University of Melbourne, Monash University and Sydney University - <http://www.go8.edu.au/>). The Group of Eight has been selected primarily on the basis of being research intensive. These universities boast good reputations for prospective students and their entrance scores are generally higher than other universities. According to Gale (2011) there is often a difference between how these universities conceptualise equity in that some universities “see equity as compatible with excellence whereas others see the two as antithetical” (Gale, 2011, p. 11). In my experience of working at two very different universities in Australia, I would agree that this tension definitely exists.

I had an interesting discussion recently with the Vice Chancellor of the university where I work about this very topic. Victoria University (not the site for this research) is both striving to be a centre of excellence as well as maintain its consistency in promoting access to university for all students, particularly those from the western suburbs of Melbourne (traditionally low socio-economic status), but is struggling financially. In his address at a staff function in 2011 he spoke at length about excellence and at length about inclusion, but in mutually exclusive ways. Over a cup of tea at the morning break I asked him how he thought the tensions between excellence and inclusion could be met, and the danger in the idea of excellence as pertaining to elitism. I don't know that our conversation got very far, but it is something I am now highly sensitive to as a result of being engaged in this research. I agree with Gale in that “if equity is to find a prominent position in the global field of higher education, its relation with excellent needs to be re-theorised” (Gale, 2011, p. 18).

### ***How policy and language create barriers.***

In the previous section, the importance of policy in creating frameworks within education was considered. Current political agendas within institutions are considered here, and analysed in terms of why those are perhaps hindering a movement towards inclusion.

Unfortunately staff and students are often simply not aware of the policies which exist at their universities (Caruana & Ploner, 2010; FOTIM, 2011). This lack of awareness in itself acts as a further barrier for students trying to access support.

Policy documents themselves can also create barriers for students. For example the medical models in which some university policies are framed (FOTIM, 2011) informs a 'labelling' culture and feeds assumptions of deficit that underlie these labels (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012; Devos, 2012). Policy may also serve as a further means for institutions to promote and maintain power differences (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012; Slee, 2011). If universities rely on evidence-based requests for assistance this can be problematic for students who may not have access to services to receive such documents, or whose disability has an impact on their learning but is not necessarily recognised by doctors (Devlin & Pothier, 2006). The onus is then placed on the individual to seek out support systems and maintain these accommodations themselves, precluding any proactive practices on the part of the university (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012; Kraus, 2008). Finally, a policy based on a medical model potentially compromises a student's educational goals if they do not follow the university guidelines for self-disclosure (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). This is because under the medical model the perception is that a student needs to be 'fixed' rather than the system. Under a policy which has been written with a focus on the medical model, individuals are forced to align their sense of self, identity and beliefs about ability to that of the

university, thus maintaining the power of the institution over individual agency (Devlin & Pothier, 2006).

Decisions about policy which are mandated by those from 'above' can contribute to creating the belief amongst staff that inclusive policy is "a policy doomed to fail" (Jordan, Swartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009, p. 535). Indeed, as Forlin (2007) argues, reforms taking the 'top-down' often fail. This points to the need for a more collaborative policy creation and consultation culture for teachers, and I would argue students as well. In doing so, all stakeholders can be empowered to develop clear and comprehensive inclusive policies. The power of collaboration is an important part of this study and is presented as part of the conceptual framework for this thesis in Chapter 3.

Part of this lack of belief in inclusive policies by staff could be because of the apparent conflict that exists within institutions. These problems point to endemic issues within the system which are impossible to solve unless the structures of the system (that is policies) are changed in response to this need (Bett, 2008). It could be said that there is a certain mindset which inextricably links teacher effectiveness with student academic outcomes. As a result, teachers are faced with the conflicting pressures of being told to meet or raise student objectives by raising class averages, while at the same time also being required to actively respond to the diversity of the student cohort and to work to diversify their approaches to meet the needs of all students (Jordan et al., 2010). It is this pressure which creates ambivalence within teaching communities about including students with a disability in their classes (Jordan et al., 2010). Teachers may also see inclusive policies as a burden which is placed upon them by policy-makers (Agbenyega, 2007).

The voices of students with a disability are largely absent from policy, research and practice in higher education (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). It seems there is much scope for listening to the voice of both students and staff members in being political ‘agents of change’. Language is a powerful tool and a means of honouring these voices (Graham & Macartney, 2012; Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002). Bourdieu argues that:

Language can be used as a battlefield or as a weapon...Language is not powerful in and of itself, but it becomes powerful when used in particular ways, or by particular groups and institutions (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. 95).

In the context of this research, Bourdieu’s ‘battlefield’ as alluded to in the quote above refers to the way in which language is used in university policy documentation.

Examples by Hutcheon and Wolbring (2012) are a case in point. These authors have noted a difference in language used depending on the equity group the policy is written for. Citing an example from the University of Arizona, legal phrases such as “undue hardship” and “duty” are often used in its disability policy guidelines, in comparison with phrases such as “inclusion” and “supportive” in its gender equity policy (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012, p. 47). Words such as “burden” or “obligation” which are used in disability policy create power structures between institution and individual (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). Indeed, the absence of considerations concerning equity and justice are often highly apparent in the language of policy (Devlin & Pothier, 2006; Dyson, Farrell, Polat & Hutcheson, 2004; Gillies & Carrington, 2004; Graham & Macartney, 2012).

Some may argue this is merely a question of semantics and indeed in the past I may have been in agreement. I can see how my own assumptions have changed, however, by becoming engaged in inclusive discourse. For instance, initially I had no

awareness of the importance of language associated with inclusion. In comparison, I now find myself recoiling when hearing terms like ‘the disabled’ or ‘the blind’.

At this point I am prompted to think back to when I started developing an awareness of the power of language and its implications in the context of striving for equity. I cite a particular example here in working with the student who was blind. In one particular instance, I found myself bearing the brunt of criticism from management in seeking an exemption for this student from a task in an exam which was wholly based on the interpretation of visual information. The attitude of management was *this student needs to be treated like anyone else - that’s equity!* To me, these were ‘fighting words’ - just as how Bourdieu talks about language as a battlefield and a weapon (Bourdieu, 1999). In my battle, there was no room for negotiating or adapting the situation in order to give this student an equitable chance of success, and ‘being treated like everyone else’ was a weapon often used against me in trying to fight for my student’s rights.

I found it extremely difficult in that early stage to try to work with people with these attitudes, and to assert how I understood the concepts of ‘equity’ as opposed to ‘being treated equally’ as two different concepts. In this thesis I understand equity to mean “ideas and practices relating to justness, fairness, impartiality and even-handedness” while equality means “equal sharing and exact division” (Graham & Macartney, 2012).

These uses of language at the time made me angry but I was unable to articulate why. In retrospect I would interpret these attitudes as ignorance and convenience, masked by the tokenism of an ‘equal opportunity’ catchcry. I wish I had been armed with this knowledge at that time to fight back - equal provision can in fact be

discriminatory. Positive discrimination sometimes needs to take place in order to bring about an equitable result (Graham & Macartney, 2012).

### ***The culture of self-disclosure.***

With the general contemporary acceptance of the social model of disability, it follows that many institutions now rely on students to disclose their disability as part of the enrolment process. However, much of the literature points to the inherent problems caused by the culture of self-disclosure such as fear of discrimination (Carney et al., 2007; Donato, 2008; Donato, 2008; Fuller, Healey, Bradley, & Hall, 2004; Gadbow, 2002; Matthews, 2009; Roer-Strier, 2002; Redpath et al., 2012; Swart & Greyling, 2011; Tinklin & Hall, 1999) and the ethical issues which may lead to under-representation and under-reporting of a disability in higher education (ANTA 1998b, p.13, cited in Watson, Kearns, Grant, & Cameron, 2000). Unfortunately many students who disclosed information about having a disability to lecturers experienced negative responses from staff (Carney et al., 2007; Donato, 2008). This obviously serves as a potential deterrent to students. In addition, there is a great deal of bureaucracy associated with students disclosing a disability and that accommodating their needs may be both complex and costly (Gadbow, 2002). This can be compounded by the complexity of some disabilities, particularly learning disabilities or those we cannot 'see'. There are also often wrongful assumptions of low intelligence linked to having a disability (Al Khatib, 2007).

Furthermore, self-disclosing information about a disability can sometimes create a dilemma for students. There may be concern on the part of the student associated with possible stigmatisation and fear of alienation in drawing attention to their disability (Swart & Greyling, 2011). The aforementioned literature (Carney, 2007 in Donato, 2008; Donato, 2008; Fuller, Healey, Bradley, & Hall, 2004; Gadbow, 2002; Matthews,



2009; Roer-Strier, 2002; Tinklin & Hall, 1999; Redpath et al., 2012; Swart & Greyling, 2011) also implies that students are fearful of declaring themselves as having a disability as there is an underlying concern that staff and students may perceive them as lazy and/or complaining. Some literature even suggests that the situation for those students with ‘hidden’ needs may be worse as there are reports that such students have been accused of lying about their requirements (Gadbow & Du Bois, 1998; Matthews, 2009; Olney & Brockelman, 2003; Valeras, 2010).

### ***Barriers created by uncoordinated services.***

Literature points to the dire need for collaboration between service providers in order to best facilitate the needs of students on a number of different levels (Donato, 2008; Dutta et al., 2009; Orsini-Jones, 2009). Indeed “pedagogical differentiation, mobilisation of additional technical, financial and human resources” to support students through transition to university as well as “special arrangements to facilitate their academic success play an essential role” (OECD, 2011, p. 24). These are of particular importance when a student is trying to adapt to the demands of a new educational and social environment at university, and are especially difficult for students to navigate after secondary school. While access to support at a school level largely remains the responsibility of the school, support in higher education institutions depends more on the students’ ability to demonstrate and make requests about their needs, and to know where to get help for themselves (OECD, 2011).

As the Whole Schooling approach to education suggests, there is a need for collaboration between schools and universities in order to aid the transition of students between different support systems. Transitioning into university requires time consuming administrative procedures which are also costly and have potentially negative social ramifications for the student (feeling isolated after being supported in

secondary school for example) (OECD, 2011). As the Whole Schooling approach also suggests, this need for collaboration extends further beyond the school and university itself and involves families, communities, vocational rehabilitation and social services in ensuring the best transition for students (Dutta, Kundu, & Schiro-Geist, 2009; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004; Topping, 2012). The picture painted by some of the state of disability services in higher education is one that is chaotic, ad hoc and highly insufficient - fragmented approaches caused by mutually exclusive agendas from different areas of the school or university (such as I.T. and administration) often results in a lack of resource mapping (Dutta et al., 2009; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004; Orsini-Jones, 2009). Unfortunately this was also my experience - I.T. operated on a different agenda to the administration of the university and were “not allowed” to install assistive software on the student’s own computer, even though she was not able to do it herself and none of the teachers knew how to do it. The clumsy assumptions made about this student before she even entered the country meant that there was a lot of money spent on creating textbooks in Braille, when not only could she not read them, but this was not her preferred method of study. In an effort to try to ‘recoup’ some of the money for creating Braille texts, one of the managers suggested she should just ‘try harder’ in developing her Braille reading skills.

Not surprisingly, these insufficiencies create a number of barriers and anxiety for students as well as staff. A lack of collaboration can cause unnecessary duplications of services and provisions and failure to provide consistent provision for access to resources such as assistive technology can result in not only educational but also employment barriers (Dutta et al., 2009; Orsini-Jones, 2009). Collaboration across services helps students become aware of what support systems are available for them at university, and avoids the need to deal with the stress and bureaucracy involved in determining who is responsible for what (Chang & Logan, 2002; Dutta et al., 2009).

### *The role of staff.*

Much of this literature review has already considered the vital role of staff in promoting an inclusive environment and fostering collaborative work practices where their beliefs, values, habits and assumed practices are shared among teaching communities (Agbenyega, 2007; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012; Deppeler, 2012). The following section considers how entrenched negative beliefs (the habitus) work at creating barriers for students.

#### *Attitudes, awareness and assumptions.*

Sensitivity and awareness for the accommodation of students with a disability is actually of more significant concern than funding availability (Holloway, 2001; Dutta et al., 2009). The difficulty is that these attitudes which are enshrined in one's habitus are deeply entrenched and embedded within the teacher (Mitchell, 2005), driven by social norms of difference (Ainscow & Miles, 2008), socially contextualised (Ainscow & Miles 2008; Jordan, Glenn & McGhie-Richmond, 2010), and can result in influencing the very quality of educational delivery by teachers (Agbenyega, 2007). The varied habituses of teachers can be conceptualised as "scripts" which are pre-written from life experiences and assumptions (Hargreaves, 2003, cited in Mitchell, 2005). Being so complex and so deeply embedded, the task of re-writing these teacher 'scripts' is extremely difficult. In addition, teachers internalise differing pedagogical theories and thus their approaches, methodologies and behaviours also differ (Jordan et al., 1997).

There is an important parallel between a teacher's belief system and their practice, particularly in regards to knowledge, teaching and learning (Jordan et al., 1997, 2009, 2010). Terms such as "pathognomonic" and "interventionist" are used in describing the different ends of the spectrum of inclusive practice exhibited by staff (Jordan et al., 1997; McGhie-Richmond, Barber, Lupart & Loreman, 2009). Teachers

with pathognomonic beliefs tend to focus on the problem as being inherent in the student, place blame on the student and hold them as accountable for their own learning.

By contrast, interventionists take the responsibility as a practitioner in educating all students and making adjustments and modifications as necessary (Jordan et al., 1997, 2010; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2009). Pathognomonic and interventionist beliefs are linked to a person's beliefs about equity and fairness and as such can be hard to change (Jordan et al., 2010).

It is perhaps not surprising then that it is virtually unanimous amongst authors that attitudes and prejudice are fundamental barriers to developing inclusive practices at universities and schools (Agbenyega, 2007; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Al Khatib, 2007; Boyle, 2012; Deppeler, 2012; Donato, 2008; Fuller, Healy, Bradley & Hall, 2004; Kashdan, 2002; McGhie-Richmond, Barber, Lupart & Loreman, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2012; Mitchell, 2005; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Poplin & Phillips, 1993). Indeed, Agbenyega (2007) argues that negative attitudes and discrimination are “the most critical of all the barriers” (p. 42). There are evidently many ways in which these negative attitudes can impinge on student access and achievement. This can be in terms of staff willingness to teach a student with a disability, to be flexible in content delivery modes and assessment methods, to be committed to planning and to be available for any student who requires a more personalised level of assistance and support (Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004).

Critically, it has been found that a student's opinion of the university as a whole is often influenced by their experience of working with teachers and lecturers, and by staff awareness of appropriate support systems (Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). Lack of awareness by staff of the accommodations required by

students, existing support systems and policies can cause many difficulties for students (Agbenyega, 2007; Hong, 2007; Orsini-Jones, 2009). For example, lecturers may need to organise getting class notes to a student ahead of time or convert text to a different format for screen reading software. They may need to enlarge text for students but also have an awareness of the extent to which text needs to be enlarged as this will differ for individual students (Redpath et al., 2012). If students need to repeat requests for support from their lecturers this can result in time wasting and increase levels of stress (Reeve, 2004; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Students may feel that they are ‘nagging’ their lecturers and become frustrated by what appears to be apparent ignorance on the part of the staff member. Dealing with staff who are not aware of support systems or inclusive approaches can have many detrimental effects on students. It is unfortunate that students often experience high levels of anxiety in relation to lecturers who actually accuse them of ‘using’ their disability to gain unfair advantage (Riddell et al., 2007). This student quote from interview data collected by Vickerman and Blundell (2010) is a case in point: “I did ask my tutor about alternative assessments due to my disability but he said that it would not be fair on the others” (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010, p. 28). Clearly the lecturer in this case showed ignorance on a number of levels, including the equity and diversity policies in place at the university as well as their responsibilities under anti-discrimination legislation. It is also obvious that this lecturer was not aware of the desire for students to have accommodations in place simply to make their chance of success the same as any other student (Holloway, 2001).

There is also a danger in teachers making assumptions about learners, their needs, their strengths and weaknesses and their abilities. There can sometimes be a mismatch of pedagogy in relation to assumptions about ability and the ‘right’ accommodations for students, rather than a direct consultation with the student (Kashdan, 2002). As a practitioner I experienced the danger and futility of generating

assumptions about students firsthand. Management made the assumption that all students who are blind read Braille. The student I was teaching did not read Braille. Before she arrived in the country, a significant waste of time, money and resources were used in converting text to Braille. When she arrived she was put under a lot of pressure to use these Braille resources. To me this was not only embarrassing but ignorant and seemed to act as some kind of rationale for a lack of rigorous and consultative planning. It also caused unnecessary stress for both the student in feeling pressured into something she was not comfortable with, as well as the staff who were working with her.

The failure of universities to provide sufficient professional development or orientation and ongoing support to staff not only acts as a barrier to staff but has an effect on the student experience. Teachers often express a lack of confidence in their own abilities in working with a student with a disability and express feelings of inadequacy over whether they have the 'right' skills for the job (Donato, 2008; Forlin, 2007; Jordan, 2009; Orsini-Jones, 2009). Teachers may also have difficulty in establishing a clear pedagogical direction for the student (Orsini-Jones, 2009). These difficulties can then be compounded by not knowing about the specifics of a student's disability (Donato, 2008). Not having access to ongoing support adds to the stress of the situation for teachers, which obviously also has an effect on the students (Barrett, 2008; Donato, 2008; Forlin, Keen, Eloff, Engelbrecht, & Swart, 2002).

## **From Global to Local: The Inclusive Policy Context across some countries**

This section reviews a selection of international literature in relation to the growing global shift towards a more rigorous implementation of inclusive policy and practice. The extent to which this has been realised in the U.K. and the U.S. is

considered first, particularly as I consider these countries to be similar to Australia socially, economically, linguistically and culturally. I then give an overview of some of the literature specific to countries where the student interview participants are from – Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and China (the fourth student being from the U.S.) in order to contextualise the cultures of these countries, giving both myself and the reader a sense of the relational field from which these students come (see the following chapter for an in-depth discussion of Bourdieu’s notion of ‘field’). In this chapter I also discuss how I conceptualised the various layers of significance related to this study in terms of the broader landscapes of deficit discourses surrounding inclusion and the international student experience. I discuss my conceptualisation of the political and economic significance of this study and its significance at an individual level – for staff, for students and for myself as the researcher.

### **The United Kingdom.**

Literature shows that enrolment numbers are generally low in both the U.K. and the U.S. for students with a disability and that these students consistently achieve poorer outcomes at degree level which is critical for financial empowerment and future employment (in the U.K: Ashworth, Bloxham, & Pearce 2010; Collinson & Penketh 2010; Fuller, Healey, Bradley, & Hall, 2004; Norwich, 2012; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010; U.S: Dutta, Kundu, & Schiro-Geist, 2009; Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010; Landin, 2010; Salend & Whittaker, 2012). There is, however, compelling evidence of a positive movement towards actively including students with a disability in higher education in these countries, and that enrolment numbers at least in the U.S. are on the rise for students with a disability. Perhaps not surprisingly, the literature out of both countries suggests that successful transition to university for students with a disability is

realised where inclusion has first been successfully implemented in schools (Hornell & Hutchinson, 2009; Inclusion International, 2009).

Over the past 10 – 15 years in the U.K. there has been improved access to higher education due to changes to legislation at both a national and international level (Norwich, 2012; Redpath et al., 2012). Prior to 1993, accessibility to higher education for students with a disability was limited (Riddell et al., 2007). The Disability Legislation in Higher Education has been enacted since the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in 1995 and Special Educational Needs and Discrimination Act (SENDA) from 2001 (Fuller et al., 2004; Riddell et al., 2007). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has played a significant role in providing funding aimed at increased participation for students with a disability, mature-aged students and students from various ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). The ‘Disability Equality Duty’ (2007) is a legal requirement for all public bodies in the U.K. including higher education institutions, and has been in place since 2006 (Collinson & Penketh, 2010). This powerful approach at universities requires students to be involved in consultation processes for policy and procedure directives (Collinson & Penketh, 2010).

Recent literature from the U.K. reflects a broad understanding of the importance of inclusion from a number of angles – the importance of the student voice in informing policy (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Fuller et al. 2004; Norwich, 2012; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010) the importance of inclusion for students with a disability themselves (Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010) as well as the benefits for all students in learning in higher education institutions within diverse cohorts. Literature coming out of the U.K. talks about the concept of inclusion as informed by pluralistic discourses comprising concepts such as cultural diversity and multiple



identities rather than prescribing wholly to the social model of disability (Ashworth, Bloxham, & Pearce, 2010; Collinson & Penketh 2010; Seale, Draffan, & Wald, 2010). It is argued by these authors that adopting this perspective towards inclusion recognises how the similarities and differences of all students can be embraced and leveraged in order to create positive educational experiences for all students. Although this literature is not concerned with ‘hard facts’ and statistics of who in reality is and is not included in higher education in the U.K., I would argue that these papers highlight new and emerging understandings of the notion of inclusion and how it is beginning to be recognised and spoken about. Perhaps most importantly is the fact that this is being done through the medium of the student voice and their lived experiences, arguably driven by the Disability Equality Duty of 2007.

However, it is somewhat obvious that these approaches are no panacea and while there are significant signs of progress, a real and apparent gap between “rhetorical policy and practice” (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010, p. 30) still remains. Unfortunately there is also ongoing debate about the tensions between ‘reasonable adjustments’ and whether this compromises academic standards (Riddell et al., 2007). It is also unfortunate that the weakening of the economy in the U.K. has meant that its higher education sector will receive a cut of 40% to its funding by 2014-2015 (HM Treasury, 2010, cited in Gale, 2011, p. 15) which will, therefore, effect not only resources for students with a disability, but all students. The impacts from these cuts are already being felt – there is now more pressure than ever on lecturers to ‘process’ students under an increasingly pressurised system of educational massification. Not surprisingly students are the ones who are suffering from the reduction of quality, timely and individualised feedback mechanisms (Cramp, 2012).

## **The United States.**

In terms of the North American context, literature reflects an increase in the number of students with a disability entering universities and colleges in the United States (Donato, 2008; Dutta, Kundu, & Schiro-Geist, 2009; Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010; Landin, 2010; OECD, 2011; Salend & Whittaker, 2012). The reasons for this are many and varied but include various legal, academic, historical, philosophical and social changes (Donato, 2008; Sachs & Schureuer, 2011; Salend & Whittaker, 2012). In particular, 1990 saw the enactment of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and an extension into policy specific to education with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), also in 1990 (Donato, 2008; Landin, 2010 ; Higbee et al., 2010; OECD 2011).

Higbee, Katz, and Schultz (2010) reflect upon the extent to which inclusion has been realised in post-secondary education settings in the U.S. by drawing on the landmark anniversary of the ADA (20 years since its establishment at the time their paper was published). Here the parallels become apparent with the aforementioned research from the U.K. as the authors also seek to approach inclusion from a perspective which is not apparent in literature from even 5 years ago. These authors argue that:

A growing body of research indicates that being part of a diverse educational community can enhance growth and development in important skills like leadership, critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication (Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010, p. 1).

Higbee et al. (2010) as well as Landin (2010) both echo the U.K. literature in underscoring the importance of the voice of students as stakeholders in their own educational trajectories (Landin, 2010). It appears that the U.S. literature also reflects a

paradigm shift towards engaging a richly diverse cohort in fostering an environment which allows for student ownership of learning, while at the same time focussing on the engagement of all students.

This next section of the literature review considers the extent to which inclusion is practised in the countries where the three non-native English speaking student participants are from (Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and China). I have also included some general information about the socio-cultural positioning of these countries in order to attempt to understand and make sense of the students' home culture or Bourdieuan field (see the following chapter for a further discussion on the notion of field in this research). I then discuss some of the literature around education in these countries in general, followed by a consideration of their inclusive practices.

### **Sri Lanka.**

Sri Lanka has a rich demography which is multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multifaith (Daskon & Binns, 2010). The population comprises of Sinhalese (most of whom are Buddhist), Tamil (most of whom are Hindus) and Muslims (Maracek, 1998). According to Maracek (1998), the various linguistic, religious, hierarchical and ethnic groups means that "individuals hold multiple identities" (p. 72). These multiple identities Maracek argues shift and change in alignment with the changing political climate and atmosphere of the country.

The history of Sri Lanka and the way of life of its people has been seriously affected by the war between minority group, the Tamils, and the majority-ruling Sinhalese (Hayes, 2010). According to Hayes (2010) this civil war raged from July, 1983 until May 2009, caused 90,000 deaths and 20,000 soldiers now live with a

disability as the result of injuries sustained in conflict. These numbers also include many child soldiers (Hayes, 2010).

In spite of the intrusion of the protracted conflict, 90% of the population is literate, most children are taught Sinhala or Tamil and English instruction commences in year three (Daskon & Binns, 2010). Education is fee-free and subsidies and bursaries are available to those from poorer families (Daskon & Binns, 2010). A cultural trait is that questioning superiors is not tolerated so that children do not question parents and those of 'low status' do not question those 'above' them (Marecek, 1998). Educational resources used in the past in Sri Lanka did not shy away from racism or discrimination by the Sinhalese or the Tamils against each other (Hayes, 2010). In recent years there has been an elimination of discriminatory content from learning material and a development of a new curriculum which stresses peace, tolerance and friendship (Sorenson, 2008).

There are approximately 900,000 people with a disability in Sri Lanka (Campbell, 2011). Increased internet communication has led to the development of a Sri Lankan Disability Rights Movement which is run by and for people with a disability. A Draft National Policy for Sri Lanka, developed by the Minister of Employment and labour in 2002 calls for the provision of the government in providing:

opportunities for persons with disabilities to upgrade their knowledge and skills to facilitate them in securing, retraining and advancing in suitable employment thus enabling them to integrate into the community or society and enter active economic and social life (UNESCAP, 2011, p. 7).

There is also a national policy on disability which aims to promote and protect the rights of people a disability (UNESCAP, 2012). Policy development, however, and

legal reforms related to disability concerns have been slow to come to fruition (Campbell, 2011; Rieser, 2012).

## **China.**

A well-ordered family is the basic unit of the socio-political order in China (Hsiang, n.d). The cultural norms of self control, self restraint and suppression of emotions result generally in little attention being given to emotional needs (Xu, Wang, Xiang, & Hu, 2005).

Responsibility and accountability for disability rests with the family (Fisher & Jong, 2008). According to the literature, people with a mental illness can often be stigmatised by both family and friends and the whole family can be seen as having failed when a family member has a mental illness (Tsang, Tam, Chan, & Cheung, 2003; Xu et al., 2005). According to Fisher and Jong (2008), most people with a disability rely on informal support from family and friends or from the Residents' Committee (the smallest political unit of local government). However, there is very limited provision of independent living facilities so a disproportionate number of people who are homeless have a disability (Fisher & Jong, 2008).

Economic growth in China has led to the expansion of junior, secondary, technical and higher education in order to meet the increasing demand for skills in the manufacturing and service sectors (Little & Green, 2009). Little and Green (2009) report on how China is challenging the developed economies in software production, computer games, biotechnology and agricultural production but has struggled with even distribution of educational opportunities across the country. Inclusive practice in China is one of integration – “*sui ban jiu du*, is literally translated as ‘learning in a regular classroom’ ” (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011, p. 356, original italics).

Although some authors suggest that movement has been afoot in recent years towards a more ideologically- based inclusive practice as outlined in the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (Yu et al., 2011; Dauncey, 2012) and there is an emerging trend in contemporary society towards advocacy for people with a disability and helping them to focus on enhancing their independence, potential, and societal participation (Dauncey, 2012; Xu et al., 2005), there is still much that needs to be done towards a fully inclusive approach to inclusion in China (Forlin, 2012; Xu, 2012).

Perhaps not surprisingly, China's massive populace demands an equally massive investment of resources. In 2008 it was estimated that there were 82.96 million people in China with a disability which includes mental illness (CDPF, 2008). The staggering amount of approximately 81 million Australian dollars (5,500 million Chinese Renminbi) will only go as far as providing school education for 129,000 students with a disability (Xiao & Qi, 2009). Additional challenges are those posed by the lack of trained teachers across the country particularly in rural areas (Yu et al., 2011; Feng, 2012). To try and bridge this gap, peers are used as assistant teachers for students with a disability in some provinces (Deng & Harris, 2008).

The Law on Higher Education in China contains legislation which includes people with a disability and as such institutions are legally obligated to accept all students into programs of study (Guozhong, 2006; Rong, & Tianjian, 2001). The fact remains, however, that some students with a disability still face barriers in order to enter into higher education institutions in China, such as those posed by physical examination requirements of some universities (Guozhong, 2006).

Furthermore, Guozhong (2006) suggests that although the physical requirements stipulated by medical examination were changed by the Ministry of Education in order

to provide fairer access for students with a disability, the lack of physical accessibility and efforts towards reasonable on-campus accommodations remain as barriers for some prospective students. However, policy change is set to come about through China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development, 2010–2020 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, [CPC] & State Council [SC], 2010), which outlines the government's commitment to increase the number of teachers as well as revise teacher professional development in inclusive practices.

### **Hong Kong.**

Chinese cultural norms in Hong Kong tend to prescribe notions of self-restraint, self-control and suppression of emotions (Chen & Mak, 2008). Asian societies can be collectivist in nature (Chen & Mak, 2008) which impacts upon how people with a disability or a mental illness are perceived within the cultural contexts; they can be stigmatised and ostracised by family, friends, and people within their own community (Tsang, Tam, Chan & Cheung, 2003). There can also be feelings of embarrassment of one's own relatives and the sense that the entire family is 'inferior' or 'a failure' because of the existence of a relative with a mental illness (Tsang et al., 2003). Gilson and Dymond (2011) suggest that the medical model is the dominant belief system which defines disability in Hong Kong. Further, according to Chen and Mak (2008), the approach to mental illness in Hong Kong Chinese culture often perceives mental illness as an internal problem of the person, in contrast to 'Western' mental health approaches which largely view mental illness as the result of interactions between people and their environment. The construct of disability from a social perspective has also been shaped by its history and influence from being under British rule from 1842 – July 1, 1997 (Gilson & Dymond, 2011). For example, an approach used in the U.K. in the past has been for both government and non-government agencies to reduce the stigma associated

with mental illness by segregating patients from the public instead of focussing on community reintegration (Gilson & Dymond, 2011).

Forlin (2007) suggests that the culture cultivated within some schools in Hong Kong is driven by elitism, which actively works to create barriers and significant challenges for students with a disability and as such the general attitude promoted by the schooling system is that including students with a disability in schools will reduce their marketability as an elite school. University education in the past used to be available to only an extremely limited elite cross-section of the population, but more recently access to higher education has been expanded through grants and government incentives (Kember, 2010). There is also evidence of a movement towards an inclusive educational environment in government schools as underpinned by the tenets of a Whole School approach (Forlin & Rose, 2010). Indeed “the government in Hong Kong has mandated that all schools should start to accept children with special educational needs by employing a whole school [sic] approach” (Forlin, 2010, p. 177). The challenges particular to Hong Kong in fully integrating inclusion into schools are related to necessary cultural changes in attitude and treatment of people with a disability, problems posed by bureaucracy, falling student numbers due to lower birth rates, inflexible systems and pedagogical challenges for teachers (Forlin, 2010), arguably the same kinds of issues in most countries. The prevailing issues in Hong Kong, however, are related to challenging:

the existing segregationist approach to education, the didactic teaching methodology employed by all teachers and the beliefs of teachers about where children should be educated and their expected role in enabling inclusion (Forlin, 2010, p. 178).



Forlin (2010) argues that the issues stated in the above quote are culturally idiosyncratic to Hong Kong and are necessary for the country to grapple with in order to achieve fully inclusive educational policy implementation and teaching practice.

Further, Gilson and Dymond (2011) argue that until people with a disability in Hong Kong:

assert their rightful places as foremost experts about their lives...the medical model's negative portrayal of disability will largely prevail, to the detriment of the quality of life of [people with a disability in Hong Kong] and Mainland Chinese. No longer do [they] need to be silenced. [People with a disability] in China are now beginning to claim their identities as fully-fledged citizens (Gilson & Dymond, 2011, final paragraph).

Recommendations borne out of the Education Commission of 2000 suggested an overhaul of university administration mechanisms in order to allow for a full consideration of students' all-round performance rather than reliance on the results of public examinations solely for the purposes of entrance into university (Education Commission, 2000; Poon-McBrayer, 2010). Poon-McBrayer's (2010) research, however, indicates that of the ten universities surveyed, none of them had adequate systems in place to identify students or address their needs. Furthermore, policy documentation (such as Education Commission, 2000; UNESCAP, 2011) is vague. For example:

Universities are recommended to overhaul their existing admission mechanism to give due consideration to students' all-round performance. Apart from public examination results, they may also consider internal assessment reports of

secondary schools, portfolios prepared by students themselves and their performance at interviews (Education Commission, 2000, p. 21).

Phrases such as “are recommended to overhaul” and “may also consider” in this policy wording are vague. This current policy, therefore, needs to be overhauled and in its place a definitive mandated policy is needed which universities can adhere to (Poon-McBrayer, 2010).

## **The Contribution of this study**

The literature reviewed for this study has indicated a number of gaps. This study aims to fill some of those gaps by being situated within a discourse which represents students in non-deficit terms. My study does this through its underpinnings in critical theory and research approaches as informed by the Whole Schooling Approach to education and the conceptual framework (see Chapter 3). At the heart of this thesis are the true voices of both students and staff and an attempt to represent their experiences as authentically as possible within an Australian context. Furthermore, the students are from what one staff member referred to in her interview as a *double disability* – students with a disability who face extra challenges brought about by cultural and linguistic differences. The conclusions reached from the results of this study contribute two models for the future of inclusive practices in higher education as pertaining to collaboration and university processes and policy development in higher education. (Figures 7.1 and 7.2 respectively. These models are presented in Chapter 7).

## **The contribution of this study to insider perspectives in inclusive scholarship.**

This study is concerned with the true voices of international students with a disability, respecting those insider voices and representing them in a way which honours the whole person. Harnessing insider voices in research is a powerful tool for showing respect for those voices which may otherwise not be heard.

There are many reasons why insider perspectives are an important part of research in inclusive education. The insider perspective represents a way of breaking down power relations between the researcher as all knowing, and avoids objectification of those as the subject of the research (Oliver, 2000). There are also often significant gaps between the perceived needs of individuals and the reality, and insider perspectives allow a bridge over that gap (Armstrong, 2004; Gwynn, 2004). For example, lecturers can make assumptions about what a student's needs are without actually asking them. This is also true of policy-makers who may purport to know what students need from a systems perspective without consultation with students, resulting in gaps between policy and practice.

These assumptions are often based on a medical model of disability (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2000). The results can be devastating to individuals in denying their right to self-determination. Resources can also be wasted when people such as policy-makers make decisions about how those are allocated without direct consultation with the people whose lives are affected by such decisions (Gwynn, 2004; Jones, 2005; Jones & Gillies, 2010; Moore, 2000).

Bringing about real change in society in terms of removing barriers for learning for all students requires the development of a listening culture where the views of all are considered equal (Clifton, 2004; Charles, 2004). These ideas are central to the Whole Schooling approach to education as well as the conceptual framework for this study.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter focussed on literature from a variety of countries in order to situate Australia within the global inclusive education context as well as provide a context for the experiences of the students who I interviewed. The literature contextualised the many facets of this study which essentially seeks to combine two 'labelled' cohorts (international students as one cohort, students with a disability as another). These cohorts are often treated as mutually exclusive and/or not considered in the context of adult learners.

With the introduction of my research questions in Chapter 1, the following chapters familiarise the reader with the theoretical and practical approaches I used in creating my research questions, and how these informed my qualitative case study approach.

Chapter 3 illustrates how Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field were important theoretical lenses for me through which to analyse my participants' perspectives.

## Chapter 3 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth focus on the theoretical underpinnings of my research. While I have briefly mentioned the theory which provides the framework for this study in Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter takes the reader through a more detailed consideration of the theory in this research and demonstrates the relationship between the theory and the thesis as a whole. Delving into theory has been a journey of profound personal discovery for me and in this chapter I discuss the importance of theory in research by looking at my own experience of learning about the various types of theories and their importance in research. I then present some background regarding critical theory and introduce Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, capital and habitus. I draw comparisons between these concepts and those behind the Whole Schooling framework and the conceptual framework for this thesis in order to show how Bourdieu's conceptual tools have informed my own. I then briefly present the method of analysis for this study – Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) and illustrate how VRM is consistent with Bourdieu's critical theoretical approaches. In order to familiarise the reader with the other important elements of data presentation and analysis in this thesis, the chapter concludes by drawing together the most influential theoretical and analytical elements of this thesis like the pieces of a puzzle in order to lead the reader to Chapter 4 - Methodology.

### **The Importance of Theory in Research - a Personal Journey**

I initially undertook this research as a Masters student, the first year of which was coursework. My qualifications up until that point were a bachelor degree so as such I had never really done academic research. Before going to my first *Introduction to Research* lecture, I went in thinking only 'quantitative equals numbers, qualitative equals words' and thought those definitions would see me through.

Not surprisingly at the first lecture I soon felt adrift as the lecturer gracefully sailed her way through what was for me, uncharted territory, talking at length about words such as ‘epistemology’, and ‘ontology’. I soon felt lost in a sea of ‘ologies’ while clinging desperately onto a homemade wooden raft made from my crude definitions for quantitative and qualitative research. The lecturer also spoke about the importance of theory, repetitively underlining the word THEORY on the whiteboard in thick pen. To say I found the idea of theory “scary and frightening” (Sikes, 2006, pp. 43 - 44) would be an understatement as I found myself starting to drown in so many new words and concepts, many prefaced with ‘post’ (structuralism, colonialism, modernism). What made things worse in my mind was the fact that others in the class all seemed to be well-equipped with their speedboats in being altogether *au fait* with these terms and concepts.

However, with the navigational aide of my supervisor in my second year, I started to feel I could cross the treacherous theoretical waters. Indeed I became a student who “said it was theory that excited them, and that theory...‘floated their boat’” (Sikes, 2006, pp. 43 – 44). I learned that familiarising myself with theory was vital to critically engage with my topic. Consequently at that time I no longer felt adrift as theory became the rudder for steering me along my correct course.

As I soon began to learn, research relies heavily on theories to guide the research process from original conceptualisation of ideas, to formation of research questions, data collection approaches and analysis. Theory also creates a mechanism by which to illuminate findings (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008) and create a framework for recommendations.

In this study, I sought to delve into the experiences of other people (staff and students). The implication for engaging with others in this way prompts questions such as:

how can we offer readers the means of understanding – which means taking people as they are – except by providing the theoretical instruments that let us see these lives as *necessary* through a systematic search for the causes and reasons they have for being what they are? (Bourdieu, 1999, p.1, original italics).

Theory has provided me with the language to express my beliefs around issues of social justice, and how these were to be realised in my research. Without theory this would have felt like a tangled mess of emotions, thoughts and gut instincts.

## **Critical Theory**

Why do we need theory? As Gilson and Parkes (2010) suggest:

Disciplining oneself towards the consistent application of selected theory situates one's work in a particular scholarly tradition (Gulson & Parkes, 2010, p. 80).

This study is grounded in critical theory and is situated within emancipatory and transformative perspectives (see the Definition of Terms list at the start of this thesis for an understanding of how these terms are used in this research). Critical theory attempts to critique and analyse socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural situations (Leonardo, 2004). The term 'critical' in critical theory means a mechanism for critique, as opposed to an unjustifiable criticism of processes, policies and institutions (How, 2003). In essence, critical theoretical approaches seek "to pull reality towards what it

ought to be, what is imminent to it and what, if all other things were equal, it would become” (How, 2003, p. 3). In other words, critical theory is used for deconstructing the status quo and is inextricably linked to notions of social justice. It is orientated towards a critique of society which thereby informs us of how we can enact change (How, 2003; Reeves et al., 2008).

Critical theory finds its roots in the work of German philosopher Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) and was developed through the collective work of members of the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt, now referred to as ‘the Frankfurt School’ (Reeves et al., 2008; Simons, 2004). According to Simons (2004), the development of critical theory happened within the context of serious political change and evolved against the backdrop of Nazi Germany, and continued along a timeline punctuated by events such as the social protest movements of the 1960s and the Vietnam War. Simons (2004) suggests that these political upheavals reflect how critical theory came to embody movement away from political ideologies, in particular “the crude materialist, determinist and allegedly scientific Marxism that had become orthodox in the Soviet Union” (Simons, 2004, p. 2). The Frankfurt School's main scholars sought to learn from the works of thinkers such as Freud, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber and Wittgenstein. Critical theorists of the time (for example Adorno and Marcuse and later Habermas) regarded these positivist approaches as complicit in both manifesting and masking oppressive power relations. By contrast, critical theory began to evolve as an approach concerned with emancipation, “in identifying ideological distortions and revealing coercive power relations” (Simons, 2004, p. 2).

Critical theoretical approaches are eclectic; they are “not tied to one specific methodology and can be applied at the micro (individual), macro (local systems and contexts), or macro (societal) level” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 633). Critical theorists



approach the subject of their thinking and research from a number of different epistemologies – from the study of signs, symbols and language (structuralism, semiotics), to issues of socio-political power relations (Simons, 2004). There are many different critical theorists who place emphasis on a myriad of elements: the democracy of education (Apple, Bernstein), language and linguistic ‘rules’ (Bernstein), ideology and curriculum (Apple, Giroux) and resistance theories (Giroux) (Harker & May, 1993; Leonardo, 2004; Pihama, 1993; Slee, 2011). While these elements are helpful in this thesis to the extent of building scope for further research pathways as discussed in Chapter 8 (Recommendations), these perspectives have not formed the main lenses through which to frame the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis as a whole.

The one commonality that critical theories share is their critique of systems by "seeking to...evaluate as well as describe and explain social action" (Simons, 2004, p. 2). Critical approaches to research can be both quantitative and qualitative, reflecting “theoretical dialecticism” (Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 445). For Bourdieu, having a certain “comfortableness with qualitative and quantitative data” (Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 238) shows how his critical theoretical approaches do not favour either quantitative or qualitative approaches to research, but rather that they demand from every researcher to be critical of whatever methodological approach they privilege in their research (Mills & Gale, 2007).

In this way, theory

operates as a tool for defamiliarisation, denaturalisation, diffraction and deconstruction. It becomes a means by which we can challenge the present by bringing a fresh perspective to the object of our concerns (Gulson & Parkes, 2010, p. 79).

This is of particular relevance to this study in looking at current practices in inclusion and seeking to bring a fresh perspective to inclusion in an Australian university context. Hence, a theory which originated in very different political, economic and social times is still very relevant for looking at contemporary issues.

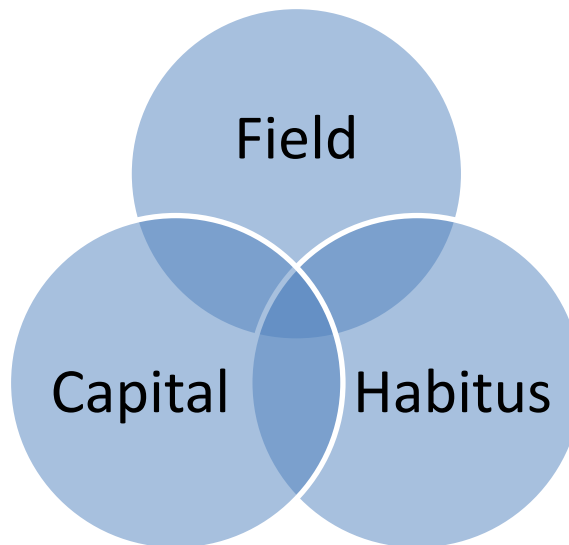
### **Critical theory – Pierre Bourdieu.**

This study concerns itself with a critique of the status quo of current inclusive practices and policies, underpinned by the work of French Critical Theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002). Bourdieu’s work is framed by his commentators as ‘eclectic’ (Grenfell, 2008; Mahar & Wilkes, 2004; Simons, 2004; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Indeed, Mahar and Wilkes (2004) suggest that “Pierre Bourdieu has always worked against the grain” (p. 218). His theories are influenced by “the sociology of class reproduction” (p. 218). One of the reasons I was most drawn to using Bourdieu’s theories in this research was to do with how ideas of culture are conceptualised within habitus, capital and field – cultures of the person, cultures of a country, institutional cultures and socio-cultural norms. Furthermore, this research involves a close consideration of power differences and examines how societies construct people as ‘disabled’. Bourdieu’s conceptual tools and ideas to do with agency in the field help explain and explore these important issues.

### **Bourdieu’s conceptual tools.**

Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital and habitus were designed to aid investigators in accounting for everyday practices (Mahar & Wilkes, 2004). The tools of field, capital and habitus only become visible through the results which they produce (Bourdieu, 1992; Grenfell & James, 2004). Even though we can consider Bourdieu’s

thinking tools as separate entities, they “are to be used in a relational fashion, rather than instruments of separation” (Mahar & Wilkes, 2004, p. 220).



*Figure 3.1.* The relational nature of field, capital and habitus.

At this point I provide some short definitions of the conceptual tools to orientate the reader. As Bourdieu suggests, the conceptual tools can only be fully understood in terms of the results they yield and how they are manifested in the ‘real world’. I provide only brief definitions here and discuss how the conceptual tools are visible in this research and the fundamental roles field, capital and habitus have played in informing my conceptual framework later in this chapter.

#### *Field.*

Fields in a Bourdieuan sense do not relate to physical spaces and are not only defined by contexts such as ‘the university’ or ‘the home’. Fields are relational social systems and as such can be both individual and institutional (Clark, Zukas, & Lent, 2011; Mills & Gale, 2007; Wacquant, 2008; Webb et al., 2002). People struggle for power in the field in relation capital.

### *Capital.*

Capital at its most basic can be defined as “things worth being sought” in different fields (Webb et al., 2002, p. 21). Capital can be symbolic, material or cultural. Position within the field is determined by one’s capital, the value of which is determined within the field (Bourdieu, 1992). Competition in the field comes about through hierarchical struggles between agents (individuals) (Grenfell & James, 2004).

### *Habitus.*

Habitus is a set of internalised embodied social structures, internal habits, reflexivity and agency (autonomy). Habitus “is structured by past and present circumstances and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure” (Manton 2008, p. 51). The visibility of habitus is brought about through how agents practise in their fields. For Bourdieu the formation and resultant practice of the habitus is largely unconscious (Farnell, 2000, cited in Sayer, 2010), which is contentious (Couldry, 2005; Sayer, 2010; Webb et al., 2002). Because fields are changing, fluid and dynamic, so too is habitus (Webb et al., 2002). The fact that habitus is not fixed is important for this study in looking at how participation within specific fields contributes to the continuing construction and reconstruction of an individual’s habitus (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008). The relationship between capital, habitus and field is such that the habitus helps a person to determine their level of symbolic capital within a field. This is established through a person’s interactions and relationships with others in the relational fields (Clark et al., 2011). In this study the relationships and contexts of the fields were not static for the student participants. It is argued and shown through the analysis that the habitus of the participants also changed in new contexts. For some of the interviewees this was on a very conscious level.

The fluidity of the habitus and its formation on a conscious as well as unconscious level is somewhat contentious and is discussed further in this chapter within the context of the contribution and extension of Bourdieu's theories. Furthermore, this research explores individual power and autonomy versus pervading societal constraints over what people can/can't/should/shouldn't do as international students with a disability. In a Bourdieuan sense this means looking at whether agents (individuals), in this case the students, have agency (autonomy). Essentially this means asking the question: do these students behave in ways that are different to how society or their culture constructs what they can and can't do in the field. Bourdieu's conceptual metaphors of field, capital and habitus help explain how these constructs are created as is discussed further in this chapter.

### **Education and Bourdieu's critical theory embodied in Whole Schooling.**

Education is integral to Bourdieu's theories – he sees educational institutions as mechanisms for maintaining and reproducing values within social spaces for each new generation that enters into it (Apple, 2004; Webb et al., 2002). Further, “these institutions and the manner in which they are organised and controlled are integrally related to the ways in which specific people get access to economic and cultural resources and power” (Apple, 2004, p. vii).

As I have begun to understand, how the researcher works to uncover these hierarchical webs is complex. The process requires the researcher to engage in what Apple (2004) terms a “critical scrutiny” (p. 10) and to seek for ways in which to challenge:

the whole assemblage of values and actions "outside" of the institution of schooling... [and] must lead to a set of commitments that may be wholly different than those many of us commonsensically accept. It requires a progressive articulation of and commitment to social order that has at its very foundation not the accumulation of goods, profits, and credentials, but the maximisation of economic, social, and educational equality. All of these centre around the theory of social justice (Apple, 2004, p. 10).

It is this set of commitments as outlined above by Apple (2004) that are articulated and conceptualised by the Whole Schooling Approach. Critical theorists argue that understanding facts requires a wider look at the circumstances and contexts in which they are produced (How, 2003) which is why the Whole Schooling Approach and the conceptual framework are so integral to this study. The points of view through which I am entering Bourdieu's work, therefore, are from the perspectives of 1) the Whole Schooling approach to education and 2) my conceptual framework.

The main tenets of the Whole Schooling approach were discussed in the previous chapter, however, at this point I aim to show its overall parallels within the Bourdieuan framework. As Reed-Danahay (2005) argues, Bourdieu's approaches seek:

to portray the concrete ways in which prevalent (and I would add, alienating) structural arrangements – the basic ways institutions, people, and modes of production, distribution, and consumption are organised and controlled – dominate cultural life (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 2).

Keeping this in mind, we can see how the Whole Schooling approach to education strives to disrupt these social and structural arrangements in its eight principles which are a way of relinquishing the power away from the institution and

encouraging voice, agency and participation through democracy, space for all, etcetera. As Apple's earlier quote suggests, these principles arguably form "a set of commitments that may be wholly different than those many of us commonsensically accept" (Apple, 2004, p. 10). As Reed-Danahay (2005) further argues, a critical approach to systems within education allows for an uncovering of barriers, but it is within a broader social context that this needs to occur; hence words like 'community' are vitally included within the Whole Schooling framework.

Bourdieu's "thinking tools" (Grenfell, 2009, p. 18) of field, capital and habitus allow us to further disrupt entrenched ideas and strive for transformational practice within educational institutions. In the following section I show how Bourdieu's thinking tools are realised in both the Whole Schooling and conceptual frameworks.

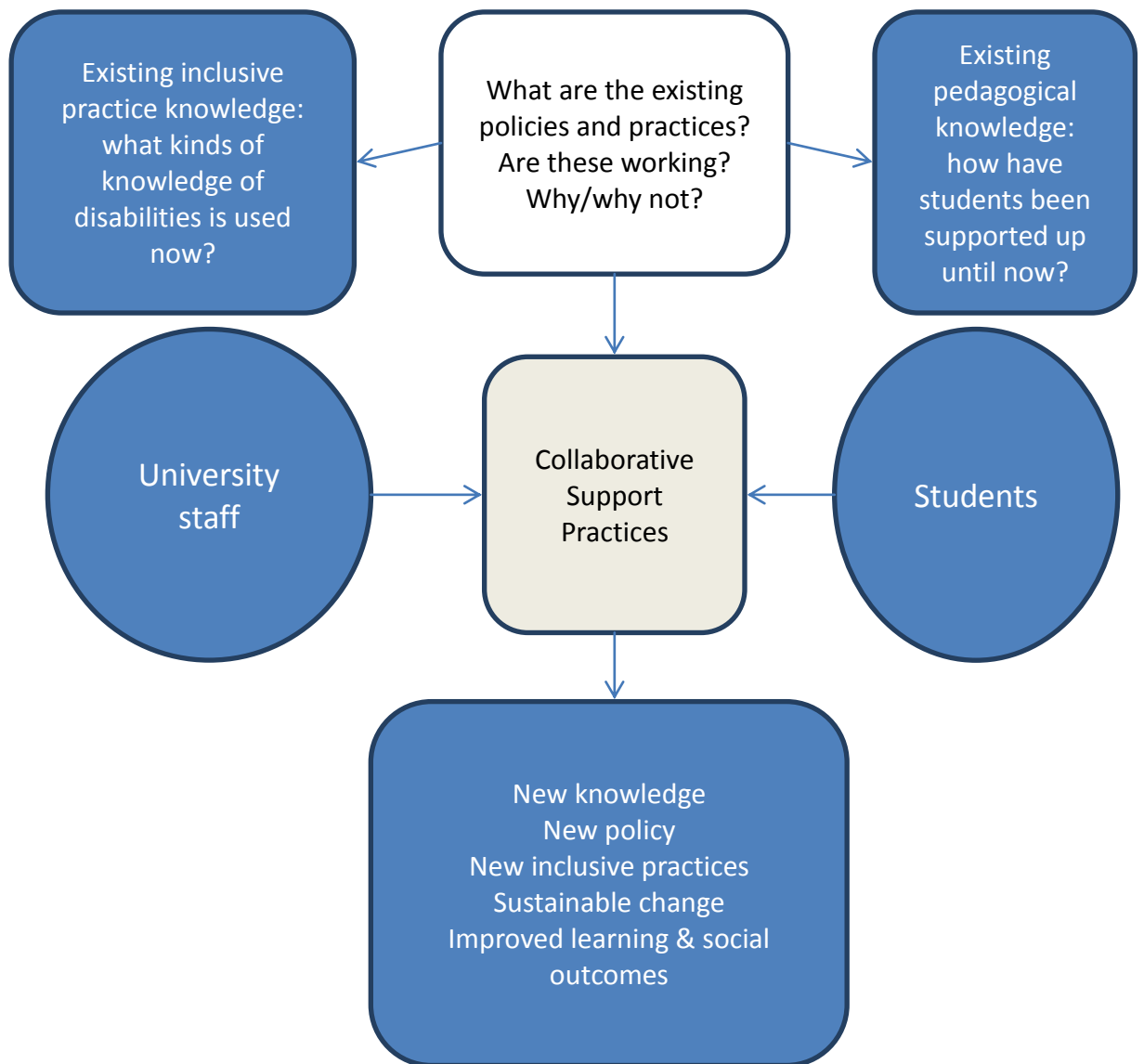
## **The Conceptual Framework, Critical Theory and Higher Education**

One of our basic problems as educators and as political beings...is to begin to grapple with ways of understanding how the kinds of cultural resources and symbols schools select and organise are dialectically related to the kinds of normative and conceptual consciousness (required) by stratified society (Apple, 2004, p. 2).

Similar to Apple's perspective above, Bourdieu also argues that a wider look at the circumstances and contexts in which structures and attitudes are produced is necessary in order to problematise, critique and transform (How, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 2005). This is the fundamental aim of a conceptual framework.

Figure 3.2 is the conceptual framework for this research. A conceptual framework is a theoretical model that guides the research design, data collection, synthesis and analysis. Essentially, the aim of a conceptual or theoretical framework is to help the researcher's thinking about what to search for in the process of data collection and how to search for it (Bell, 2005). In alignment with critical theory, the conceptual framework for this study takes wider contexts into account; it essentially seeks to interrogate current practices by placing these within wider cultural and social frameworks. Figure 3.2 was used to frame this study in alignment with the principles of social justice and equity as expounded by critical theory. It was informed by the current literature on inclusive education and illustrates a comprehensive systems approach to inclusive practice.





*Figure 3.2.* The conceptual framework informing this study.

The conceptual framework has informed the participants of my research (management, lecturers, support staff, students) and the areas for me to seek answers to (regarding knowledge, experience and so on). The current status quo (existing practice and pedagogical knowledge) is sought to be disrupted through a questioning of practices (What are the existing practices? Are these working?) In asking these questions I have sought to uncover the “cultural resources and symbols” (as suggested by Apple, 2004, p. 2) of one particular university. The reason I am engaging staff and students in this process is in alignment with critical theorists who argue:

that education [is] not a neutral enterprise, but by the very nature of the institution, the educator [is] involved, whether he or she [is] conscious of it or not, in a political act (Apple, 2004, p. 1).

According to Bourdieu, this is certainly also the case for higher education and is apparent in the various ways that power and distance are maintained in universities which result in alienating students (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For example, lectures which are delivered in the traditional way of the lecturer at the front of the class standing behind a podium create barriers in situating the lecturer as the gatekeeper of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1996). It can also be difficult for students to gain access to lecturers in these situations as the classes can be delivered to hundreds of students (Webb et al., 2002). Language is another layer which can serve to alienate students in that they are often expected to be experts in academic discourse without necessarily being told the specifics of what is acceptable in genres like formal essays (Bourdieu, 1996; Webb et al., 2002).

The aim of the answers created out of the conceptual framework is in working towards informing transformational practices - collaborative support between staff and with students. The eventual outcome is the new problematic: new knowledge, inclusive practices, sustainable change and improved social and learning outcomes.

### **The conceptual framework, Whole Schooling and Bourdieu's thinking tools.**

The alignment of the Whole Schooling and conceptual frameworks with Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus is presented in table format on the following page.

Table 3.1

*An extrapolation of Bourdieu's thinking tools pertaining to the principles of Whole Schooling and parameters of the conceptual framework*

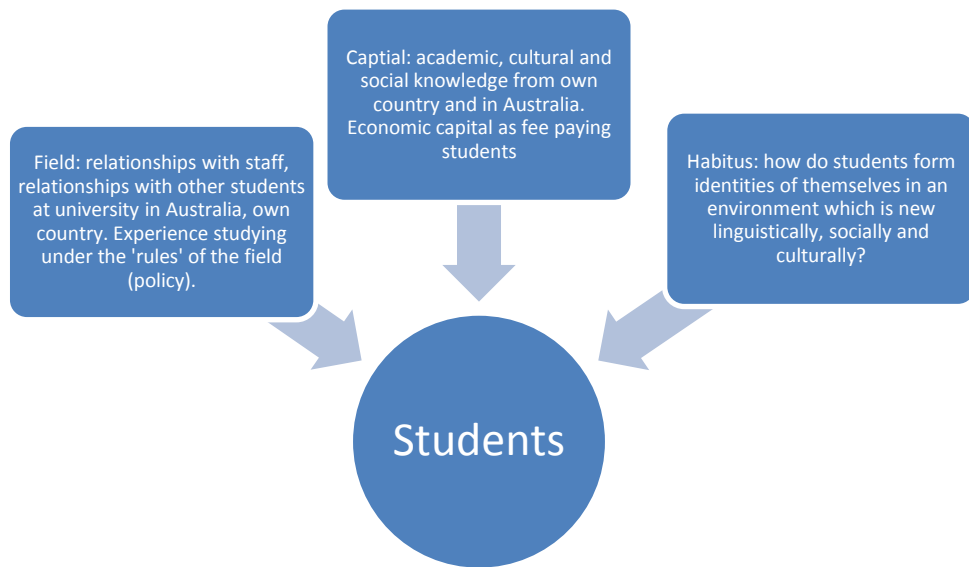
Definition of Bourdieu's thinking tools	Whole Schooling principle	Conceptual Framework parameter	Examples in this research	Example resulting questions used to inform interview questions
Field "relations between individuals or institutions...a game in which players understand the rules and the objectives" (Clark, et al., 2011, p. 136).	Community	Relationships and knowledge of key stakeholders – management, lecturers, support staff, university administration, I.T. support, library staff between each other and students	Australian culture Australian universities – policies Relationships in own country Research Questions 1, 2 & 3	What are the perceptions of inclusion in Australia and other countries? Are staff and students aware of the rules of the field (i.e. policies?) What are the rules of the field in the students' home country related to inclusive practices? What social capital do the participants have? What kinds of symbolic capital did the students have before they came to Australia? Were they respected; that is, did they have symbolic capital? Is there a high amount of prestige and, therefore, symbolic capital attached to teachers in their country? Do universities attach 'academic capital' to results obtained overseas?
Capital "any resource that is effective in a given social area...the concept encompasses the economic, the social and the cultural" (Clark, et al., 2011, p. 138).	Space for all Democracy Include all	Collaborative support practices New knowledge, policy, inclusive practices, sustainable change, improved learning and social outcomes	Knowledge, policy, change, collaborative practices (with staff as well as with students) Research Questions 1, 2 & 3	

<p>Habitus</p> <p>internalised embodied social structures; hierarchy, internal habits, reflexivity, agency. Habitus “is structured by past and present circumstances and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure” (Manton 2008, p51, in Clark et al., 2011, p. 137).</p>	<p>Support</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Authentic instruction</p> <p>Authentic assessment</p>	<p>Existing practice knowledge (staff)</p> <p>Existing pedagogical knowledge (staff)</p> <p>Existing perceptions of self and how these change in new fields (staff and students)</p>	<p>Staff knowledge and how this is deployed</p> <p>How the attitudes of staff impact on knowledge</p> <p>Student construction of identity in home country and Australia</p> <p>Research Questions 1 &amp; 2</p>	<p>How do staff ‘see themselves’ as inclusive practitioners? How do the students ‘see themselves’ as students in another country with a disability?</p>
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## Field, Capital, Habitus and the Agents in this Study.

My conceptual framework provides a frame to explore how teacher attitudes and perceptions are manifested as their practices. In a Bourdieuan sense, there is an inextricable link between practice and habitus which relates to how we navigate and negotiate within fields (relational contexts). Doxic attitudes are also fed and sustained by the multiple habitus (Atkinson, 2011).



*Figure 3.3.* Bourdieu's thinking tools in relation to students.

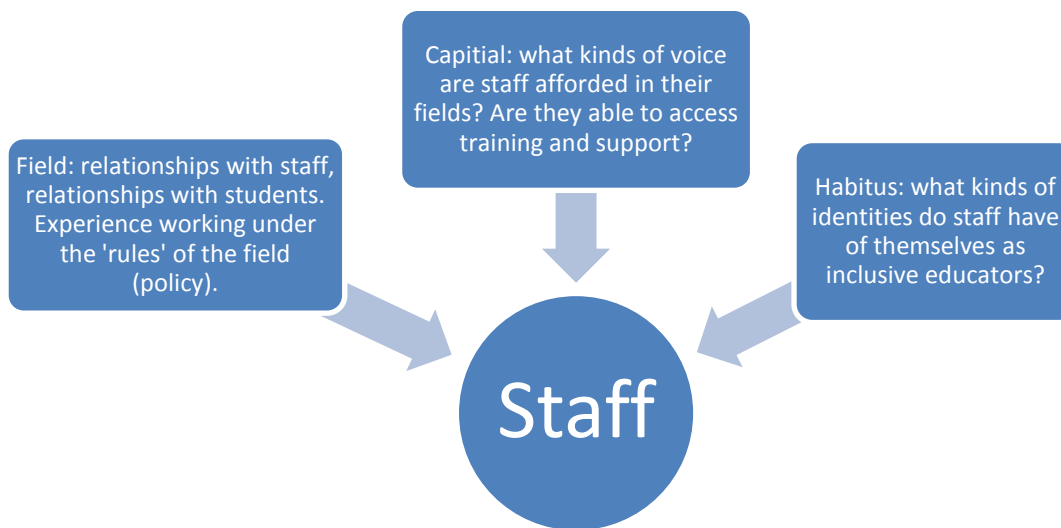


Figure 3.4. Bourdieu's thinking tools in relation to staff.

### *Field.*

People struggle for power (capital) in the field. For students within the context of this research, fields relate to relationships in their home country, the university and Australia. Fields relate to their dealings and relationships with staff and organisational bodies within the university such as the DLU; these are 'cultural fields'. Finding out whether students know the rules of the field involves an exploration of whether they are familiar with university policies and procedures. Field is cultures in which students now live. What are their perceptions of the 'rules' of the field in Australia and how do these compare with their own country? Relationships with staff are an important element within the field of university for students. A look at the field also shows how power is maintained within the physical barriers and structures of the university campus; for example, through access to buildings (Ernste, 2006).

For staff, the field is determined by the university, the faculty, dealings with other staff and management. Students are also part of the relational field for staff. This is in regards to how staff associate with students within the structure of the classroom or university setting.

### *Field and Doxa.*

Behaviour in fields is often confined by *doxa*. Doxa can be defined as “the ‘natural attitude’; that is, “utterly taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and existence” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 340). Doxa is fundamentally “sustained by *shared* beliefs and orientations” and is “a *generalised* sense of ‘what is done’” in the field (Atkinson, 2011, p. 340, original italics). Staff can be guilty of showing a ‘doxic attitude’ (Webb et al., 2002, p. xi) through “unconscious submission to conditions that are in fact quite arbitrary and contingent” such as those ‘imposed’ by the university. These might be realised in terms of adherence to strict assessment criteria by which to judge student performance, or heavily penalising students who speak English as a second language for not following academic writing conventions which they may not be fully aware of nor understand.

### *Capital.*

The symbolic capital of the student relates to how they are viewed in their field of the university or by those from the dominant culture. Educational institutions can also promote and seek to distribute their own symbolic property (Apple, 2004). For example, in their identity as ‘international students’, how does this impact on the way in which staff interact with these students? What about being a student with a disability and this impact? (In this way, it is important that culture is conceptualised as more than that which is related to a country, and is widened to include the culture of institutions, discussed further in this chapter). Are the students given credit for cultural capital they have built from their own countries, academically, socially and culturally? (For example, do they get recognition of prior learning in Australia for study done in their home countries?)

In my experience, international students are often viewed collectively in reference to their language abilities and stereotypical assumptions which categorise these students as having “general inferiority to domestic students” (Dunne, 2009, p. 225). Local students may find mixing with international students demanding, anxiety provoking and ‘less rewarding’ than intracultural contact (Dunne, 2009). This is certainly my experience as a teacher observing local and international students. Local students can then entrench themselves further within their own cultural circles, continuing to exclude others, resulting in what is known as ‘aversive racism’ (Deal, 2007). Aversive racism is a lot more subtle than blatant racism and is found to be common amongst well-meaning individuals who are highly educated and liberal-minded (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2010). It is probably difficult to find a university student who would say they are a racist, and yet I have seen the results of aversive racism played out through domestic students avoiding contact with students from overseas, particularly Chinese students.

There is a similar tension at play for students with a disability which is known as aversive disablism (Deal, 2007). In a very similar way, students who do not have a disability may suggest personality traits such as ‘the ability to get along with anyone and everyone’ but avoid contact with students with a disability. In a Bourdieuan sense both aversive racism and aversive disablism are the result of a disparity between “a student’s cultural capital and the taken-for-granted cultural capital of the dominant groups within the university” (Field, Merrill, & West, 2011).

As students who are required to pay high fees, it is also highly likely that international students come from backgrounds of significant economic capital. Once in Australia, however, students may face financial challenges caused by high exchange rates or a higher cost of living. Students may also come from a country where they had



no symbolic capital, that is, they were forced to study within infrastructures where support for their needs did not exist. If these students receive academic support in Australia the possible result is that they now feel empowered; the result of having symbolic capital in a new country.

For staff, capital also relates to agency and voice in the field. For example, what kinds of voice are staff afforded in their fields? Are they able to access training and support? Are they valued for what they do? Where do they 'sit' in the external hierarchy?

### *Habitus.*

Habitus is determined by internalised, embodied social structures, internally defined hierarchy (that is, 'where do I position myself in relation to others?'), habits, reflexivity and internal agency ('do I feel like I can be heard?') The habitus of the students prompts us to ask questions related to their identity, that is, how students position themselves in an environment which is different from their home environment linguistically, socially and culturally. How do the students talk about themselves and their biographies? How has that shaped who they are in Australia as an international student with a disability and is this different from their self-perception within the field of their home countries?

"It is through the workings of habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure)" (Reay, 2004, p. 432). For teachers this means habitus is how their capital and biographies inform their practice. To extend this idea further, how teachers exploit their habitus in the field has a direct and causal relationship to how their students acquire capital. In other words, if a teacher's habitus results in them displaying negative attitudes towards inclusive practice, this will work to diminish the capital that

students can acquire through the process of knowledge transfer from teacher to student. Because habitus in this thesis is conceptualised as a fluid state, “the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field” (Reay, 2004, p. 432). Thus teachers, policy makers, and managers may claim to be inclusive practitioners in some fields, but not actually ‘practice what they preach’ in others.

### **Contribution and extension of Bourdieu’s theories.**

Bourdieu’s theories fit the theoretical underpinnings of this research because of the way the conceptual tools and the pieces of the puzzle can be used to explain and represent the lived experiences of its participants. As the data analysis in Chapter 6 shows, certain elements of Bourdieu’s approaches have been both deconstructed and reconstructed as part of the process within this research context, such as his theories surrounding the habitus.

Bourdieu saw social space in modern societies as comprising of fields of competition in which agents compete for various forms of capital (Couldry, 2005). Bourdieu’s habitus has been critiqued as being too deterministic (Couldry, 2005; de Certeau, 1984) and largely unconscious (Sayer, 2010). Couldry (2005) argues that Bourdieu’s habitus limits agents’ “possibilities for action, by constraining the resources he or she has to act in the situations he or she encounters” (Couldry, 2005, p. 357). Further, a critique of the habitus is how it apparently “ignores the way in which the constraining and enabling effects of social contexts on individuals are mediated by their own deliberations” (Sayer, 2010, p. 89). The data analysis in Chapter 6, however, shows that this is not necessarily the case with the students I interviewed, and that in fact their practice in Australia is different from what their histories from habitus formation might suggest.

The largely unconscious formation of the habitus is also debated by some commentators of Bourdieu (Couldry, 2005; Sayer, 2010; Webb et al., 2002). These authors suggest that agents are essentially “driven by the values and expectations they get from the habitus” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 58). However, the data analysis shows how this is not so. In fact in alignment with de Certeau (1984) the students in this research take “advantage of the flexible surface which covers up the hard core [and] create their own relevance in this network” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 54). This is essentially the network of the Australian university setting. The fluidity of the habitus in terms of its potential in both ethical and emotional dimensions (Sayer, 2010) is also explored through one student who talks about how she has ‘become a better person’ through her experiences in Australia. This is also discussed in the context of teachers and how they spoke about the experiences of teaching an international student with a disability as making them feel better about themselves; an ethical shift in habitus which is somewhat missing from Bourdieuan literature (Sayer, 2010). Finally, this research adds to the discussion within a growing body of literature which considers the changing nature of agents’ habitus in relation to globalisation and its related forces within education (Appadurai, 1997; Rizvi, 2010).

Bourdieu’s work is significant because it provides a model for understanding the Whole Schooling approach to education. The eight principles show how “a truly whole school approach [sic] includes and involves all community members in every aspect of school life, by empowering students, their families and staff” (Forlin, 2007, p. 280). These communities of practice at the heart of the conceptual framework, are intrinsic to the success of inclusion (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Deppeler, 2012; Dyson et al., 2004; Mentis, Kearney, & Bevan-Brown, 2012; Morrison, 2007). These factors are drivers for political and social change which are an important part of a critical theoretical perspective.

The richness of the Bourdieuan concept of symbolic violence is also extended upon in this research through an exploration of the concepts of the psycho-emotional dimension of disability and internalised oppression.

## **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an in-depth focus on the theoretical frameworks of the research. In the chapter I discussed the importance of theory in research and my own experience of learning about the various types of theories and the vital role they play in all stages of research. In this chapter I have drawn comparisons between Bourdieu's conceptual tools and those underpinning the Whole Schooling framework and the conceptual framework for this thesis to show the relationship between Bourdieu's conceptual tools and my own approaches. The following chapter takes a deeper and more detailed look at how Bourdieu's critical theories, VRM and thick description work together in this thesis. (A thorough exploration of the reflexivity piece of the puzzle is undertaken in Chapter 6).

## **Chapter 4 Theoretical Perspectives and Research Paradigms**

There are many methodologies that can guide researchers in terms of how they ground their work (Crotty, 2003; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The choice of methodology is often based on the research questions, researcher assumptions and values (Johnson & Christenson, 2004; Ayiro, 2012) and the researcher's own theoretical framework (Mertens, 2005). This chapter discusses a selection of research traditions and shows how and why the current study is positioned within a critical interpretive qualitative paradigm. I also illustrate how this is consistent with a Whole Schooling approach to inclusion and is underscored by Bourdieu's critical theories.

### **Quantitative approaches and the positivist paradigm.**

The researcher's own theoretical framework is inextricably linked with perceptions of what constitutes 'knowledge'. This is known as epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A researcher's epistemological stance can depend for example on whether they believe knowledge is based on objective, universal and systematic truth. Research borne out of this kind of epistemological framework often involves using methods which seek answers to theories via quantifiable means and are defined under the definition of positivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hart, 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Quantifiable methods of data analysis within a positivist paradigm involve data collection approaches such as surveys and questionnaires (Crotty, 1998).

Positivist approaches have dominated previous research in disability studies (Goode, 2007; Oliver, 2007). Through positivist approaches, the researcher is

positioned outside and at a distance, and looking for an objective reality. From a critical theoretical perspective, this is problematic – positivist approaches can work to position the participants as ‘the other who is different’. Because these approaches often do not have a built-in space for reflexivity or questioning of assumptions and values, the research carried out within the structures of positivism often neglect the possibility of analysing underpinning power relations or wider social contexts (MacArthur, Higgins, & Quinlivan, 2012; Webb et al., 2002). As such, the positivist paradigm “excludes explanations which appeal to our social forces, structural features of society, institutional factors and so on” (Oliver, 2006, p. 270).

Barnes, 1997, Lunn and Munford, 2007, and Proctor, 2001, in their various critiques of positivist studies involving people with a disability focus on one commonality - the inability of the participants in previous studies to actually ‘find’ themselves within the research that supposedly represents them. These authors also discuss the failure of research in the past to represent the diversity of experiences amongst the people who were participants in the research.

Positivist approaches can effectively work to set up tensions of power and fail to include the voices of people and their lived realities, contributing to discourses of objectification rather than transformation or liberation (Barnes, 1997). This perpetuates beliefs intrinsic to the medical model of disability where the problems people face are seen as their own fault, rather than society’s fault. The failure to recognise the diversity and legitimacy of voices alienates people with a disability (Oliver; 2006; Proctor, 2001) and is an avenue of exploitation rather than liberation (Barnes & Mercer, 1997; Lunn & Munford, 2007).

This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the following example from Oliver (2006) of questions used in past approaches to research.

Table 4.1

*Questions from 'Survey of disabled adults', Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS)*

**TABLE I. Survey of disabled adults—OPCS, 1986**

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<b>Can you tell me what is wrong with you?</b>
<b>What complaint causes your difficulty in holding, gripping or turning things?</b>
<b>Are your difficulties in understanding people mainly due to a hearing problem?</b>
<b>Do you have a scar, blemish or deformity which limits your daily activities?</b>
<b>Have you attended a special school because of a long-term health problem or disability?</b>
<b>Does your health problem/disability mean that you need to live with relatives or someone else who can help look after you?</b>
<b>Did you move here because of your health problem/disability?</b>
<b>How difficult is it for you to get about your immediate neighbourhood on your own?</b>
<b>Does your health problem/disability prevent you from going out as often or as far as you would like?</b>
<b>Does your health problem/disability make it difficult for you to travel by bus?</b>
<b>Does your health problem/disability affect your work in any way at present?</b>

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The questions in Table 4.1 (Questions from 'Survey of disabled adults', Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1986, cited in Oliver, 2006, p. 270) show how the 'problem' of disability has been perceived as one within the person. This is particularly evident from the first question "Can you tell me what is wrong with you?" By looking at this example it's not difficult to see how "empirical power and participant subjugation have initially clouded the inclusive research landscape" (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 1).

A contextualisation of the relationships between "people, organisations, time and place" (Grenfell, 2008, p. 221), such as with the conceptual framework for this study, seeks to define and redefine the socially constructed parameters at play. It is important to say that these perspectives are in no way an attempt to undermine the value of positivism as an important methodological tradition. In fact, it is true to say that positivism can be used as a paradigm for capturing certain data, and where the aim is to

find overall probabilities which can be derived from studies consisting of large numbers of cases, usually selected randomly (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; 2005). However, as a methodology and a theoretical construct, these approaches do not reflect the aims of every kind of research question and purpose. Indeed, as alluded to earlier, “Your prime reason for choosing [one method over another] should be because it is consistent with the epistemological position of your research question” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 46).

### **Previous qualitative studies - inclusion in higher education.**

The fact is that inclusion as a research construct is rich with complexities. Thus:

Research in inclusive education takes on many forms but includes aspects such as diversity, values, social justice, equity, access etc. Whichever form it takes requires critical reflection and consideration of researcher and participant positioning, conceptual frameworks, research designs, and definitions of inclusion (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 1).

This is apparent by considering the following examples of research carried out by Donato (2008), Orsini-Jones (2009) and Hopkins (2011).

Donato’s study (2008) aimed to identify factors which contribute to the success of students with a disability in higher education, with a similar outcome in mind to this study in informing policy and practice. Attitudes of faculty members were a particular area of focus for Donato who involved a large sample of 57 participants which included 49 faculty members and eight students with a disability. Of particular interest in Donato’s study is the fact that the researcher herself has a disability, and she draws upon that experience and knowledge in a highly powerful and meaningful way.



Donato's study used individual interviews in order to identify themes, and then used surveys as a follow-up quantitative approach in order to identify the frequency of some of the accommodations mentioned during the interviews.

Research conducted by Orsini-Jones (2009) focuses on three students who are referred to as "two visually impaired and one blind" (p. 27) studying languages at university in Coventry: Sarah in her thirties, who became visually impaired after a motorbike accident, Maria, a bilingual English/Spanish woman who also had a vision impairment but from birth, and Harry who was blind since birth. The research aimed to explore the kinds of support networks which existed at the university for students with a disability, and whether these were sufficient to cater for the particular requirements of these students. Data were collected via student focus groups and interviews, reflective logs and web forums. Four members of staff were also interviewed in regards to their experiences with the students.

In the case of Hopkins' work (2011), the aims were manifold in terms of exploring the experiences of students with a disability at university in the U.K. and addressing the lack of qualitative research which explores students' "lived worlds and life histories" (p. 3). The study achieves these goals by including six students with a disability from different backgrounds. Hopkins uses data from interviews and data analysis through VRM. In doing so his aim seeks to provide "a thorough account of the phenomenological world of these students without neglecting a materialist and cultural analysis of their environment" (p. 1).

For Donato (2008), Orsini-Jones, (2009) and Hopkins (2011) it is clear that a wholly quantitative approach guided by a positivist methodology was not going to serve their purposes. Each of these studies sought to "probe deeply into the research setting to

obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 12).

Donato, Orsini-Jones and Hopkins clearly wanted to represent the voices of their participants and doing this through a purely quantitative approach would clearly fail to capture the richness of this kind of data. These examples demonstrate how the level of interaction provided by interviews is vital for researchers to gain insight into the lives of the people they are interviewing (Barnes, 1992). Moreover, Donato suggests there are two main concepts reflected in disability discourse:

One discourse of disability is that individuals with disabilities are either looking for pity or to be pitied...Overcoming adversity – “I am still here and I am still fighting”— is another frequent discourse of disability. Education and disAbility [sic] should not be about overcoming obstacles, or whether or not individuals have the *ability* to survive a system that does not level the playing field; the issue regarding education and disability is about levelling the playing field.

Individual experiences speak to those barriers that must be removed to achieve equal access for everyone. Focussing on whether or not a person has *managed to survive* an adverse system places the responsibility on the individual not on the institution that maintained the inequalities (pp. 6 -7, original italics).

Again these insights would be almost impossible to gain through a purely positivist approach.

## **Qualitative research and the post-positivist paradigm.**

As discussed in the literature review, the concept of ‘disability’ is a social construct. It would, therefore, be in direct contradiction of the theoretical underpinnings of this research to be situated within a positivist framework.

It is because of these reasons that my work is situated within an interpretivist paradigm in that it seeks to understand the human experience by relying on the perceptions and perspectives of participants (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mertens, 2005; Sheppard, 2006). Interpretivism focuses on finding the reasons for social action through observation and interpretation and recognises the subjectivity of knowledge. The interpretivist paradigm assumes people create meaning through interactions with others (Bryman, 2008). As such, the researcher cannot be separated from the research – the researcher’s values are an inherent part of all the stages of the research process and cannot be detached from the subject under investigation (Ayiro, 2012; Bryman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Bourdieu’s work is framed by his commentators as ‘eclectic’ (Grenfell, 2008; Mahar & Wilkes, 2004; Simons, 2004; Webb, et al., 2002); the epistemological underpinnings of his work can be identified as both positivist and interpretivist (Susen, 2011). For this research I identify with Bourdieu’s interpretivist approaches which argue that the assumptions of the researcher must be made explicit. Bourdieu’s interpretative views can be seen in how he argues:

How can we [as researchers] claim to engage in the scientific investigation of presuppositions if we do not work to engage in the knowledge...of our own presuppositions? (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 608).

Similar to the examples of research from Donato (2008), Orsini-Jones (2009) and Hopkins (2011) cited, the aims of this research cannot be met within a positivist perspective due to the fact that it will attempt to answer questions which are based upon the interpretation of different facets of the learning and teaching experience for students from non-English speaking backgrounds who have a disability.

Due to the fact that individual interpretations of the world and human experience are central to the philosophical drivers behind interpretivism, qualitative rather than quantitative methods are suitable. Definitions of qualitative research are many and varied, but at its most fundamental, qualitative research means “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). While this may seem simplistic in one sense, it is important to consider here in direct comparison with quantitative research and its aims. A further and more detailed definition is given by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who suggest that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices...turn the world into a series of representations including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

Flexibility is also a strength of the qualitative approach, and its scope to “explore unanticipated issues as they emerge” (Lewis, 2003, p. 47). Design in

qualitative research is not, therefore, a discrete stage which is concluded early in the life of the study. Qualitative research methods are flexible, dynamic, and fluid, and reflect a continuing process which calls for constant review of decisions and approaches (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lewis, 2003). These qualities are certainly part of this research and are considered in more detail further in this chapter.

Data gathered through qualitative research methods are invariably dense, complex and usually large in volume. For this reason one key aim for data analysis in qualitative research is to reduce the data down to key concepts (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003a). There are a variety of approaches to qualitative data analysis such as grounded theory, content analysis, thematic framework analysis and discourse analysis which are suitable for different types of qualitative data. Thematic framework analysis for example allows for the identification of key themes, concepts and categories which emerge within the data and as such seeks to develop distinct themes which are used as a framework under which sub themes can be divided (Ritchie et al., 2003b). Thematic framework analysis, however, essentially allows only for the identification of themes that cut across individual stories. Because this research is concerned with the whole story of the complex web of interpersonal relationships and theories underpinning power and politics, the complexity of these themes are difficult to identify within the constraints of the thematic framework analysis approach. As another approach, discourse analysis is a powerful analytical tool in regard to its concern of how knowledge is framed within certain linguistic styles (Ritchie et al., 2003a). However although language does play an important role in this research in looking at how people talk about disability, it is not the main focus of this thesis. Through a process of elimination it was found that qualitative analysis methods such as thematic framework analysis and discourse analysis did not correspond with the aims of this research.

## **Voice Relational Methodology and disrupting epistemological assumptions - relational approaches and empowerment.**

In making the decision regarding which method of analysis to use, the choice of one over the other was decided largely by the researcher's epistemological focus and conceptual and intellectual processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Ritchie et al., 2003b).

The method of analysis I have chosen is called Voice Relational Methodology (VRM). This was suitable to my research because each story is told in relation to other stories and relationships; a close consideration of these relational fields is consistent with a Bourdieuan approach. Furthermore, Bourdieu strived to achieve change and transformation of social oppression through his scholarly work (Webb et al., 2002). These aims are not dissimilar to the aims in inclusive research and necessitate fundamental changes in thinking by agents in the field (Slee 1998; Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). This change in thinking can be brought about via "a redefinition of the problem of disability from a medical model to a social model and a challenge to the methodology of dominant research paradigms" (Proctor, 2001, p. 364).

### **Bourdieu's thinking tools and Voice Relational Methodology.**

Being grounded in Bourdieu's work means engaging in critiquing, unpacking and questioning social structures and providing space for voices to be heard. Indeed:

Starting thought from the lives of those people upon whose exploitation the legitimacy of the dominant system depends can bring into focus questions and issues that were not visible, 'important,' or legitimate within the dominant institutions, their conceptual frame-works, cultures, and practices (Harding, 1998, cited in Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 439).

Voice is significant for Bourdieu. The acceptance of the authenticity and legitimacy of an individual's voice is a fundamental right (Mills & Gale, 2007)

Bourdieu's approaches to uncover deeper elements of a person's lived experience requires suitable analytical tools. Subtle nuances such as the psycho-emotional dimension of disability (any situations where a person with a disability feels put down, "undermined", "devalued", "worthless" (Reeve, 2002, p. 1)), internalised oppression, (where people learn throughout their life that "even partial acceptance into the social mainstream is contingent on the obscuring or internal and secret managing of disabled experience" (Watermeyer & Swartz, 2008, p. 602)), and aversive disablism ("subtle forms of prejudice" (Deal, 2007, p. 93)) are difficult to detect with a face value acceptance of what a person says. As a process of trial and error for this research, I found that some qualitative research approaches such as framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 2003a, 2003b) or interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) for example did not provide me with enough depth in their analytical frameworks to uncover the psycho-emotional dimension of disability, and internalised oppression.

From a Bourdieuan perspective it is important for the researcher

to point the reader towards factors easily overlooked in a distracted, cursory reading...[because] these benchmarks and observations recall the social conditions and conditionings of the men and women talking (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 2).

It is precisely the aim of this research to shed light on the 'factors easily overlooked' as Bourdieu alludes to in this quote. For this reason, Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993) has been used as the method of

analysis in this study. A thorough discussion of VRM and its applications is undertaken in Chapter 6. However, in order to give the reader a taste of what VRM involves, put simply, Brown and Gilligan's (1992; 1993) method seeks to address and answer the following points and questions:



1. The story and who is speaking
2. In what body?
3. Telling what story about relationships?
4. In which societal and cultural frameworks?

(Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 21) .

The guiding questions above aim to aid researchers in unravelling the complexity behind individuals and their myriad positions by framing these positions within the contexts of “historical trajectories across social space” (Couldry, 2005, p. 356). At the same time the researcher is challenged to uncover the constraint experienced by individuals as the result of “uneven distribution of symbolic power” (Couldry, 2005, p. 359). In VRM, the researcher must be highly engaged with the interview data, becoming absorbed and obsessed in its details. The multiple readings that this form of analysis requires, therefore, involves more than “a distracted, cursory reading” of the text, with the aim as Bourdieu says, of uncovering (through the four framing questions above) “the social conditions and conditionings of the men and women talking” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 66).

Before writing his seminal work *The Weight of the World* (1999), Bourdieu’s approach was criticised for neglecting the importance of the voice of individuals in his analysis of the social world and focussing too much on social structures (Couldry, 2005). What comes through in literature which focuses on Bourdieu’s theories (Couldry, 2005; Deer, 2008; Grenfell, 2009; Grenfell & James, 2008 for example) is the complexity of Bourdieu’s position regarding the individual perspective. On the one

hand Bourdieu's theories are in alignment with the importance of the recognition of the individual voice (Couldry, 2005). However, of significance to this study is the Bourdieuan perspective that:

A person's available set of dispositions (or habitus) closes off his or her possibilities for action, by constraining the resources he or she has to act in the situations he or she encounters (Couldry, 2005, p. 356).

The question of whether agents are at the mercy of their own habitus is significant to this study in exploring how, if any, changes take place within the students' dispositions through being in a new country.

According to Bourdieu, the researcher must critically examine:

all the elements necessary to analyse the interviewees' positions objectively and to understand their points of view, and...must accomplish this without setting up the object advising distance that reduces the individual to a specimen in a display case (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 2).

This perspective shows how Bourdieu argues strongly against being distanced from the research process. In fact, Bourdieuan thinking advocates for the researcher to become involved in research as a part of their own development and transformation. Hence the vital role that theory plays in research at once becomes even more important in providing "the means for the construction of scholarly argument and the formation of the scholar simultaneously" (Gulson & Parkes, 2010, p. 80). VRM allows this by openly involving the researcher in the processes of analysis. How this is achieved is through the strict adherence to reflexivity, another vital piece of the puzzle, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

Brown and Gilligan's VRM and Bourdieu's theories are a good fit. The critical questions posed by Brown and Gilligan provide a space through which Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power relations can be explored. For this reason, I see the qualitative Bourdieuan researcher as involved in putting together many pieces of a puzzle. The puzzle aims to reconcile the elements of the qualitative, emancipatory research conceived through Bourdieu's critical theories.

The challenge for the researcher remains as the analysis "must adopt a perspective as close as possible to the individual's own without identifying with the *alter ego*" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 2, original italics). Thus a balance must be reached between Bourdieu's two goals of objectively presenting the data and remaining true to the voices of the participants. This is the final piece of the puzzle. Thick Description is a way of presenting the data which allows the original voices of the participants to be preserved. Thick descriptions allow the researcher to give an account of the full context of the interaction with the participants in their research (Denzin, 2005).

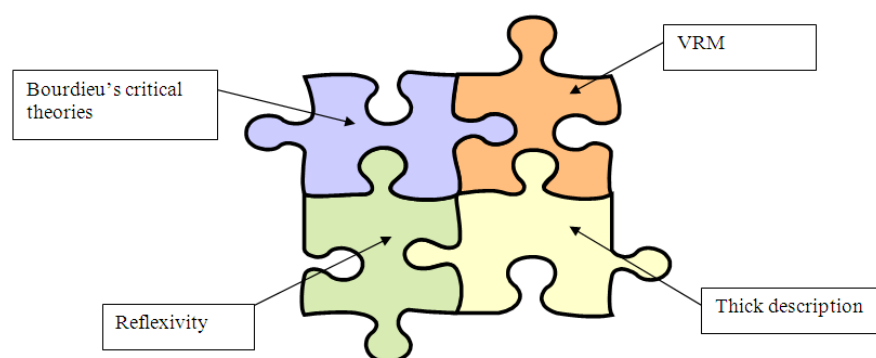


Figure 3.5. How the theoretical and analytical elements of this research fit together.

As the conceptual framework illustrates, my research is situated within the movement towards positive change away from deficit models. Moreover, the concept of inclusion has been conceptualised in terms of a Whole Schooling approach to education. What this essentially means is that a number of factors from both within and outside both the interview participants themselves and the policy documentation are recognised as being interconnected. The conceptual framework and Whole Schooling approach show a variety of relationships between people, people and resources, people and pedagogy, and people and policies.

Voice Relational Methodology is an approach which can capture both the various elements within the realms of its analysis and the important role played by the researcher which is difficult to capture using other analysis approaches. Furthermore:

the fact that exclusion is located within the deep structure of social relations and cultural reproductions already suggests [the need for] a more critical and multidimensional approach that captures both the interaction between the experiences of individuals and the social structure and context (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 2).

It is clear that there are complexities surrounding the selection of a research methodology and methods. Because of the various layers within this research project, it is vital that the research method employed represented these complexities in an authentic way. A further challenge was devising a methodological framework for inclusion, something which can require “intense emotional work, the work of relinquishing a positivist worldview infused by ableism” (Salmon & Basset, 2009, p. 922). Moreover as I also discovered through engagement in the various stages of the research process:

Research is not just a technical enterprise but is inextricably linked to the subjective lives of both the researcher and the participants. The researcher is a tool in this process. In a dialogical space about participants' practices, expectations and beliefs we therefore don't do research *on* subjects but *with* participants, and that's why we enter as a learning partner into this space. The concepts subjectivity, reflexivity, agency and learning then apply as much to the researcher as to the participants (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 3).

Interpretive research offers a voice to individual participants to comment on their lived experiences. The process through which participants are then involved in the research as having their voices 'heard' is aimed at creating a sense of empowerment. This is known by different authors as action, emancipatory or transformative research (Barnes, 2001; Winter, 2002). A researcher working within emancipatory and transformative paradigms functions not as observer or reporter, but more as a facilitator or secretary (Barnes, 1992). This role serves to bring the researcher more fully into the research itself as Bourdieu (1999) argues is necessary.

Seeing the experiences of the participants through Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, capital and habitus allows the researcher to think more about the individual identities of the participants in relation to their social contexts. Something I have found vital to keep in mind is the fact that it is likely that research participants with a disability may not perceive having a disability as an important part of their identity as a whole, (Watson, 2002) and that making this assumption through an 'ableist' perspective is dangerous. Thus, there are delicate reflexive balances in this research which needed to be respected.

## **Using an interpretive approach in this study – VRM.**

In deciding a method of analysis to use in this study, I was mindful of adopting an approach which maintained the authentic voices of the students, and was able to take into account the interplay between various relationships, cultures, contexts and outside factors as seen in the Whole School and conceptual frameworks. Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) was developed by Brown and Gilligan (1992) and allows listening for:

psychological resistance to the dominant cultural voice...when ‘Others’ bury their feelings and thoughts, and manifest confusion, uncertainty and dissociation. They also listen for political resistance, times when people struggle against abuse and fight for relationships in which it is possible to disagree openly with others, to feel and speak a full range of emotions (Proctor, 2001, p. 366).

The quote above also shows alignment with the main controversies in inclusion as discussed in the literature review: power, politics and people. Brown and Gilligan created VRM in response to traditional research paradigms which they found were unsatisfactory for their purposes. They found other approaches were restrictive in terms of allowing for reflexive awareness and listening out for different voices within the same person’s narrative (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993; Hopkins, 2011). VRM is grounded within feminist approaches (Hopkins, 2011; Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008; Proctor, 2001). There are parallels here between feminist approaches and the tenets of inclusive research and its concern with power, politics and people.

There are parallels here between feminist approaches and the tenets of inclusive research and its concern with power, politics and people. These approaches were vital in

my study. They helped to clarify the complex interplay of layers created by culture, gender, language, and disability and how these affect the experience of the interviewees. Finally, in accordance with the importance of inclusive research to challenge dominant deficit discourses, the following questions have played a fundamental role in informing my selection of analysis method:

What are the discourses that the research is supporting and disrupting? Are we disrupting the dominant discourses and replacing them with new voices of resistance and representation? Do research methods that take power relations into account produce outcomes that are relevant and can make a difference in the lives of those being researched? (Lunn & Munford, 2007, p. 76).

Hopkins (2011) argues that indeed the outcomes produced by VRM can make a significant difference to the lives of the participants by giving them input into how policy and practice can move forward. For example, U.K. policy is now informed by the ‘Disability equality duty’ (2007) which “demands the inclusion of disabled voices in decisions with regard to the policies and procedures of public bodies, including higher education institutions” (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010, p. 22).

### **Illuminating the different voices in VRM.**

#### ***Making silenced voices audible.***

The question to be considered at this stage is what might all this ‘look like’ - how is it realised in a practical sense using VRM? While Chapter 5 gives a thorough explanation of just how the techniques are employed and applied to the data, to orientate the reader at this stage I consider the following example which shows how different voices are illuminated in VRM. In Hopkins’s (2011) study the author identifies the

theme of physical barriers which was mentioned by his research participants. One of the students, Ben, gives the following example of his experience of a physical barrier:

I do remember the wheelchair ramp ... it was quite often blocked by a delivery van but I got round it somehow – I mean you could see that it was a lot more convenient for the van driver (interview with Ben, from Hopkins, 2011, p. 10).

Hopkins's analysis of this quote using VRM reveals being able to “hear Ben's voice of resistance capitulating to the supposedly greater needs of the delivery van driver” (p. 10) in the way that Ben talks about the convenience for the van driver rather than focussing more on the inconvenience to himself. Other methods may not be able to detect voices being silenced in this way, and as Hopkins concludes “VRM is a useful analytical tool for picking up when voices are being silenced like this” (p. 10).

#### Shedding light on deeper psycho-emotional dimensions

The psycho-emotional dimension of disability is also something to be considered (Hopkins, 2011; Reeve, 2004). Reeve (2004) suggests that psycho-emotional elements are any situations where a person with a disability feels put down, “undermined”, “devalued”, “worthless” (p. 83). Hopkins (2011) identifies this psycho-emotional dimension in his study by discussing the concept of assertiveness and how students in his study needed to become assertive in order to have their needs met. Students in his study were noted as often being forced to make the same request numerous times. As a result, students end up being victims of psycho-emotional disablism (Reeve 2002, 2006) by feeling like a “nuisance”.



### ***VRM and the researcher.***

One of the aspects that attracted me to using VRM is the way that it involves the researcher. An integral part of VRM is the fact that “the researchers’ voices are also heard, in our interpretations and in our reflections, as a different but linked part of the same research process” (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008, p. 1445) as well as providing space and opportunity to acknowledge researcher perceptions and reactions to the data (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008 ).

It is important that inclusive researchers think critically about the what, why and how of the research while consciously locating the approaches in the context of wider social and relational contexts (Lunn & Munford, 2007). Our own beliefs and assumptions also need to be critically examined. Some important questions to ask as a researcher might be:

How do we embody the values of inclusion as researchers? Should we? How do we study the implementation of inclusion without objectifying and marginalising our participants? (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 1).

The fact is that I, as a researcher, am also telling a story, and it is important that my role is made explicit in telling this story. I also need to be open about my role as an interpreter of the stories of the participants. Hence “the researcher as a person is regarded as a research tool and can for that reason not entirely be disconnected from the research process” (Descombe, 2010, cited in Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 1). The researcher needs to be transparent about the beliefs and assumptions he or she has about disability, to be reflexive and open about uncomfortable arguments for example, power relationships between people with a disability and ‘others’ (Lunn & Munford, 2007; Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). Again this is why VRM has been chosen as a method of

analysis – it allows a space for the researcher to ask these uncomfortable questions regarding who is listening, who is speaking, the nature of these relationships in research, the wider social contexts, power balances and what role the researcher plays in these relationships (Millar, Canavan, & Byrne, 2004).

While reflexivity affords us insight into how our own beliefs, experiences, political leanings and identities might have impacted on our research, it also allows us as researchers to become critically engaged in how the research may have changed us, not only as a researcher but more deeply as a person (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). This is an aspect that certainly speaks to me. There is a dramatic shift in consciousness through being engaged in inclusive research - a kind of ‘self liberation’ which reveals insight into relations of power and an ability to unpack social structures such as class, gender, race and, body. These can help the researcher in shaping new visions of social justice and lead to a sense of personal satisfaction. In effect the researcher becomes involved in two simultaneous projects: the research about inclusion, and research into oneself and one’s own positioning (Glesne, 2011).

### ***VRM and benefits for stakeholders.***

A direct benefit which can be derived by those participants who are involved in the research, such as students, is that their lived experiences can be used to inform policy and practice. Being involved in research can be transformational not only for the researcher but for also for participants. This is illustrated by the following quote from Harry Smith, who was a student participant from the U.K:

I am here and I am being seen as Harry, not Harry the blind person... I am happy...And to be quite honest with you...this year [being involved in the research] has been wonderful ... I don’t want to be treated special...I want to be

treated like the other classmate like everybody else (Orsini-Jones et al., 2005, interview with Harry Smith, p. 24).

A potential benefit for research participants who are practitioners and involved in case study research is the ability to reflect on and improve professional practice (Miles & Huberman, 2002). This has certainly been the case for me in learning about the importance of inclusion for all students, and reflecting on my own discomfort and ‘ableist’ attitudes, and something I wanted to make explicit as part of my analysis. Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that these benefits may continue to be enjoyed by the researcher even after the project has finished as “concrete experiences can be achieved via continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study” (p. 223). There is also the need to be honest about the benefits researchers receive from studies they carry out (Proctor, 2001).

## **Method and design**

The purpose of my research was to gather relevant contextual data from international students with a disability and from academic and support staff via interviews in order to analyse the data and arrive at a more in-depth understanding of the Australian experiences of selected international students with a disability. This research also aimed to discover any tensions, anomalies and inconsistencies between these experiences and relevant university policy documents on equity and diversity in accordance with the Research Questions outlined in Chapter 1.

## **Interpretive case studies.**

Considering the nature of the questions I was exploring, I chose a case study method for this investigation. Yin (1984; 2003; 2009) defines the case study research method as

an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

This research approach enabled me to present an account of the experiences of international students with a disability in the course of their study and what their teachers and support workers have to contend with as delineated within their particular institutional framework. Detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships is presented in Chapter 6.

Researchers using case studies are interested in presenting their findings as thick descriptions and not as facts (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Thick descriptions can help a case study researcher to uncover an otherwise hidden problematic. The richness of the findings availed by a case study approach are often more interesting, revealing and useful for the researcher as well as making more significant contributions to social theories (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

This study is designed as a critical qualitative interpretive case study of one higher education institution. A case study investigates phenomena in its real-life context (Cavaye, 1996; Yin, 1984; 2003; 2009). Case studies are common in the interpretive tradition and focus on human interpretation and meaning. There are a number of

different reasons as to why case study is a useful research method. Case studies are powerful in relation to answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Yin, 1984; 2003; 2009). These criteria can be applied to my research questions and aims. Due to the fact that case studies often encompass complex and contradictory ideas, opinions and points of view, the findings can be difficult for the researcher to summarise and generalise whilst maintaining unique perceptions and perspectives of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The data for my case studies was collected via interviews. According to Bourdieu, the interview process is “an exceptional opportunity” for participants “to testify, to make themselves heard, to carry their experience over from the private to the public sphere” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 56).

The level of interaction provided by interviews is somewhat intrinsic to this paradigm, particularly for researchers to gain insight into the lives of the people they are interviewing (Barnes, 1992). It is easy to see the danger in trying to draw conclusions which are too general. Whilst the cases cannot be seen as *statistically* generalisable, they do allow for the identification at some level of possible *theoretical* generalisability (Cavaye, 1996, my italics), and reciprocity in the conclusions drawn, the latter of which is also an important element within case study research.

### **Using interviews in qualitative study.**

In interpretive case studies, interviews form the main sources of data (Yin, 1984; 2003; 2009). This research aims to capture the lived experiences of students and staff in a way that is representative of their voices. Interviews allow for thorough exploration of topics and are more effective for this purpose than other techniques. Questionnaires for example in comparison to interviews are shallower (Murray & Lawrence, 2000). In

addition an interview allows for a greater degree of transparency as the researcher can make the aims of the research clear to the participants. Moreover, interviews are highly adaptable and allow information to be divulged such as in depth feelings about one's self and relationships with others which may not be possible through other methods of data capture. Perhaps the most compelling reason for using interviews is related to how they allow the researcher access to experiences which may only be known or held by the interviewee (Murray & Lawrence, 2000). All of these elements (in-depth exploration of the topic, high level of transparency, personal feelings, insight into the experiences of others) were important for this research.

The type of interview technique employed was that of the semi-structured interview which allows researchers to use both a structured approach as well as a more 'conversational' style in order to answer the research questions (Barnes, 1992; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). This style of in-depth interviewing known as "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984, cited in Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 5) is appropriate for this study as it aimed to glean deep insights into the participants' perspectives. A conversational manner is particularly important in establishing rapport and helping the participants to feel at ease which is of utmost importance in this paradigm when seeking to gain insights and allow the participants to reflect on potentially sensitive situations. I consider myself as being highly familiar with techniques in creating rapport, as is supported by my current employment as a member of the teaching profession. As such I was able to draw upon techniques such as utilising standard interview probes (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The consent forms allowed for research participants to choose whether or not to be audio-recorded (see Appendices C, G, & J). It was important to give this choice as it was anticipated that some of the participants may not have felt comfortable in having their voices recorded. Each

participant was provided with a written transcript (soft copy) of their interview and invited to make any changes they deemed necessary.

There is also an important layer to consider in interviewing participants who have a disability (Mertens, 2005). For example, the researcher needs to:

explicitly turn control of the interview over to the person with the disability...[for example by] allowing the person to end the interview at any time, choose not to answer specific questions, raise issues that the researcher did not bring up, and have the opportunity to review his or her comments before they are made part of the official record for research data (Mertens, 2005, p. 389).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter considered the various ontological, epistemological, theoretical and practical facets of adopting a particular approach for analysis of data in this study. I illustrated why Voice Relational Methodology was chosen and discussed the reasons for this in light of the conceptual framework for this study, other studies which are similar to it, and how the tenets of the Whole Schooling approach and Bourdieu's conceptual tools are in alignment with VRM's mode of analysis.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, guides the reader through a number of steps which are part of VRM. I show how these were used in identifying key parts of the data and how these worked to underscore a variety of themes. A step by step explanation of the techniques used at each stage of the analysis is given, and I explain how these are

consistent with my study which is underpinned by socially constructed and relational approaches to research.



## **Chapter 5 Methodology, Data Collection and Approach to Analysis**

This chapter presents the steps that were taken in data collection through interviews and analysis of policy documents and illustrates how various reflexive approaches were utilised in analysing the data. This chapter also shows how Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) was used to make sense of the data. In this chapter I discuss how the data presentation stage utilises and adapts Denzin's (2001) five primary typologies as a guiding framework in data organisation and how VRM was applied as an analytical tool to create thick descriptions. I show how each part of the analysis process is related to socially constructed contexts, interpretative and relational approaches, whilst adhering to the driving forces behind the conceptual framework and the Whole Schooling approach to inclusion. This chapter also illustrates how the use of thick description and VRM work together in creating a complete, holistic and true representation of the participants, making their stories, and hence their voices, come alive.

### **Selection of Participants**

This research aimed at recruiting students as well as staff who work in various capacities across the case study university. Table 5.1 below shows the distribution of participants and reasons for selection.

Table 5.1  
*Distribution of participants*

Participants	Number	Reasons for selection*
Students	4	To gain insight into the student experience, the student voice
Teaching staff	4	To gain insight into concerns, to explore feedback on the teaching experience
Support staff	1	To gain insight into the role played by the DLU in working with students with a disability and particularly international students with a disability

(\*The basis for selection of the participants is informed by the theoretical framework which guides the study which positions students and staff as important stakeholders to be heard).

Purposive sampling was the main approach used in inviting participants to take part in this research. Purposive sampling is used when there are certain characteristics required by the researcher (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In the case of this research the criteria I utilised was staff who had experience in working with an international student with a disability, and international students with a disability themselves who were registered with the DLU. In order to meet ethical requirements all participants, whether known to me or not, were invited via adherence to formal protocol.

The sampling methods used were not without their limitations. While purposive sampling can be useful in that it can “hand-pick” its participants (Black, 1999, p. 118), it can be influenced by inaccuracies caused by the particular criteria used by the researcher, thereby affecting the results (Gay et al., 2009). The sample also may not be representative of a particular cross section of the population due to possible biases inherent in the selection (Black, 1999) and the fact that not all students with a disability have necessarily registered themselves with the DLU. Analysis of these issues will form part of the later chapters of this thesis in terms of the limitations of the research.

I already knew the teaching staff as we had worked together with the same student. I sent emails to the teachers which contained background information and an invitation to participate in an interview (Appendix A). Once I received replies from those interested in participating I sent a follow-up email as a confirmation which included the explanatory statement, consent form and interview questions as attachments (Appendices B, C, & D). I also invited my managers to participate but did not receive any replies to my invitation emails.

Students were contacted through the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU). It is understood that currently the procedure at the university at the centre of this study, and indeed most universities, is for students to disclose a disability on the university enrolment form. In alignment with principles of the social model of disability, students indicate whether they consider themselves as having a disability. An email was sent to the DLU (Appendix E) which outlined the background to the research and provided my contact details (a Monash University student email address). This email was then forwarded to the relevant manager who became a point of contact within the DLU, and who also participated in an interview. The DLU staff member sent the information (Appendices F, G & H) to the relevant students asking them to contact me to show their interest in participating. Making contact in this way for recruitment was important in maintaining and respecting privacy and confidentiality as I was not in direct contact with the students.

Once I had made contact with the DLU liaison officer regarding the students I asked him whether he would also like to participate in the research and he agreed. (See Appendices I, J & K respectively for explanatory statement, consent form and interview questions).

The students I interviewed and their respective home countries are Jane (Sri Lanka) with an injury sustained while studying in Australia; Anna (Hong Kong) who experiences depression and anxiety and Mary (China) a student with a vision impairment. These students all speak English as their second language. The final student interviewed was James (U.S.) a native English speaker who has attention deficit disorder. The four teaching staff interviewed were Jenny, Veronica, Lauren and Monica. The fifth staff member Terry was from the DLU.

## **Tools for data collection**

### **Interview protocol.**

The interview protocol is informed by the conceptual framework (Chapter 3, Figure 3.3) which situates policy, practice and pedagogy as intrinsic to fostering inclusivity in higher education. Three different versions of questions were prepared to be used with teachers/lecturers (Appendix D), students (Appendix H), and support staff (Appendix K). Using the conceptual framework I created questions for each of the three groups under the same umbrella headings (general background information; knowledge – pedagogical, knowledge – inclusive practices and disability; collaborative support practices; policy and legislation; cultural issues; and the future). The aim of creating different questions under the same headings was to provide consistency in data collection.

For staff, the questions aimed at capturing their experiences of teaching an international student with a disability and their views about that experience. The aim of the subsequent analysis was to identify areas to inform best practice and policy. For students the focus was on what is currently working or not working for them, and how they viewed their experience as a student with a disability from a country outside of

Australia. Because of the added layer of complexity provided by cultural diversity within both participant cohorts, questions also focused on gaining insights into the interviewees' perceptions of socio-cultural norms as reflected in their respective countries, as well as perceptions of other countries.

As part of the preparation and review process, the interview questions for staff were piloted on one staff member and adjustments made accordingly.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection from participants as informed by the conceptual framework was collected via face-to-face interviews with students and staff members. Interviews with the students took place at different mutually agreed locations on different campuses (referred to here as campus A, campus B and campus C). These locations were pre-determined via email correspondence with the student. Two interviews were carried out in study rooms in the library on campus A and campus B, one in a classroom on campus C, and one in a quiet courtyard on campus A. One interview with the teaching staff took place in a study room in the library on campus A, two were done in classrooms on campus B, and one at a teacher's home. The interview with the DLU staff member was conducted in his office. Again all of these locations were pre-arranged via emails with the staff. Each of the interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Data were collected over a period of three months. My role was as interviewer who asked questions of the participants and at appropriate junctures I would ask questions to elicit elaboration on key points. With permission from the participants the interviews were recorded by using a digital recording device and I also took notes about their answers to the questions as a backup ('just in case' there were problems with the recording). In the case of audio-recordings, the MP3 files were transcribed verbatim into

a text document and sent to the participants via an email which also requested that any adjustments or editing was made using the track changes function in Microsoft Word. In one situation where the participant did not wish to have their voice recorded, I took notes about her answers during the interview and transcribed these into more detailed comments and complete utterances which I then sent to her to review.

### **Methodological issues and limitations**

I wanted to interview as many international students with a disability who were registered with the DLU as I could, but I was ethically limited in terms of my recruitment methods. The policy of the university at the centre of this study is that I had to recruit the participants through DLU so I was unable to use methods such as advertising on posters for example. This essentially positioned the DLU as gatekeepers. I had planned to interview Amira (not her real name) who the other teaching staff and I had worked with but she did not wish to participate.

I also experienced a high degree of tension due to my shared role in teaching the same student as the colleagues I interviewed. In some ways this added to the richness of the data and also prompted me to think about a different level of reflexivity which I then drew upon as part of VRM.

It was also a difficult time for me logistically in organising the interviews as I was in the middle of changing jobs. The biggest disappointment for me in terms of the interest in the project, or lack thereof, was from the managers of the English Language Centre where I was working. Presenting a management perspective of working with an international student with a disability would have added a further layer to the data. My assumption was perhaps that managers felt participation in the research would leave them somehow vulnerable in perhaps admitting some of the difficulties they

experienced. This assumption was based on the reaction of two managers to a conference presentation myself and Jenny (one of the teachers) had planned to deliver – during a practice run of the presentation they asked us to change a lot of what we were saying as they interpreted our information as too negative (such as how we spoke about the ad hoc nature of service provision in the university and the difficulties we faced as teachers in not having had training or not having access to resources). In essence I felt that they were censoring our presentation.

Although the sample size was small, it has been observed that more discoveries have arisen from intense consideration and in-depth analysis of data than from statistics applied to large groups (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Kuper & Kuper, 1985). Furthermore, due to the depth of analysis availed by VRM, sample sizes are in general kept small - less than 10 participants is usual (Hopkins, 2011; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008; Proctor, 2001). This allows both for a deeper exploration of the participants' stories and continuous linkage to occur in the researcher's mind between emerging ideas and the conceptual framework for the study (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

## **My Role in the Research Process**

The aim of this research is to create spaces where the voices of both students and the researcher can be heard, particularly for those who anecdotally are often considered as part of mutually exclusive cohorts: international students and students with a disability. Thus my goal as the researcher becomes “to create a text that permits a willing reader to share vicariously in the experiences that have been captured” (Stake, 1978, p. 5). This is essentially the purpose of thick description: to make visible the voices, emotions, situations and experiences of individuals in everyday interactions and create “verisimilitude, a space for the reader to imagine his or her way into the life

experiences of another” (Denzin, 2005, p. 99). Thick descriptions allow the researcher to give an account of the full context of the interaction with the research participants. By doing this, the researcher immediately becomes fully immersed in both the processes of data collection and interpretation, and simultaneously enmeshed in the research process, allowing for full and transparent reflexivity. Thus “the analyst’s intrusion is as difficult as it is necessary. It must proclaim itself openly and yet strive to go unnoticed” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 1).

In qualitative research the researcher functions within close proximity of the participants and becomes a learner who is the key person responsible for collecting data and describing the experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003; Ponterotto, 2002). The researcher creates a context and facilitates an interaction within the data collection context and interprets and translates data into information which is meaningful (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). Because of these functions, the researcher is an instrument of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003; Ponterotto, 2002).

The researcher as instrument can be problematic. For example, certain biases embodied by the researcher may cause tensions and compromise the information obtained from an analysis (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). As Bourdieu suggests, these tensions are caused by the fact that

the analyst will be able to make the most unavoidable intrusions acceptable only through a *rewriting* that reconciles two double contradictory goals. On the one hand, the discussion must provide all the elements necessary to analyse the interviewees’ positions objectively and to understand their points of view, and it must accomplish this without setting up the object advising distance that reduces



the individual to specimen in a display case. On the other hand it must adopt a perspective as close as possible to the individual's own without identifying with the *alter ego* (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 2, original italics).

The use of thick descriptions enables this proximity to the data and reduces the distance between participant and observer as Bourdieu indicates in the quote above. The very nature of the language used in thick descriptions differs greatly from thin descriptions. In the case of thin descriptions, researchers tend to use “second-order, experience-distant, social science words instead of first-order, experience-near concepts and terms” (Denzin, 2005, p. 103).

At the same time, however, the researcher as instrument can be powerful insofar as allowing a space for the participants themselves to gain a different insight into the experiences they share with the researcher. This enables research participants to become empowered citizens (Ponterotto, 2002). The power of the researcher as instrument is also significant for the researcher themselves. Through the close interaction with participants, researchers are challenged to question power and bias, and, therefore, “the instrument (the researcher) changes and evolves as a result of intensive interaction with participants in their natural socio-cultural contexts” (Ponterotto, 2002, p. 399).

## **Reflexivity**

A reflexive approach guided me through the data collection and analysis. In this section my discussion explores different levels of reflexivity, the particular affinity Bourdieu had with reflexive practices, and how I have conceptualised reflexivity in relation to Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of doxa, habitus, capital and field. I unpack reflexivity into three main categories as informed by Swart and Agbenyega (2010): positional, theoretical and personal. The section on reflexivity concludes with specific

examples of how I have consciously engaged in reflexive practices throughout this research.

### **Reflexivity and its importance in this research.**

The term reflexivity is often used and has many meanings but is not necessarily clearly defined in terms of how it is 'done' (Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Maton, 2003). At its most fundamental, reflexivity is essentially the process of being attuned to, critical and self-conscious of the self, and the positions and assumptions of the self (Pillow, 2003). There is an important distinction between reflexivity and reflection; “to be reflective does not demand an ‘other’, while to be reflexive demands both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (Pillow, 2003, p. 177). In qualitative research this is important and in inclusive research even more so because of the inherent issues of power between the researcher and the ‘researched’ as outlined in the discussion of critical theory in previous chapters. This questioning of beliefs prompts us to consider how we realistically represent our research participants (Pillow, 2003). The reality is that as researchers we can never be truly disconnected from the processes of research (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). The most important question is “are we representing the realities of the people we are researching, or are we appropriating the voices of others and creating new stories?” (Lunn & Munford, 2007, p. 65).

### ***The researcher as instrument.***

The researcher is the key person obtaining data. It is through the researcher’s facilitative interaction that a context is created where respondents share rich data regarding their experiences and life world (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003, p. 418).

As Poggenpoel and Myburgh's (2003) comments above show, as the researcher I am an important instrument in this research. There are many implications when the researcher is the key person not only collecting data, but also creating contexts for the sharing of information and acting like a music conductor in managing the flow of communication. As I see it, the researcher does not exist in a vacuum void of influences- we are human after all! What I mean to say here is that as researchers we come with our own habitus, perceptions and embodiment of capital and experience in the relational field. Specifically, "who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel [fundamentally] affect[s] data collection and analysis" (Pillow, 2003, p. 176). We bring our habitus, various forms of capital, and presuppositions as shaped by our doxa. Each of these selves necessitates a reflexive stance in view of their potential influences on research design (King & Horrocks, 2009).

In inclusive research, reflexivity is critical in understanding the relative social positioning of researcher and the participants (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010), that is, their position as agents in relational fields. This positioning also helped me in uncovering the relationship between myself and the data. I found that the various levels of reflexivity (personal, positional and theoretical) allowed me a space to understand my own influences by bringing myself into the research.

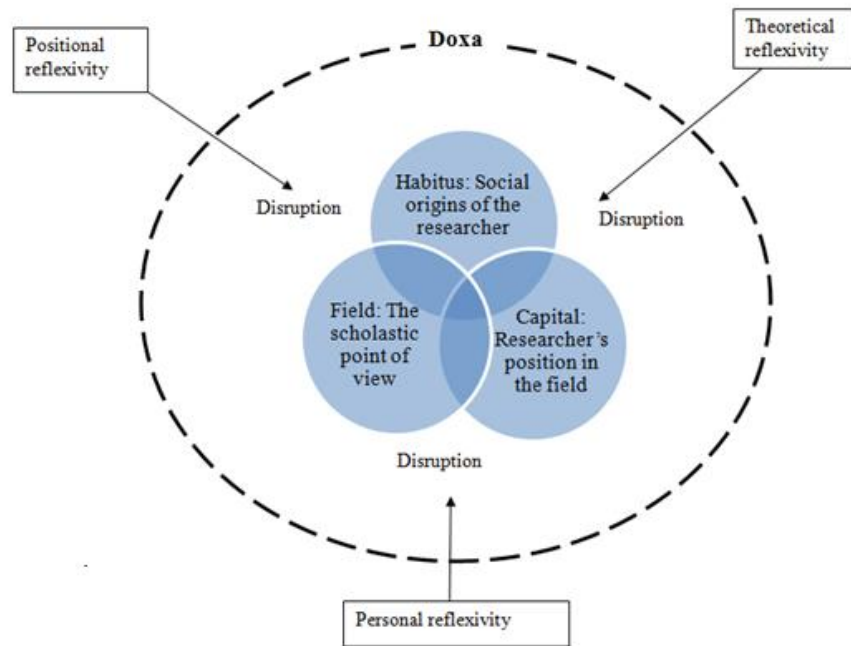
This research makes a contribution to the discourses of inclusion and, therefore, involves the study of difference in social and cultural contexts and how these are manifested as practices and result in power struggles (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). Bringing oneself into the research and challenging our own perceptions is an integral part of critical research. Indeed, reflexivity in inclusive research "is a requirement rather than an option for researchers" (Slee, 1998, p. 445). As an earlier quote from Bourdieu which I referred to suggests:

How can we [as researchers] claim to engage in the scientific investigation of presuppositions if we do not work to engage in the knowledge...of our own presuppositions? (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 608).

Bringing our own habitus into the research as Bourdieu suggests above helps us to understand and conceptualise inclusive education. This is inextricably linked to the ways in which we go about researching and enacting it (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). Reflexive processes enable the researcher to unpack the invisible aspects of the data in a non-judgemental way.

Bourdieu was a strong advocate for rigorous reflexivity. In fact, commentators on Bourdieu agree with his apparent obsession with reflexivity (Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Maton, 2003). His obsession was related to the need to interrogate scholarly thought and the recognition of no one, true, all-pervading perspective. A Bourdieuan reflexive approach is one which is shaped by the ideology of critical theories, that is, the need to destabilise and problematise the doxa of power and authority (Kenway & McLeod, 2004). For Bourdieu, this is achieved through the interrogation of habitus, capital and field (Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Schirato & Webb, 2003). As I see it, this interrogation is not easy but it is possible. As tenets of critical theory suggest, assumptions and beliefs, or 'doxa,' despite being perceived as 'the norm,' are permeable.

Figure 5.1 illustrates how I have married Bourdieu's habitus, capital and field with the three types of reflexivity (positional, theoretical and personal). The interrogation of the capital, habitus and field of the researcher requires the pervading doxa to be broken through, allowing an opening through which reflexivity can occur. I have used the broken line to represent doxa in order to show its permeability.



*Figure 5.1.* The disruption of the researcher's doxa through three types of interrogational tools: positional, theoretical and personal reflexivity.

As Figure 5.1 shows, the engagement in positional, theoretical and personal reflexive practice allows the researcher to interrogate his or her habitus, capital and field and how this might influence the data collection and analysis.

This study is an interpretivist study using Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) and thick description. It reflects the belief that meaning does not exist somewhere to be discovered, but is shaped by one's understanding of it (Clark et al., 2011). Because of this, it is impossible to stand apart from or outside of the topic under investigation; it is the way the subject of our investigations is interpreted which makes it meaningful (Clark et al., 2011). Thus, interpretivist research is subjective. Relying on my own voice as the researcher as well as the voices of the participants means my intention is not

wrapped up in searching for and then presenting some kind of objective and distanced ‘truth’. Rather, the intention is to present the voices of others (I use ‘others’ here to mean ‘people who are not me’, as opposed to ‘the other who is different’) and their lived experiences. The intention is to also show myself an insider and an outsider, to be open about how this affects the research relationship and consequent impacts on data collection and analysis.

To say reflexive engagement is a delicate balance is an understatement. Clearly in qualitative research caution must be taken in attempting to interpret the voices of participants. The following section considers how I attempted to maintain the delicate balance whilst juggling various tensions and conundrums inherent in reflexive practice. I explicate the tools I have developed in order to present critical voices and not obscure the participants’ perspectives. I show how this requires three levels of reflexivity in the disruption of doxa: positional, theoretical and personal, as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

### **Positional reflexivity.**

“How do we study the implementation of inclusion without objectifying and marginalising our participants?” (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010, p. 1). This question articulates one of the most difficult challenges for inclusive researchers. Positional reflexivity attempts to help us answer this question.

Positionality problematises and helps to articulate the social, ideological, biographical and interactional location of the researcher relative to the overall research project, its participants and the data itself (Glesne, 2011; Swart & Agbenyega, 2010). Problematising the location of the researcher happens through the interrogation of doxa, habitus, capital and field, as outlined in Figure 5.1, specifically by asking “hard and timeless question of how I had the right or the authority to make judgments about a

people, country, and problem of which I did not belong” (Madison, 2011, p. 132). For Bourdieu, positional reflexivity acts as a kind of cautionary framework in helping researchers to understand how their *way* of seeing influences *what* they are likely to see (Webb et al., 2002, my italics).

‘Insider’ and ‘outsider’ help to explain the relational positioning between a researcher and the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Edwards, 2002; Gair, 2012; Hellowell, 2006). As with many definitions in qualitative research there is no one fixed definition of what constitutes insider/outsider roles in research and indeed sometimes roles can be blurred or shift between one and the other in the same field (Gair, 2012). Generally speaking, however, and for the purposes of this research I have applied Gair’s (2012) definition of insider/outsider status which means:

the degree to which a researcher is located either within or outside a group being researched, because of her or his common lived experience or status as a member of that group (Gair, 2012, p. 137).

The students I interviewed were Jane from Sri Lanka, Anna from Hong Kong, Mary from China and James from the United States of America (names have been changed). None of these participants had been students of mine. I had never had much contact with Sri Lankan students but my assumption was that their culture would be similar to that of India. I had taught many students from Hong Kong and China, lived in China for a year and have made numerous trips to Hong Kong. These experiences gave me pre-conceived notions of what I might expect - pushy parents and an unforgiving experience of schooling. I had also made the assumption that the students I was interviewing would have all lived with a disability for a number of years before coming to Australia. Furthermore, despite the relative similarities in language and culture with

the U.S. and Australia I did not know much about the education system there or how inclusion was viewed but made assumptions from the literature I had read about inclusion there and about it being a fairly forward-thinking society. Overall I expected the experiences of the students here to be grim in terms of their levels of support based on the literature I had reviewed about local students with a disability as well as the assumptions I carried with me.

My data analysis, however, shows how many of my assumptions turned out to be very false indeed. The influence these preconceptions had on my data collection meant that my questions focussed on the differences in the levels of support received in Australia and the home country of the student, and had not taken into account variables such as disability as the result of injury in Australia such as in Jane's case, or a student who spoke English as their first language – as in James's case.

### ***Language and voice.***

Three out of the four students I interviewed spoke English as their second language. One of the first considerations which came to my mind about this was the difficulty that speaking in another language can create when trying to express oneself. By this I mean more than being misunderstood or not knowing the word for something. For example, when I was in my second year of university I spent a year in Japan on an academic scholarship as part of an exchange program funded through the Japanese government. For an entire year I became immersed in the language and culture which I had been studying for six years. My Japanese improved significantly during my time in Japan, but I was always struck by how I felt 'different' when I spoke the language. These feelings were related to something deeper than just the cognitive load that speaking a second language can command and more to do with feeling a strange sense of 'who am I when I speak this language? Is this truly *me*?' For example, I was amazed



at how I would catch myself using different body language when speaking Japanese, and because it was used so unconsciously, at times it was akin to having some kind of out of body experience. It prompted me to think about how closely language is tied up in our identity, and how we might feel this identity is loosened or shifted when we speak a language other than our mother tongue. After finishing my interviews with the students I wondered if they experienced similar feelings. Using VRM as an analysis tool has allowed me to create a space where I can ask questions of the utterances the students made in terms of ‘is this what they were trying to say here?’ from a socio-linguistic perspective. It is my prior experience as a student studying overseas I think which allowed me to do this, as well as my work in TESOL (Teachers/Teaching of English to Speakers of other languages) and my undergraduate study in bilingualism and biculturalism and socio-linguistics.

Language also raises issues to do with more than simply linguistic considerations. With English as the lingua franca, this also surely introduces elements of power and colonisation (Hayes, 2010) particularly when the researcher is an Anglo-Saxon native English speaker such as myself. It is also important to keep in mind how the very presence of a white, native English speaker with an MP3 recording device (even though this was used with prior consent) potentially affects the data which is collected. Could this have made them give answers which they thought I wanted to hear? I also wonder how much subtle reactions as interviewers (nodding, asking for further information, clarification, the body language used) could work to influence how the interviewee might be trying to ‘read’ what the interviewer’s “own attachment to and construction of particular perspectives and truths” as researchers are (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 541). Participants might use these subtle signs to second guess themselves and engage in high levels of self-monitoring and editing.

As discussed throughout this thesis, voice is intrinsic to this study in so many ways, and has been instrumental in informing my method of analysis. As Hayes (2010) suggests, “qualitative researchers may claim to be giving voice to those whose voices are not usually heard in academic discourse” (Hayes, 2010, p. 69). I think Hayes’s use of the word ‘claim’ is significant, and I like the way he further qualifies the statement in relation to his own study by saying “I am making a personal claim about what is, for me, the significance of the study” within the relevant relational field. I think this is an important part of positional reflexivity. It is about openly saying “I am who I am (habitus), this is who I am *in my field*, and this is the significance *as I see it, within my academic field*”. Hence I would like to rewrite Hayes’s quote to apply to this research; my italics replace his words:

I am making a personal claim about what is, for me, *as an educator*, the significance of the study *within the wider inclusive education community*, where stories such as these regarding *the voices of international students with a disability* are rarely heard.

### ***As pertaining to both insider and outsider.***

If we remove the concept of positional reflexivity for a moment and consider the researcher and the participants as human beings first and foremost, then we can start to unravel the “psychodynamic” (Finlay, 2003, p. 10) element of the data collection process. In this way “construing both the researcher and researched as anxious, defended subjects [means that] both will be subject to projections and introjections” (Holloway, 2001). In other words a researcher using VRM as a method of analysis is looking for how the slightest projections and introjections in utterances are meaningful. But what Finlay also suggests here is that these projections and interjections will also be evident from what the *researcher* says in the interviews. In some ways while these

transferences no doubt hinder the process of data collection (for example my assumptions about the students' backgrounds or experiences), in other ways transferences are most important in that they "structure the researcher's ability to develop empathic relations with those subjects who provide the essential source of sociological data" (Hunt 1989, in Finlay 2003, p. 10). In other words, my experiences which related to the students' contexts (my experience of their culture and my experience as an overseas student) as well as my experiences which relate to the staff contexts (our shared experiences of teaching an international student who was blind) helped me to build a relationship within the interview context with the students, and to build on the existing relationships with colleagues in a new space.

The fact that I shared my teaching experience with the teachers whom I interviewed (indeed, that we taught the same student often at the same times) meant that as part of the interview process we were actually involved together in a process of reflexivity, essentially engaging in "a reflexive dialogue" (Finlay, 2003, p. 10) about our experiences of teaching. I did, however, find myself operating within the interview under a kind of personal/professional conundrum: was I "supposed to" or "allowed to" give my perceptions of what happened or my memory of a certain shared situation with the interviewee? Or was that somehow overlapping and overshadowing the parameters of their experience with my experience? Again I found myself balancing on a very fine line, but I think in reality I could not deny the fact that I had shared in a situation, an event and a process through operating within the same field as my colleagues. It is interesting because looking back I think this process acted as a kind of debriefing - a space to share our experiences which we had not had the chance to do previously.

With the DLU support officer Terry, the situation was different. I was an insider insofar as we were both staff- members of the same institution, but I was an outsider as

I did not work in the same role, under the same conditions or with the same people as he. I also became aware when I was analysing Terry's transcripts that it was important for him to present himself in a certain way to me – he worked for the DLU, and organisation that needs to present itself as an equitable and fair unit. However, I had had rather mixed experiences with the DLU as a teacher. This may have come across in some of my questions which might have influenced his answers.

### **Theoretical reflexivity.**

Critical theorists...argue that understanding facts requires a wider look at the circumstances and contexts in which they are produced, not as a 'given', compared to empirical approaches (How, 2003, p. 9).

How's (2003) quote above echoes Bourdieu's work in suggesting a wide consideration of circumstances and contexts is necessary in destabilising and disrupting what is "a given" (the doxa). Theoretical reflexivity involves the consideration of how a researcher's world view has influenced stages in the research from construction of interview questions, to data presentation, analysis and reporting of results (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010).

Theoretical reflexivity is interesting in that it strikes me as being more dynamic and influenced by time, experience and knowledge than positional reflexivity. For example, when I was writing my interview questions I did not have a strong sense of Bourdieuan concepts, of inclusion as an ideology, of inclusive policies or of university service provisions such as the workings of the DLU. I carried with me assumptions of negative discourses surrounding disability and international students. What I did have at that particular time was my strong sense of being concerned with issues of social

justice. This then helped shape how I chose Bourdieu, how I approached reading about inclusion and how I started to shape my analytical methods.

### **Personal reflexivity.**

Personal reflexivity means becoming involved simultaneously in two projects: one surrounding inclusive research and the other being research into oneself and one's own positioning (Glesne, 2011). As I alluded to in the previous section regarding theoretical reflexivity, I consider myself to have shifted in my conceptualisations of the discourses surrounding 'disability' and 'international students' as sociological constructs. This 'shift' is known as personal reflexivity and "involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and researchers" (Willig, 2008, p. 10). For example I have experienced an internal structural shift, a change in my habitus, in how I now conceptualise inclusion. Previously my thinking was related purely to ideas of how to create access to education in an equitable way for students with a disability. I now feel that my perception of inclusion is further reaching - it has more to do with social structures, barriers, perceptions, attitudes, an embodied ideology, and:

an understanding of ourselves and our self location, our relations with other humans and with the natural world; an understanding of the relation of power in the interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy (O'Sullivan, 2003, p. 326).

I have taken the notion of two projects at the same time to task. Because I felt myself changing so fundamentally as a result of being engaged in this research, I wanted to start capturing how my thinking was changing and the different processes that

I was undergoing as I started to read and think more and to become more deeply involved in my thesis. I decided to start writing and publishing a blog in July 2011 (<http://babybeephd.wordpress.com/>). I can easily say that the effects of my personal reflexivity journey are long-lasting, arguably permanent and create larger and future possibilities (Swart & Agbenyega, 2010; Madison, 2011).

### **Bringing it all together - reflexivity and data analysis.**

I have been so captivated by the various elements of reflexivity that initially my writings on it for this chapter amounted to over 40 pages and close to 10,000 words! It is an area that I would like to put more time and thought into beyond my thesis, particularly in reference to Bourdieuan reflexivity.

I have created the following diagram in order to illustrate how the various elements of reflexivity have worked to guide my data analysis.

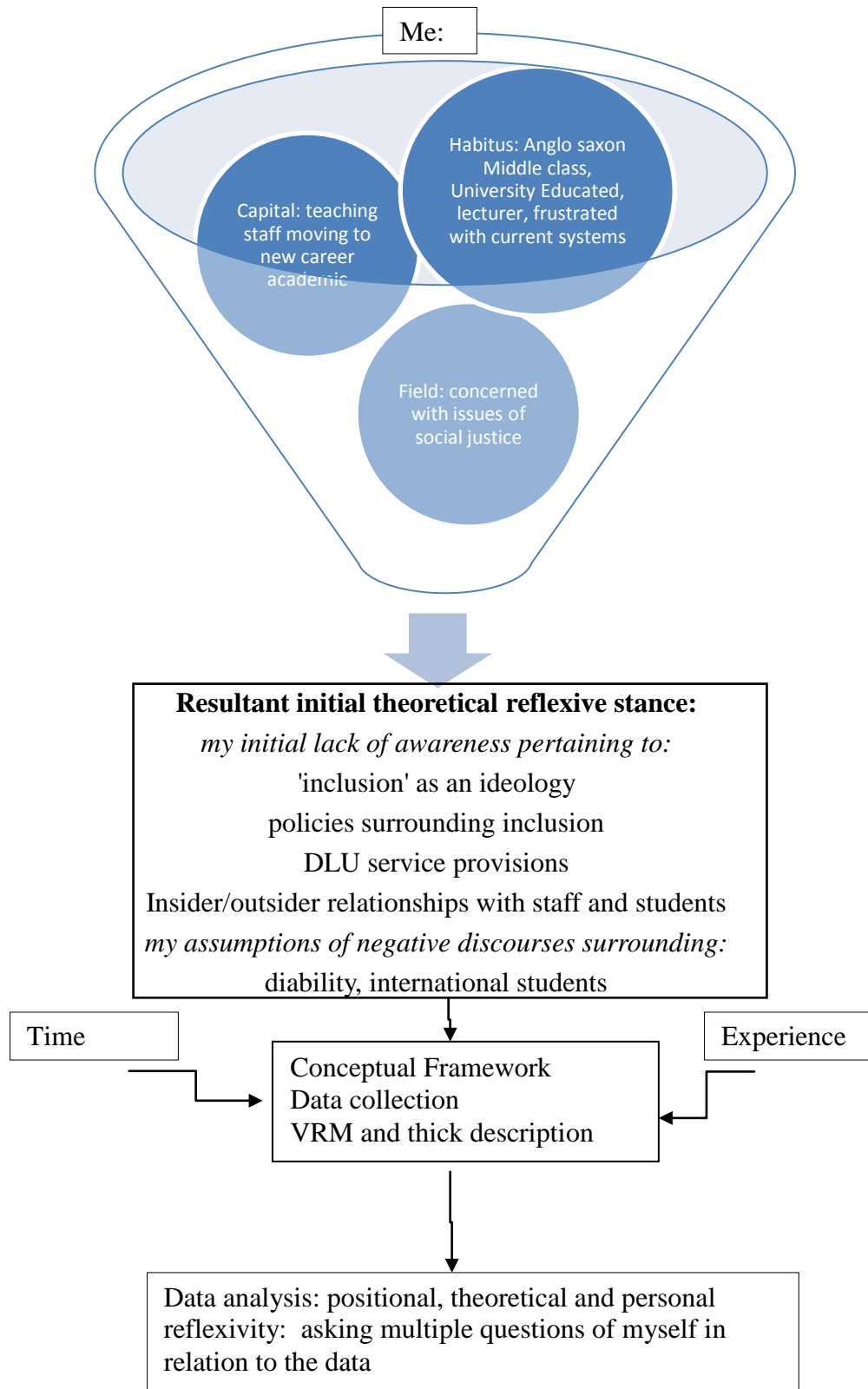


Figure 5.2. Personalisation of Bourdieu's theoretical framework for reflexivity

Figure 5.2 shows my conceptualisation of the processes of reflexivity from a Bourdieuan standpoint into which frame I add myself. I bring my own habitus, (Anglo-Saxon, middle class, university educated, lecturer, frustrated with current systems as a result of my teaching experience) and capital (teaching staff moving to new career as an academic) and field (concerned with issues of social justice) to this research. My initial theoretical reflexive stance related to a lack of awareness of inclusive ideals, policies, service provisions, and assumptions about the negative discourses surrounding disability. All of these influenced how I created my conceptual framework, collected my data and the methods I chose for analysis. Time and experience allowed me to shape and revisit the conceptual framework, my data analysis methods (reviewing the interview questions for example) and data analysis approach (moving away from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Framework analysis for example and towards VRM and thick description).

All of these factors in Figure 5.2 have resulted in how I have adopted a reflexive approach to my data analysis. I have engaged reflexively in the data by asking questions of myself informed by positional, theoretical and personal reflexivity. These are some of the guiding questions I have asked myself through analysing the data:

***Positional reflexivity.***

Am I an insider or an outsider in relation to this participant? As an insider how can I bring myself into the data in a way which is honest but does not compromise or undermine what the participant is saying? As an outsider how do I bring myself in whilst being conscious of maintaining an authentic voice but yet not objectifying or speaking on behalf of the person? Am I representing what they were trying to say in a way that is true to the speaker? Am I respecting cultural and linguistic practices of the participants? Are the participants telling me what they think I want to hear? Are my



preconceptions about the person or their culture influencing what I am seeing in the data? Am I being an inclusive practitioner in the way I present the data or am I objectifying the participants?

#### *Theoretical reflexivity*

Am I showing awareness in the analysis of Bourdieuan concepts? Is the analysis truly Bourdieuan? Am I showing an awareness of inclusive ideologies? Is the analysis truly inclusive?

#### *Personal reflexivity.*

What am I learning from what the participants are telling me? How am I developing as an academic, an inclusive practitioner and as a person? How can I apply this knowledge in a way that respects the ideals of inclusion?

These are the questions I have held in my mind as I have read, planned, written and refined my data analysis. As the data analysis shows, at times some of these questions appear openly as part of my analysis.

## **Ethical Considerations**

I was ethically limited in terms of my recruitment methods due to the policy of the university at the centre of this study - I had to recruit the student participants through DLU which limited the number of students I was able to have as participants.

All participants were assured of confidentiality. This is of particular importance in contacting students who identify themselves as having a disability. Tensions inherent in confidentiality and disclosure of information meant that I made sure not to be privy to any student's identity prior to acknowledgment of willingness to participate in the

study. There were no connections between the students who I interviewed and the teachers. That is, to my knowledge, the teachers who I interviewed had not had any of the student participants as their students.

Students and staff participating in the research were provided with information about the purpose and nature of the research activities including the expected benefits and risks. All hard copies of transcripts and notes are now stored in a lockable cabinet in my office, while soft-copies and audio files are stored on my laptop which only I have access to via password protection. The name of the university at the centre of this study was disguised in the transcripts, as were the names of participants and anyone the interviewees mentioned who could have been subsequently identified. This was all explained to the participants and is written as part of the explanatory statement provided (Appendices B, F, & I).

An application for ethics approval for this study as a Masters by research which remains relevant for doctoral research since my upgrade in February 2011 was made to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and reviewed on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (see Appendix L). Further correspondence received in May 2010 indicated the need to revise eight separate points in order to receive approval which was granted on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2010. It is understood that these stipulations were in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The original ethics clearance was granted on the basis of an application which sought to include 3 universities in the study. However, because I wanted to go deeper into the level analysis and contextualise the study for one university, the scope and direction for data collection changed to interviews at one location. Although the original ethics application was also for the ELICOS context (English Language Intensive Courses for

Overseas Students), the students who came forward to interviews were not ELICOS students, and one turned out to be a native English speaker, so this was also revised in the research.

The aims of this research are perhaps problematic ethically and politically - it is envisioned that most institutions would vociferously proclaim that their policies of inclusion are aligned with those of the university and the Disability Discrimination Act, that discrimination on the grounds of disability does not happen, and that the highest quality of support is provided within the realms of the available resources. My experience, however, indicates that this is not so (hence the impetus for this research!) Minkler (2004) describes the situation thusly: "For the outside researcher, an ethical dilemma may, therefore, involve the tension between respecting community wishes and pushing for the higher-level social change" (Minkler, 2004, p. 693). In that sense, any possibly damaging findings required careful attention directed at how best to use the study findings in ways that unite and strengthen the university community (Minkler et al., 2002).

## **Preparation of data**

I transcribed around 200 minutes of the data from interviews myself. Transcribing the first interview took me around 10 hours which was clearly unsustainable in terms of my ability to spend so much time on each interview. Not only that but I started to suffer from repetitive strain injury from so much typing. For two other interviews I was able to use a foot pedal and transcription software which reduced the time taken for transcription by around 50%. The foot pedal allowed me to stop and start the audio recording without the need to use a mouse so frequently. For the remaining 200 minutes of interview data I was able to apply for research funding for the use of transcription service which greatly saved me both precious time and energy and afforded me some

time to take a break to recover from my repetitive strain injury. Because of my repetitive strain injury and the amount of time still required to be devoted to typing for my thesis, I utilised the resources of the DLU and undertook training for using voice assisted software in order to decrease the time I spent typing.

The policy analysis the equity and diversity policies of the university at the centre of this study were accessed via its website and analysed using the same VRM approach as the interview data.

## **Data analysis: Approaches and Presentation**

In qualitative analysis there are no set rules, procedures or processes which must be followed in terms of analysing data (Ritchie et al., 2003a). Researchers will often interpret methods of analysis in their own ways (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In this way:

not only is the researcher interested in the number of items or statements falling into categories as described by the participants but also concerned with attitudes and interpretations found within each category which foregrounds the theoretical framework of the study (Ritchie, et al., 2003a, p. 200).

These components are essential to this particular study and VRM captures these intricacies within its analysis framework, as underpinned and informed by Bourdieu's critical theories. This is important because as I discussed in the literature review, in past research conducted within a positivist paradigm, the voices of students with a disability have seldom been heard. VRM is both theoretically and fundamentally different from other qualitative data analysis approaches such as thematic framework analysis.

Because the interconnection of relationships and how these are situated within the social

discourse are key components of this research, the conceptual framework, and a Whole Schooling approach, VRM was chosen. Furthermore, although policy documents are not 'live' material they in fact 'speak' rather loudly.

Policy in this research was interrogated using VRM and interpreted in relation to what the research participants were saying. This juxtapositioning of policy documents with interview participants' experiences as well as what other universities are saying in their policy documents allows insight into whether the policies are comprehensive, and if not, what needs to be added. VRM illustrates how policy documents can also be interpreted and understood in different ways, their inherent complexities, and other underlying features which may not be apparent through a superficial assessment.

### **The typologies.**

I have adapted Denzin's five primary typologies of thick descriptions (Denzin, 2001; Ponterotto, 2006) as a way of organising and presenting the data for the process of analysis and presentation. The typologies acted as my initial framework in which to organise the interview data as well as a guide for presentation of the findings. The five primary typologies as stated by Denzin (2001) are: biographical, situational, relational, interactional and macrohistorical. In practice this means reading the transcript and looking for these elements within the data sets:

- Biographical: "individual or a relationship, typically in a situation" (p. 108);
- Situational: "a visual picture of the situation and locates the person in the situation" (p. 108);
- Relational: "brings a relationship alive" (p. 110);
- Interactional: "interactions between two or more persons" (p. 110);

- Macrohistorical: “attempts to bring an earlier historical moment or experience alive in vivid detail” (p. 110).

Because my participants were talking about their histories in regards to their biographies, situations, relationships and interactions, I found I wasn't able to identify much under 'macrohistorical'. Also, I found difficulty finding a typology for elements of culture which was so important to this research. For this reason I have adapted Denzin's typologies and added my own 'cultural' typology. I have defined this as:

- Cultural: a situation or reflection which occurs as a result of the participant locating themselves from, within and/or between known socio-cultural norms and perceptions of Australian culture.

While these typologies are useful guiding tools in organising the data, they also overlap. This is indicative of the need for flexibility in qualitative research analysis methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; McLeod, 2011).

## **Using VRM in Analysing Data**

In VRM the researcher is required to read the data a number of times (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993; Hopkins, 2011; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008) and the corresponding audio can be listened to simultaneously. The developers of VRM, Brown and Gilligan, (1992; 1993) suggest that listening to the audio helps the researcher to become attuned to the various tones and emphases of a person's voice. Furthermore, the different levels of analyses allow each participant's story to be heard as a whole, and as a result avoids the disembodiment of people from their identities. This in turn enables a co-creation of meaning (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) which is consistent with the tenets of interpretivism.

Brown and Gilligan's (1992; 1993) method seeks to address and answer the following points and questions:

1. The story and who is speaking
2. In what body?
3. Telling what story about relationships?
4. In which societal and cultural frameworks? (p. 21)

Listeners focus on the four points above through a number of different readings of the data:

Reading one: the plot and our responses to the narrative. Reading two: listening for the self, that is, the voice of "I". Reading three: reading for relationships, seeking to understand how people experience themselves in relation to others. Reading four: placing people within cultural contexts and social structures (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993; Hopkins, 2011; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008).

These four steps are now considered in more detail in regard to their application to both interview data analysis and analysis of university policy documentation.

### **Application of VRM to interview data.**

As informed and guided by Brown and Gilligan's (1992; 1993) approach, I contextualised the different stages of the reading and interrogation of the data by creating some of my own guiding questions regarding what to look for in the transcripts, which I discuss below. These questions helped me to uncover a number of complex matters which I think would not be uncovered through a superficial reading of the text.

For example the first reading relates to the person and the facets of their character as an individual. The second reading relates to how the person talks about themselves in relation to their language use. The third reading takes the participant's history and cultural contexts into account, whilst the final reading considers the notion of silence, repression or disempowerment in relation to wider social contexts.

***Reading one: the plot and our responses to the narrative.***

There are two parts involved as part of the first reading. Essentially the reader is looking to unravel the interview participant's story, and thinking about "the who, what, when, where, and why of the narrative" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27). In doing so the listener will ask themselves: What is the story the participants are telling? Who is speaking? Is the person really speaking as him/herself or speaking to please someone? In what body is the person speaking - a liberated body?

The second part of the first reading asks the researcher to situate themselves and be conscious of themselves as an interpreter of the voices. The researcher is also speaking and so becomes part of a storyteller. The researcher, therefore, needs to ask: What kind of story am I telling? As I am doing this, how am I telling the story? In what ways do I find myself close to or at a distance from this person? In what capacity am I speaking - as an arrogant researcher who knows it all, or as someone who is making reflective interpretations? As discussed in Chapter 4 this is why reflexivity is such an integral element in VRM. Reflexivity in this research is also further explored in Chapter 6.

***Reading two: listening for the self; the voice of "I".***

This reading is concerned with establishing how the participants speak about themselves. The second reading seeks to "identify where the respondent might be



emotionally or intellectually struggling to say something” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 128). For this stage of the reading, personal pronouns such as “I”, “we”, “you” are sought which enable insights into how a research participant perceives themselves. This is important to discover “how she speaks of herself before we speak of her” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27).

***Reading three: reading for relationships, seeking to understand how people experience themselves in relation to others.***

This reading seeks to discover and uncover the story that the participants tell. This point in the analysis asks: What are the connections in the story? How are these stories connected to the participants’ histories? For example in this context do students feel liberated in their new country? If so is it because in their own culture there were no opportunities? What were their expectations based on their previous experience? Is there a link with their experiences in their home countries?

In their dealings with lecturers, do students feel or sense themselves as being ‘below’ staff members? Are they viewed as equal players? What about the staff and managers? Is there an open dialogue occurring between the student and staff members in relation to making decisions regarding appropriate resource deployment and management? Are the students being dictated to and hence being silenced? Is there equal participation occurring in terms of their needs?

***Reading four: placing people within cultural contexts and social structures.***

In the context of this study, VRM is important for uncovering a number of complex facets of disability and culture as discussed in the previous chapter: the

psycho-emotional dimension of disability (Reeve, 2002), internalised oppression, (Watermeyer & Swartz, 2008), and aversive disablism (Deal, 2007).

The fourth reading places participants' "accounts and experiences within broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 132). This reading looks for situations where interviewees may indicate a sense of

self- silencing or capitulation to debilitating cultural norms and values – times when a person buries her feelings and thoughts and manifest confusion, uncertainty, and dissociation (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 132).

In Chapter 4 I used the example from Hopkins with "Ben's voice of resistance capitulating to the supposedly greater needs of the delivery van driver" (Hopkins, 2011, p. 10). The questions to ask here are: is there a sense that the interviewee can't speak out about something that has had an impact on their experience of equity as a student at university? Are they making excuses for someone else's poor judgement? If so, why?

### **Application of VRM to policy documents.**

#### ***Reading one: the plot and our responses to the narrative.***

Considering "the who, what, when, where, and why" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27) of policy documentation needs to locate who is speaking. This is done by looking closely at the documents and thinking about who the policy is made for and asking questions such as: who are the players? (that is, the creators of the policy); is the policy comprehensive? Does the policy speak for everyone?

***Reading two: listening for the self; the voice of “I”.***

This reading seeks to identify how policy writers position themselves. Do they create a persona for the university which is open, inviting and inclusive? Are there also people with a disability speaking? Is it apparent that stakeholders such as students and staff were consulted? Are the policies prescriptive? Do they speak in no uncertain terms? Do they aim for equity or can they be interpreted as a panacea and in doing so create instances of inequality?

***Reading three: reading for relationships, seeking to understand how people experience themselves in relation to others.***

For this reading the questions are those such as: is the policy document telling someone to do something, that is, does it ‘speak’ in imperatives? How has it been situated by its creators in terms of the student cohort? How does it speak of relationships with staff, governing bodies and other policies? Can students recognise themselves in relation to these policies? Can they identify policies which are relevant to them and their particular needs? Who is visible/invisible in the policy?

***Reading four: placing people within cultural contexts and social structures.***

This reading of the policy looks at language and asks: Has the policy document been created as something that is accessible to all and written in language which is understandable by all? Is it prohibitive? Does it use jargon which is difficult to understand? Is it available in accessible and alternative formats? Would students know how to find it?

## From Data Collection to Presentation – Steps Involved

Figure 5.3 shows my approach to the data analysis using thick description and VRM. The data collection and preparation stage involved collecting information via semi-structured interviews recorded onto an MP3 device, then transcription, approval from research participants, editing as advised by the participants and final participant approval. The next step was working with hardcopy versions of the transcripts and using different coloured highlighters to differentiate between the five typologies. From here the soft copy versions were used for transferring the relevant information into a matrix which was organised and guided by the typologies.

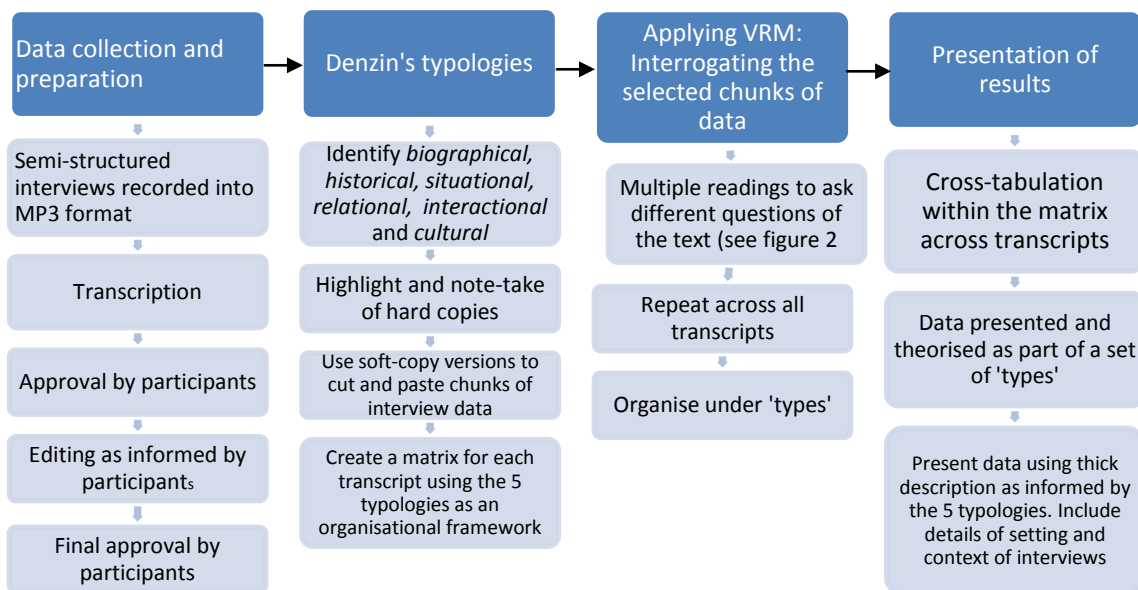


Figure 5.3. Analysis approaches using thick descriptions and VRM.

Approaching the data in this way aimed to maintain utterances in their entirety, thereby also maintaining the true voice of the participant. This allowed me to look for

commonalities across the different interview participants' transcripts. It was at this stage in the process that I applied VRM, the same method of which was applied across all transcripts. The end of this process culminated in organising the data from the VRM analysis under 'types' and theorising by drawing on relevant literature, thus allowing for a critical gaze (White & Drew, 2011). The final part of the process was referring back to the cross tabulation of the matrix and presenting the final data sets as thick descriptions, which included full reference to details of setting and context, and general overall impressions of the interviews as a way of providing a vicarious experience for the reader. Looking for types (instead of 'themes') is a way of seeking common threads in the data for the purposes of linear and logical discussion and theorisation, as opposed to a thematic analysis which might forsake the true meaning of an utterance for the sake of perceived consistency. Presenting the data in alignment with the original typologies as adapted from Denzin gives a sense of closure to the process as both starting and ending points. In this way the procedure takes on a form of expansion and contraction in moving from the wider typologies to the minutiae afforded by VRM and back to the bigger and richer picture created by presenting the data as thick description.

However, like all methods of data analysis, VRM was not without its disadvantages and limitations. The biggest drawback is the amount of time it takes for the multiple readings. It was also sometimes confusing keeping in mind what to be looking for with each reading. Similarly, using thick descriptions as a way of organising the data at times felt restrictive, particularly when I started using the five original typologies suggested by Denzin. It was also frustrating when 'macrohistorical' didn't 'fit.

I did find, however, that by using VRM, the multiple readings made me feel completely immersed in the data while the key questions helped me to concentrate on

the minutiae of emotions, relationships and stories running through the data. Also, as there are no suggested ways of how to actually present the data analysed using VRM, thick descriptions provided me with a frame for doing so and in a way that I felt would best maintain the utterances of the participants.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the pragmatics and logistics of in-depth analysis of large volumes of qualitative data using a VRM approach combined with thick description. The data analysis stage invariably immerses the researcher in both the processes of data collection and interpretation as part of the research process. Engaging in a process of rigorous reflexivity was central to the data collection and analysis. Therefore in this chapter I outlined the importance of reflexivity in its many forms as it applies to this research before I present my data.

Figure 5.4 below is a summary of the various readings of the data in the context of this study as informed by VRM. The next chapter presents the data using thick descriptions and the critical analysis using VRM.

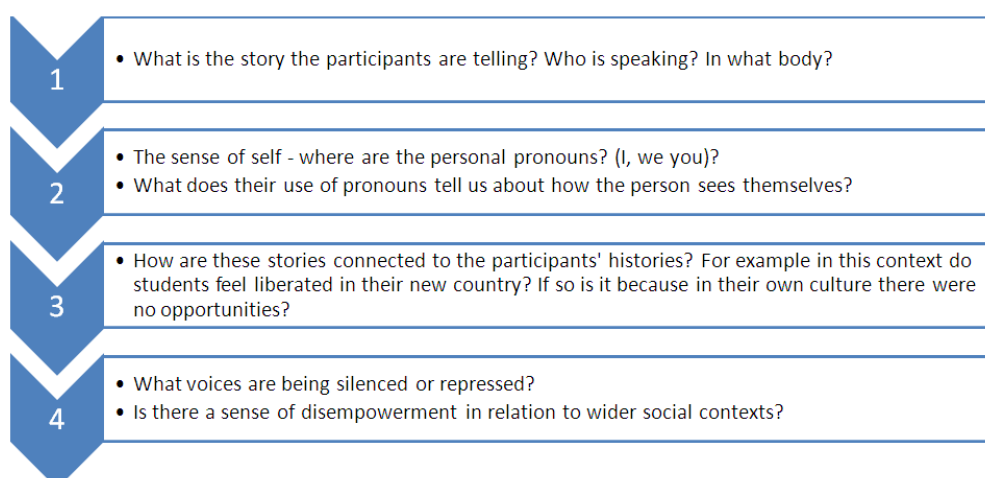


Figure 5.4. Summary of guiding questions informing VRM in this study.

## **Chapter 6 Presentation, analysis and discussion of data**

The previous chapter discussed how thick description and Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) are in alignment with the underlying epistemology of this research. This chapter is the result of the final two stages of the analysis approaches using thick descriptions and VRM which are illustrated in Figures 5.3 and 5.4 (Chapter 5), namely with the presentation of data as sets of 'types' using thick description and analysed through VRM. The theorisation is informed by Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field.

The data and reflexive notes from each of the interviews in this chapter are presented as single cases for the students James, Mary, Anna and Jane, and as a collective case for staff Jenny, Monica, Lauren and Terry. As discussed in the previous chapter, the aim of using thick descriptions and 'stories' is to make visible the voices, emotions, situations and experiences as they relate to the individual participants' everyday interactions (Denzin, 2005).

### **Data Presentation and Analysis Combining Thick Descriptions and Voice Relational Methodology**

This chapter presents the interview findings from each participant which are structured using thick description and the five typologies (Biographical, Situational, Relational, Interactional and Cultural) adapted from Denzin (2001). Data came from two sources: interviews with the participants and document analysis of policy statements. VRM and Bourdieu's conceptual lenses of capital, habitus and field are used to analyse the data as single cases for students and a collective case for the staff.

There are no set rules in terms of how qualitative research must be presented and analysed. In the writing-up of qualitative research:

most important to consider is selecting the most appropriate representational and presentational modes that will best describe and persuade for your readership the core context and analytic outcomes of the study (Saldana, 2011, p. 139).

This is consistent with a Bourdieuan methodology which asserts “methodological polytheism” (Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 438) that is, deploying whatever data production technique is best suited to the question rather than being bound to one approach over another (Wacquant, 1998). What mattered to Bourdieu was not what techniques and processes are used in research but a consideration of why they are used and what they will achieve (Mills & Gale, 2007).

As discussed in previous chapters the importance in this study remains with the representation of the voices of the participants, in alignment with the parameters of VRM and thick description. I wanted the deeper analysis to be based on the student experience (hence using individual case studies). Staff are generally afforded more capital in the field due to their position (Apple, 2004; Webb et al., 2002). Moreover, the 4 teaching staff who were interviewed and I all taught the same student, so it made sense to highlight their converging and diverging experiences in the relational field by juxtaposing their comments.

Overlapping concepts from the students and staff are discussed and theorised in relation to the research questions in the following chapter. The data from the participants is not presented chronologically but rather in the order which best contextualises it for the reader.



## **Insider/outsider in research – how this influenced data presentation and analysis.**

In relation to the students I was an outsider – I am not an international student, I am Australian, and although I had not used the services of the DLU for assistance at the time of the interviews, I did in fact require their services on account of developing repetitive strain injury from too much typing with my thesis! However in terms of the staff, we were colleagues and had the shared experience of teaching the same student with a disability at the university language centre in 2008/2009.

For the staff, my role as an insider was something that I was grappling with during most stages of the research – from approaching the staff participants to conducting the interviews and analysing the data. As the literature suggests, being an insider has its advantages but it is certainly complex and can create a number of challenges for the researcher (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Edwards, 2002; Gair, 2012; Hellawell, 2006). For example, while I most likely was able to access insights and ideas perhaps ‘off limits’ to an outsider through a commonality of experience (Gair, 2012), I was highly conscious of what I asked in the interviews (particularly in follow up questions) whether I was “allowed” to add what I thought about a situation or an experience (which was often shared) and how to present findings in a diplomatic way which also respected the privacy of the individuals. I soon realised there was no “fixed nor given” (Edwards, 2002, p. 77) way to conduct the research as an insider. Moreover, as Edwards (2002) suggests:

an organisation's culture always runs much deeper than its published aims and its members' behaviour. The characteristics that ‘decorate the surface of organisational life’ are clues to a ‘much deeper and all-pervasive system of meaning’ (Morgan, 1986, p. 133, cited in Edwards, 2002, p. 77).

Hence my role as an insider helped me gain insight into matters which are at the critical heart of this study as shaped by Bourdieu: organisational culture and relational fields, in order to uncover the “all-pervasive systems” as the above quote suggests. Yet the “burden” of being an insider (Edwards, 2002, p. 72) can be great – there are tensions caused by a difficulty in extrapolating one’s own experience from that of the participants which may also skew the way an insider then analyses the data (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The interview process itself may also change the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participant, resulting in participants developing “filters” caused by a shift in power dynamics as a result of the research (Edwards, 2002).

With the students, two things influenced the way I conducted the analysis and present the data: 1) my role as an outsider and 2) my aim to represent their voices in a holistic way. This means *my* voice for their stories acts only for further contextualisation of their comments as needed. In this way I aim to keep the stories as close to a ‘whole’ as I can. Structurally this means that after I have presented each student’s data set, what follows is the framing of the experience for that student case as underpinned by a Bourdieuan perspective. This structure continues for the other student participants so that the theorisation and my voice as a researcher happen separately. Because the analysis happens separately, some of the quotes are repeated from the data presentation section in the analysis section as a way of reminding the reader of what was said.

Further, in order to try and maintain the authentic voices in the student stories as much as possible, I did not correct any grammar in the transcripts. I also applied the conceptual tools differently for each of the participants. This means that the structure of the theorisation may differ between participants as one conceptual tool or typology may

have a different meaning or relevance depending on whose story is being told. Again this is important in trying to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach to the analysis.

The staff data are presented collectively under the guiding typologies. I have used subheadings within the typologies for staff to separate the ideas and to guide the reader because of working with a number of different voices. My voice plays a stronger role in the staff analysis. While I have been careful to present their experiences as separate to my own, I found it necessary to further contextualise some of their experiences within the relational fields and I simply cannot wholly separate myself. I have tried to do this as openly and reflexively as possible. Indeed:

In Bourdieu's (2000) view, nothing is more false than this universally accepted maxim that the researcher must put nothing of her/himself into her/his research. On the contrary, Bourdieu believes that a researcher should constantly refer to her/his experiences, although not in a guilty, unconscious or uncontrolled way (Mills & Gale, p. 2007, 443).

### **The participants.**

The student participants were James, a native English speaker from the U.S. who has attention deficit disorder; Mary from China is a student who has a vision impairment; Anna from Hong Kong who experiences depression and anxiety and Jane from Sri Lanka who has an arm injury sustained from a car accident in Australia.

One support staff member from the DLU (Terry, the manager) was interviewed. Four teaching staff members were interviewed: Jenny, Veronica, Lauren, Monica. All the names of both students and staff have been changed to maintain anonymity.

## **The logistics of the interviews.**

As discussed in Chapter 5, the process of recruitment for students was through emails via the DLU. Jane was the first student who made contact with me regarding being interested in participating in the interview. I was very excited by the fact that anyone had responded at all to the emails so I felt really positive after her initial email. In total I had five students contact me to say they were interested, with four resultant interviews.

I found it surprisingly difficult to try and find the ‘perfect’ location for my interviews. I was worried about trying to maintain anonymity but also wanting to make sure that we would both be comfortable. I was a little apprehensive when waiting for the students before their interviews as I hadn’t met any of them before. Would I recognise them? How would they recognise me? I did also wonder to what extent their disability would be visible as all I had asked the students before we met was whether the location for the interview required anything specific in order to be accessible for them.

The individual cases for the students with theorisation now follow presented as thick descriptions organised under the headings Biographical, Relational, Interactional, Situational and Cultural. The order of these headings differs depending on the participant. I have used italics to indicate text taken directly from the interview transcripts.

### ***James’s story.***

I was somewhat surprised when James contacted me and expressed his interest in being a participant as he is from the U.S. and I had assumed that anyone contacting me would speak English as their second language. This immediately challenged my notions regarding ‘international students’ as I had anticipated that all of the participants

would be from non-English speaking countries. On reflection I think this assumption was based mainly on my habitus of working within the discourse of non-English speaking international students in the relational field of my teaching work.

James was extremely keen to have an interview and told me via email that he was especially interested in talking about his experiences and those of other students at one of the Asian offshore campuses of the university. We exchanged a few emails regarding setting up a time and place for a meeting. However, catching up with James turned out to be logistically difficult. He had to cancel the first meeting due to illness and he forgot the second meeting due to being completely snowed under with his studies. Although this was a little inconvenient for both of us I was still buoyed by James's keenness to participate. James ended up suggesting the place to have the interview which turned out to be the nicest location of all my interviews – the Law campus of the university in the city.

Apart from mentioning his brothers a couple of times in the interview, James didn't talk very much about family and friends or close relationships. For that reason the 'relational' typology has been omitted from his data set.

#### *Biographical.*

James had an associate degree in Network Engineering, a bachelor's degree in sociology, certificates in Network Engineering and a Diploma in Education from the U.S. At the time of the interview he was studying for his Juris Doctor at the university. He completed part of his study at one of the offshore campuses of the university which was part of the reason he was interested in participating in my study - to advocate for the students he met there. This was part of his original email to me where he expressed his interest in being a participant:

*It's funny because I was inquiring into doing something very similar to you[r study]. Unfortunately it's somewhat unrelated to my studies. Nevertheless, I would like to help out in any way I can. It's the least I can do considering all the assistance I have received from this university.*

*I befriended a student on the Asian campus who has ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], and even though she had received a diagnosis by a doctor, whom she was referred to by the offshore university in Asia, she was not put into contact with a disability liaison officer. The reason was due to the simple fact that no such office or position exists on that campus. I assume there are many students facing similar challenges, and unfortunately are unaware of what types of assistance are available to them. Also there seems to be a reluctance on the part of the students in that country to even seek assistance.*

*In my personal experiences, I have found this university to be extremely professional and helpful in so many ways. I would like to make sure all students have similar access as we do in Australia.*

James told me at the start of the interview that he has ADD. He was positive about the apparent advantages that he perceives this affords him:

*I was diagnosed with ADD but it's never been really a crux for me. I always felt that it allowed me to take in a lot more information more rapidly than the average person which I think is true. My brother is a lawyer. He was diagnosed too. My other brother who doesn't have it, he would complain. I would get the same scores as him and I would only study for half an hour or an hour. I'd only read it once and he'd read it three or four times to get the same grade. We did the exact same computer degree.*

The only way that James perceived that his ADD had a negative effect on him was in terms of it making him *a little bit more disorganised*.

Prior to coming to Australia James was teaching in Thailand and met someone there who had completed their law degree at the Australian university at the centre of this study and had had *a really good experience* so that started him thinking about coming to Australia to do his Juris Doctor study.

*I thought that [further study] would be advantageous to expand my horizons education-wise and whatnot. I think I made the right choice.*

*I know I wanted to do my law degree internationally instead of the United States. I knew that I was going to face some difficulties in respect of maybe taking the bar exam. So I checked it out – my first choice was not Australia, it was actually the U.K. but they only had LLBs and LLMs which is the Bachelors in Law – so it was a completely different system to what you have in the United States or here at this university. So I checked out Australia.*

His goal once his postgraduate study was completed was to work internationally for a company such as Cisco or a video games company.

*Cultural.*

James spoke about the culture in Australia as being different to the United States in a number of ways. The main difference was *I think you guys are more liberalised*.

*The culture is more relaxed here but when it comes to the rules, they're very anal about rules in this country. In the United States, it's more competitive and*

*it's more strict culturally. We are a police state...Americans are far less sympathetic than Australians of course.*

*The culture [in the U.S.] is very, very competitive. I'm not talking just because of sports. I'm talking about everything...It's very normal for children to constantly try to outdo each other, brothers and sisters.*

James spoke openly not only about his impressions of the differences in the culture between the United States and Australia but also within the schooling systems. For James there was a connection between this *more liberalised* society in Australia and how this resulted in the culture created in institutions.

*I think Australians are more easy-going which I love. And I think the universities are more accommodating and more helpful to their students.*

James felt that compared to Australia the United States had more of a competitive educational environment:

*our teachers, our professors, our faculty, they're not as accommodating, it's like they want to prepare you for real life...It's full on. And it's a very dog eat dog world. It's very competitive. It's a lot more competitive than Australia.*

James felt that this competitiveness had a direct impact on how people with a disability are perceived in the United States.

*Americans are far less sympathetic than Australians of course. If somebody's got a legitimate disability like, hey, don't help them out. I mean, it's not like they don't want to help them out – it's not like the school doesn't have mechanisms in place. They have disability liaison units in all the universities I'm sure, in*



*America. They're accommodating or whatever, but I'm talking about just if somebody says, I have a problem, or whatever, outside the university, it's far less accommodating than Australia, because we're not a liberal country.*

It was clear from his initial email that James had an interest in the topic of my research which stemmed no doubt from his own experiences. The fact that James had also studied at an offshore partner institution of his Australian university meant that he also had insight into how students with a disability received support there, which he was far less positive about:

*Here you have the appeals officers. You have the disability liaison unit. You've got regular counsellors. You have your doctor. You have all these mechanisms put in place. And that's the thing, a lot of students, and this is probably the most important thing of anything I could say during this interview, is that these students right here told me that all the other students [overseas] are afraid to really speak out because they're afraid of reprisal. But I told them in Australia it's not like that. But they are afraid. They probably don't have a lot of the services available there [offshore] that they have here. So that's number one. It's kind of ridiculous... Unfortunately because of cultural reason or because just simply, they don't have the programs in place, students are either hesitant to seek assistance or they just aren't getting the assistance there.*

James wasn't affected personally by this apparent lack of support systems offshore, but he obviously had a keen awareness of what his classmates were going through.

*You don't complain about things. And then when they're in the faculty and they're legitimate – they feel like, if I make a complaint then it's going to come*

*back and I'm going to have reprisal against me. They've expressed this. From my experience, only being there [on the offshore campus in Asia for] five weeks, they have not nearly the level of assistance as – or even protection or whatever, that we experience here in Australia.*

*Situational.*

James had only once before requested special consideration from his university in the United States as part of his undergraduate degree. It also seemed that ADD made James's life unpredictable in different situations:

*I didn't go and tell the university that I had ADD or whatever like when I first applied here because to be honest I wasn't even sure how it was going to affect me in the program. And it really – it's nobody's business anyways.*

He felt he was managing well until second semester when he *encountered some problems*. These problems stemmed from a rise in anxiety brought on by pressure to succeed in his core subjects, and one final exam.

*I had the information in my head but when I put it under that pressure [of the exam], I just felt that it was just too much. I took three exams but two of them really weren't that big a deal. I did fine but when I got into the real core subjects it was different.*

The pressure and his reaction to it was something that perhaps caught him by surprise:

*I did really good in two [exams] but the other one, I was just so stressed out...I found it was very difficult for me. I did really.*

James attributed his feelings of stress prior to the third exam to a few different factors – difficulty in the content and structure of the exam,

*They're not simplistic questions [in the exam]. And every single part of a sentence or every sentence could bring – could very much have an effect upon the way you're going to answer it. And to write 10-14 pages or something, and correlate all this stuff and do it in two hours...*

anxiety over accuracy,

*because of it [ADD] I'm extremely accurate because I always double check and triple check. When you're in an exam, you can't be doing that. I have this inclination to keep double, triple, quadruple, like checking it, making sure it's right*

and time constraints,

*when it comes to taking law exams, it's very difficult because I print.*

I asked James about whether typing in an exam would be a better option if he felt stymied by his hand-writing.

*When I originally came here, I was thinking it was just like my brother's law school where you just typed because he just typed. If it was typing, I wouldn't need any extra [time]. I can type probably more than – faster than almost any student in here because that's what I do.*

But even though this may have been an option for James he was hesitant to pursue typing in the exam:

*It might have been an option. It might have been. But I didn't feel comfortable if they're [the other students] not typing, why should I be typing? Then also I think if a professor is reading a paper that's been typed, he might be thinking to himself, 'well, you were able to cover more information than the other people because you were typing' or whatever. I just felt like I wanted it to be equal. I want to be on the same standards as everybody else.*

James obviously felt a huge amount of stress brought on by this final exam. It seemed he was both surprised and embarrassed by how he was affected by it, saying *I didn't even start seeking assistance until I was referred by a faculty member. So as far as this university concerned, I am very happy with it.*

James continued to emphasise his feelings of stress as he talked about the situation, almost as a way of justifying why he asked for assistance.

*Yeah, you're writing quickly. It's really bad. Then it's difficult if you don't have a little bit extra. That in itself I think is a legitimate reason for asking for a little bit of extra time.*

It seemed that James was not used to asking for assistance and perhaps was grappling with feelings of guilt as a result:

*I didn't try to ask for anything unreasonable. Honestly, I didn't know how it was going to affect me because I'd never, other than statistics, I'd never needed the assistance.*

*I can definitely say I don't feel guilty for asking for it [extra time in the exam] because I definitely needed it. That was very stressful. I am just very, very, very*

*glad and very lucky. I consider myself extremely lucky that I came to this university and that I had such a helpful faculty and administration because let's be honest, in a lot of universities, I probably wouldn't have received the same level of assistance.*

*Interactional.*

At the time of this interview, James's experience with high anxiety and before the final exam was the only time he had called upon the DLU for support. He talked about his lecturer for that subject as being a key person who helped him get through it and who helped him become aware of the services offered by the DLU.

*What I thought was cool was my professor. I just didn't go to the exam. I was too stressed out. I didn't know what resources were available to me or anything...I emailed my professor and said I can't go to the exam. I'm too stressed out. She had had me previously and she knew I had written her a really good paper.*

James was fortunate in that this lecturer was flexible and understanding and advised James of what he needed to do.

*She said, 'go to your doctor and just and ask him' because she says 'it's obvious that's what happened' [that you are too stressed]. I guess she's encountered [situations like this before] so she probably diagnosed me but she said, 'go to your doctor and see your doctor'.*

James went through the necessary processes as his lecturer had advised.

*I went to the doctor. The doctor told me to go to the disability liaison unit. I went there. They told me, 'okay, so you had this experience'. They asked me to get some information from my previous school... I could easily verify this [ADD] from the fact that when I was a little child they put me on Ritalin when I was a little kid but I got off of it, thank god.*

It is clear from this experience that James's lecturer was instrumental in him getting the support he needed to get special consideration for the exam.

As part of the process James was asked in terms of what accommodations he felt he needed:

*They [the DLU] said, 'how much time do you think you need, you need 50% more time?' I was like 'whoa – 50% more time, that's pretty extreme. No, I don't need 50%.' I don't want my professor to be like, 'oh you got 50%'. I said 'no, 30% I think is enough'.*

James was very surprised that the DLU were willing to ask him how much time he felt he needed rather than him being told how much he could have. As James said in his initial email to me, part of the reason he wanted to participate in the study was to talk about how positive he felt his experiences at the university had been, which he reiterated numerous times throughout the interview.

*I have requested special consideration a few times after [the experience of the exam] and they were very helpful...The university has been really – I don't really think I have any right to complain about anything. They've been wonderful to me.*

*I want to drive this home. This university has been extremely accommodating to me, more than I would have expected...I think this university cares about their students.*

### ***Framing James's story through Bourdieuan lenses.***

Given the types of responses James was providing, I have omitted the 'relational' typology from his data set.

#### *Habitus and Symbolic capital.*

Bourdieu suggests that labels which imply deficit such as 'disability' are socially constructed (Mahar & Wilkes, 2004; Webb et al., 2002). These socio-cultural deficit views can perpetuate negative feelings of self in relation to others. When this happens people labelled in deficit can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This attitudinal master disposition (habitus) determines how we exist in the field and the relationships we have. James's comments about how he perceives having ADD as something positive demonstrates how in a Bourdieuan sense, disability is socially constructed – others may perceive having ADD as a 'crux' but for James it has never been that way.

What is interesting in this study is how agents are able to push against the dominant doxa or the ways in which society constructs identity. I referred in the literature review to critiques of Bourdieu's habitus by Couldry (2005) and Sayer (2010). Couldry argues that Bourdieu's habitus limits an agents' "possibilities for action, by constraining the resources he or she has to act in the situations he or she encounters" (Couldry, 2005, p. 357). However, in the context of this study Bourdieu's theories can be re-appropriated towards the potential for people to push against the dominant doxa and construct themselves as powerful and empowered. As we see with James, he affords himself agency (autonomy) and symbolic capital *because* of his disability. He even mentions the fact that his brother *who doesn't have it [ADD] is jealous* because of the achievements it has brought the others in his family. This new conceptualisation of Bourdieu's habitus hence can take into account "the way in which the constraining and enabling effects of social contexts on individuals are mediated by their own



deliberations” (Sayer, 2010, p. 89), something which Sayer argued that Bourdieu’s construction of the habitus “largely ignored” (p. 89). Mills (2012) also argues that habitus is not static, and is the argument used in the analysis of this data.

As the analysis for the other students Mary and Anna also shows, creating a habitus which contradicts the doxa was a key part of helping me to understand the data. Looking at the experiences of these students serves to complement and then extend Bourdieu’s habitus by seeking to acknowledge

individual reflexivity and the capacity to behave in ways that are not necessarily accommodative to the dominant social relations or discourses within which they are located (Bennett, 2010, p. 101).

James and I spoke on the phone after the interview where we went through the transcript together to make sure he was ok about what he was recorded as saying. (This is a process I had asked all the participants to do via track changes in a document but James asked me if we could do it over the phone). During this phone conversation he reiterated the positive aspects of having ADD. As he saw it, *everyone else* was at a *disadvantage* from a study perspective compared to him – he had seen his family and classmates struggle to learn and remember information which he found easy to understand and recall. He only felt it was unfortunate that in the case of exams the extreme feelings of pressure made it difficult for him to function.

James’s positioning as an agent who was proud of his strengths as a result of ADD is arguably what made him hesitant to ask for assistance prior to the law exam (*it’s nobody’s business anyways*). His language and expressions in talking about getting assistance seem to indicate his habitus in the new relational field of dealing with

lecturers and staff in a new culture and trying to somehow justify it and absolve himself of any associated guilt.

James was also very keen to express how he would like to see the systems of the university change to be more accommodating of the needs of students such as himself who experience anxiety before exams which can be so bad it becomes debilitating.

Again in our telephone conversation he told me:

*If I had any complaint at all it would be that there is more of a focus on exams rather than the course itself and the way that the students use what they learn.*

*The time constraints are too strict for the exams and don't allow a true indication of knowledge of a subject.*

We agreed that the above adjustments would help all students, which would include those who may experience extreme anxiety caused by exams and may not know/want to know that they are able to tap into assistance. I agreed with this wholeheartedly; as an undergraduate I was one of these students. Until I started doing this research I was not aware that acute anxiety caused by exams was something that could warrant special consideration. I have wondered since doing this interview with James how this option may have made a difference to my own undergraduate degree.

*Symbolic Capital and Field.*

James's perceptions of the cultural differences between Australia and the United States of America are interesting in that he talks about a very competitive environment in his home country. Bourdieu likens this competition between agents in the field as a struggle for various forms of capital within the field (Couldry, 2005). In a competitive field, the distinction between the acquisition of capital in the field results in the 'haves'

and the 'have-nots' (Webb et al., 2002). In the context of education, the stakes are clearly high – the 'have-nots' potentially becoming social outcasts and lacking enough capital to get a job and earn money. Somewhat ironically, perhaps this competitive environment made James hesitant to request special consideration in his own country (apart from in one exam). He feared that getting extra help in an exam would make the playing field uneven and that he might have essentially felt he was 'cheating against the rules'. James's experiences in the new relational field in Australia meant that he constructed the culture as more accepting, open, and willing to accommodate students. This exemplifies how the Bourdieuan field is something which is fluid, flux and dynamic (Webb et al., 2002). I did wonder, however, if James would have had such a positive experience if his lecturer had not been aware of the systems and/or flexible and accommodating with his needs.

James's accumulation of cultural capital and his confidence through symbolic capital also mean that he had an awareness of the field on the offshore campus in Asia. This is reflected in his concern in wanting to *make sure all students have similar access as we do in Australia* as he wrote in his first email to me. This suggests he is keen to use his cultural and symbolic capital to help others.

The interactions James had were pivotal not only in shaping the way he conceptualised the learning experience in Australia, but also the situation of his final exam and consequently his academic achievement. James was fortunate that he had a lecturer who was both cognisant of the systems in place as well as having an understanding of what James needed. This is of particular interest in light of the negative experiences students can have with lecturers' lack of awareness over support systems (Donato, 2008).

### *Mary's story.*

Before I even met Mary I got the feeling that she would be a positive and upbeat person. The emails we exchanged to organise a time and place to meet for the interview were full of animated smiley faces and exclamation marks.

Mary was based at a different campus of the same university from the other interviewees so I began to investigate the different options of where to conduct the interview. Initially I thought the private study rooms in the library would be suitable. Further investigation of these rooms, however, revealed the paper thin walls and three quarters high ceilings - not very appropriate for maintaining anonymity. Fortunately the group study rooms were a better option.

We arranged to meet at a bus stop near the library. Mary turned out to be tiny; she probably only reached my shoulders in height, and I'm only around 5'5". She was made to look even smaller by the enormous back pack she was carrying which looked heavily loaded with books. She greeted me with a smile and we chatted as we walked up to the library together. Her voice matched her size. She chattered in such a friendly way it put a smile on my face even when I have listened to recordings again since the interview. I was only aware of the fact that she wore what looked like thick glasses, but it wasn't until she looked at the interview questions that I realised that her vision was limited as she had to hold the paper very close to her face to read.

Mary lived up to the bubbly personality which came through in her emails. She talked extremely quickly and in looking at her transcript after the interview it seemed to me that she was adept at packing a lot of detail into her utterances. She was the youngest interviewee of the group, and she was also studying as a pathway student so was not going to be studying at degree level until the following year. She struck me as

being the most driven of the students I interviewed – the data shows that she is highly independent and has achieved a great deal despite not having been given many opportunities for support in her home country.

*Biographical.*

Mary attended university for a year and a half before coming to Australia from China. On coming to Australia she initially studied at an English Language Preparation course at the university at the centre of this study, and at the time of this interview she was studying Accounting, Macro Economics, Management and Marketing at Diploma level which was part of her pathway into a Bachelor of Accounting. She came to Australia with some knowledge of these subjects already from studying in China but remarked that she felt a big difference in the content between what she had studied in China compared to Australia.

Mary and her family were keen for her to travel abroad for a number of different reasons.

*I want to try something new because I feel in China I don't want to say it's very bad or something. I feel I can't fulfil my knowledge. We just should learn something. In China the education system is like we have some compulsory course to do.*

Having an aunt living in Germany prompted her to consider going there, but she was anxious about having to learn the language. According to Mary, Melbourne has a good reputation in China *for living* and she has cousins in Melbourne who encouraged her to come here to study so her decision was made.

Mary talked about herself as being someone who is very adaptable; she mentioned this both in terms of adapting to life in Australia, as well as adapting to her *eye problems*.

*When I was very young, yes, [it was hard] but it's been 20 years. I just adapted and it makes me feel very happy every day. I can talk to everyone about my eye problems now. I don't feel very confused or very stressed about my eye problems. When I tell you, yes, it's the truth. I can't fix it and my father always told me that if you can't control it, just let it go. It happened so that's a fact. I can't change it so it just doesn't matter.*

Mary expanded on the difficulties she faced when she was young in relation to her education.

*I just try to do something I can do so when I was young, when I tell people I can't study, maybe at junior school when I told people I had the problem [with my eyes], I feel very bad.*

However in Mary's case it seems that what could have been a potentially nightmarish existence at school was somewhat ameliorated by the encouragement of her father.

*When I graduated from middle school I think a lot about my life at that time and my father asked me if I want to go to a normal life or just disability life. I can apply for disability in China, but it's different situation. You apply for disability, you can have some support, but they will think you're not a good person, I mean, physical, physical good person.*

*If I go slow I just can learn by myself and my father said your brain don't have problems so you're a very brilliant girl and just have some problems with your eyes, that's my problem.*

Mary continued to talk about *my problem*, but she talked about her situation in a positive way in relation to having the support of friends and family.

*I have a lot of friends and they know my problem, they can help me, I don't feel very bad this time. Also in China I can talk to my friends.*

While Mary was small in stature, she certainly had a big voice in standing up for herself. She told me a story about a discrepancy in her grades from the previous semester. She received a fail grade for one of her subjects, which she explained was not possible because of her High Distinction (80% and above) and Distinction (70% and above) from both assignments in the subject. To get over this hurdle, Mary navigated her way through university administration and stood up for herself by getting in contact with administration and her lecturer. She also managed to get herself a part-time job and said that the work as a waitress in a restaurant (for which she receives less than minimum wage) provided her with good experience and another way to *keep my life busy*.

#### *Cultural.*

Mary had a lot of different perspectives about the differences of learning in Australia compared to in her own country.

*First English is our second language and we should learn it and we should learn the subject and so the book here is very, very heavy. In China our book is not that heavy, but we have a lot of other things to do and here we should learn a*

*subject by ourself, reading or do some assignment only by ourself, research something and we should read a lot and if we have some problem, we just need to email the teacher, but in China it's different.*

Mary described her university classes in China regarding the teaching approaches and relationships with lecturers.

*We just have class, maybe some classes 100 people, but some classes very few people, like 30 or 20 people, just like tutorial, but not really a tutorial, they just teach. We don't need to do extra work. Maybe the teacher tells you to do this question 5, 6, 7 for the assignment and you just do those things and if you can do more, you will get good marks...but here we learn the subject by ourself more.*

Mary seemed to suggest a more open relationship between lecturers and students exists here in Australia.

*Maybe we have one small question we ask the teacher and when we study, we have another small question and we ask again the teacher - a lot of students will ask questions. That's what I feel.*

It seemed quite remarkable to me that Mary had managed to complete both her schooling and 18 months of university level education in China with little or no help or support from teachers, or administration.

*We don't have something like DLU or a group to support your studying [in China]. I just can tell the teacher [about my needs] and the teacher maybe...actually they do nothing.*



In order to learn and survive at her school in China Mary had to become resourceful and adaptable:

*I just sit very close to the blackboard and copy it... If I want to listen to the course, I just sit in front of anyone else and I copy some notes from other people.*

Mary felt that she needed to hide her disability because of possible ramifications in the wider community in China.

*When I was in China, if you have some problem, maybe I'm shorter than other people and I have eye problem, so they will look down at you and if I will go to find a job, it's very difficult. They don't think you can do it.*

With attitudes such as these to contend with it is perhaps no wonder that Mary felt like she had to hide her disability.

*They [people in China] think you have disability so you're actually not a normal person. When I was young I had these thoughts, but when I'm growing up I think they have the same rights, I think. They need to study. Maybe they will do things better than the normal person and maybe I can't see it clearly, but my ears is very good. I can hear a lot of things.*

It is likely that Mary counted on having to hide her disability at her university in Australia, and in many respects she was coming out into the unknown, even more so than most international students. Mary was unaware of the support systems that existed at the university in Australia before she came.

*Actually, before I came to Australia I don't know there is a kind of department or a group like DLU. When I came here I just know this... Here [Australia] is better [than China].*

In China having a vision impairment meant that Mary felt she was unable to disclose her needs because of the high level of academic and professional competition that is part of life in China. She told me about how as part of the process of applying for university in China students need to have a medical examination, and that prospective students can often be denied entry to university on the basis of 'unfavourable' results. She just happened to be lucky:

*When I came there [to the medical] I just said 'I can't see clearly, if you can just make me pass' and at that time they just don't want to make some problems, [so they said] 'yes, you can pass' ...maybe I can just see 5.1 maybe and so it's borderline, it's 5.4, they just make it [up to be] 5.4.*

She mentioned a few times the fact that,

*in China I don't want other people to know my eye problem, but it's difficult. Furthermore, when I apply for a job I can't tell [about my vision] because of potential discrimination...Traditional Chinese companies, they just feel something like you have eye problem, you can't do this and that affects my major, too. This is why I choose Accounting, I'm not very interested in this subject, but I can't do other subjects. International company I think is better.*

I was interested to know what Mary's parents felt about her being here in Australia, given her difficult educational experiences in China. She told me that her parents *think it's better here because there is a good living environment for me.* In the

first instance this feeling was related to their concerns about Mary's safety than necessarily the level of support she was getting.

*Most important here, I want to mention this, your people [Australians] always follow the rules, the traffic rules is better. In China it's not like that. It's very dangerous when even you walk along the street because there's a lot of bicycles and they always don't follow the rules.*

This comment particularly struck me. I lived in China for a year and remember the chaotic roads, which I found quite scary at times, and I couldn't imagine not being able to see cars ducking and weaving dangerously between each other with little concern for pedestrians, or rogue bicycles riding up behind you on the footpath. However the buses are apparently less predictable in Australia than in China:

*When I see the sign at the bus stop is different before I check it online so sometimes it's different. Your bus not always stops every stop. In China it's different. They stop every stop because they always have passengers.*

*Relational.*

Despite having family in Melbourne, at the time of this interview Mary was living with a family in accommodation she found on the internet.

*I find a very good home. I live in [an Eastern suburb of Melbourne] and she [the host mother] is very kind to me and just me living in her house. She is working at this university, and she can help me a lot and she just let me go into her family and I know a lot of her family members and we are very good friends.*

For Mary living with a host family was important not only from the perspective of feeling at home, but also to feel that she was improving her English.

*We can talk and I think my English improved very, very quickly. I was here for about eight months. At first my English is not like this. I just talk very, very slow and I [only] used some words.*

The help from this host family was also vital for her in working through a difficult situation with administration when she received a final failure grade for one of her subjects.

*The people I'm living with, the family, she is very good. She called someone in the university to help and she asked me to send an email to the administration of that subject and actually it's very lucky because I know him and he knows me and I was in his lecture and tutorial and he knows me, I did a good job, because I'm the only one got HD [High Distinction] in his subject.*

Mary spoke about how happy her parents were for her getting such good support at university in Australia. As discussed in the literature review, much of this had to do with the tutors in being willing to help.

*I think I want to talk to one of my good tutors. He's very kind. Last trimester I asked him a lot of questions. When we did assignments, not only me, I just feel confused so I just I came to his office maybe four or five times a week to ask something about assignments and he's very kind and he just tells me and he is very humorous and he helps me to do the things and he told me 'maybe this is wrong and you should do this', those kind of things.*

Mary also spoke positively about help from the learning adviser in organising the things she needed to be able to study.

*The learning adviser as I mentioned before, K, she is very good. She helps me a lot for the bigger printing and to apply for DLU and some other things. I ask her about my research in marketing and because she's the tutor in marketing and a lot of other things about study, so that's good.*

*Interactional.*

Mary's comments were mainly positive about her interactions with tutors and other staff at the university.

*I'm the person always having some problems and I always ask questions so a lot of teachers, not only teachers, tutors or learning advisers or some other students, they all know me because I'm very special and very small so they think why is she in college or uni? From my eye problems I need to talk to the teacher about my problems. All of my tutors know my problems, they know me and I always ask some questions about the research and the DLU told me I can get some help, but I didn't do it last trimester because I applied for the DLU after the break nearly finished, two weeks before I finished the trimester, maybe one month before I finished it so I've nearly finished my research.*

Mary consulted a learning adviser who assisted her in printing out slides in bigger font which she found very helpful.

*I'm very familiar with the reception at level 5 and the learning adviser because I need a lot of support so I did a lot and maybe other students not very familiar with the things because they don't need this.*

Enlisting the help of her learning adviser to the DLU also meant that Mary was able to organise alternative arrangements for her exam.

*Last trimester we have three hours exam in management and three hour exam in marketing... We have lots of things to write, answers to questions. I have three hours so I write just before as the teacher says 'start' and I have a special place. Other students, they come to the racecourse to do the exam, but I just go to a place... just me is a very quiet place and when the teacher says 'start', I just write, three hours I didn't stop. I didn't stop and for another two subjects, maybe I don't need so much time, but I still get that time. It's better.*

*Situational.*

All of this is not to say that Mary didn't have any negative experiences.

There was a palpable sense of frustration when Mary talked about some lecturers with whom she had some difficulties working. She mentioned a lecturer who didn't know her very well and how this impacted on her study in that class.

*They don't know me, they don't know what the problem actually is so I just told them my eyes are not good or something, but they can't understand how bad it is.*

The frustration of working with certain lecturers seemed to be compounded by further frustration in not being able to express the difficulty she experienced in completing some tasks in class.

*Maybe the teacher uses Excel, but other people can see it. I actually can't see it, but how can I say just make it bigger? If they make it bigger, I can't see it too,*

*so I just need to use some extra time to ask the teacher if I can't understand something. Sometimes I feel the lecturer is not very good for me.*

*I can't explain very clearly how bad it [my vision] is. I just can tell them it's bad, I can't say it so I need to ask or something.*

To communicate these kinds of feelings in one's own language would be hard enough, let alone in another language where perhaps you don't feel you can express yourself in the same way.

No doubt spending so many years trying to hide her disability also had an impact on how confident Mary felt in being able to communicate with some of her lecturers, and not surprisingly she was conscious of others in the class:

*I just don't know how to tell him, how can he help me if he do something, maybe he write something, but in front of the class I don't want to, because it's not only me sitting here to do the study, other people, too, and actually I'd like the teacher to do something on the whiteboard.*

Mary also felt stressed by having to do tasks that she felt were difficult and placed time pressures on her because of the time it takes her to read and the amount of reading involved in the subject.

*Because I read a little slow and I write a little slow so maybe...I need more time to study. During the trimester the research is more difficult for me, I think.*

She also felt that the lecturers didn't understand what difficulties she faced in completing assignments with the amount of required reading.

*When I was studying sometimes I feel a little stressed because I need to read more, but reading is one of the problems for my eyes, so I think one is the reading problem and the other is the essay or assignments we get. It's more difficult. I should type, but actually I don't like it because there's so many things to read the computer.*

Since reading the transcripts I think I would have liked to ask Mary whether she had used any assistive software. I am familiar with software such as Dragon (a dictation software which converts speech to text) and JAWS (a screen reader which 'reads' text on the screen aloud). As the above quote shows, using computers is problematic for Mary in typing and reading the screen. In class she also needed to be able to read text on a computer monitor as well as any projected images lecturers might use. She didn't mention using either JAWS or Dragon, however, and talked about the stress she experienced from using computers in class and in her own study.

*I just feel a little stressed because we should use computer a lot this trimester because we have business statistics subjects, one hour per week for computing and actually if the teacher do something on the computer and they show it on the wall, I really can't see it, I can't see it.*

I asked her whether the lecturer was aware of how this caused her stress.

*I talked to the tutor after the class and I said my eyes have some problems and I really can't see. He just told me I can ask him....I told him, but he just said you can ask me any time, but that can't help me when I was in the class. I can't see it so I just waste some time.*



As has been discussed, inclusion and being an inclusive practitioner is extremely complex. For Mary, however, something as seemingly benign as handwriting had a huge impact on her learning.

*The Business Law tutor for me, his writing...he uses his left hand...I told him, [how difficult his writing is to read] but I don't think he realises how difficult it is...he knows [about my vision]. He knows and he said 'you can move your table to anywhere'.*

It seems in this case the lecturer either had not fully understood or even tried to understand and accommodate what Mary was asking. Distance from the board was clearly not the issue - it was the quality of his handwriting which was the issue for Mary. No doubt sitting closer would not have helped this for Mary. Seemingly Mary's friends also found this lecturer's handwriting difficult to read. Mary, however, was afraid of the impact that speaking out might have had.

*Business Law is a much more difficult subject in this trimester so I just try to do it and I want to pass it.*

It may sound clichéd but interviewing Mary really helped me think about the everyday things that I take for granted such as the ability to read signs or finding a book in the library,

*Yes, I want to mention the library because when I want to find a book, I just will not know maybe the number of the book. I just look at the shelf, where is it? I'm shorter than anyone and I can't read it very clearly so it's high, I can't see it and if it's lower I can see it, but if it's higher, it's difficult for me and for some research.*

and also outside campus:

*Maybe another thing I want to say, maybe I just mention it, the timetable or the map. Actually, some are very high and it's very small so actually I can't see it.*

As an international student Mary was also liable to pay higher prices on things such as public transport.

*For all of the international students, I feel it's a little unfair. For international students, for example, we should buy the Metcard [transport ticket] maybe for you \$10, [but] we should pay for \$20.*

Mary also felt that although her needs were generally met (with some exceptions) there needed to be better systems in place to support international students socially as well as having official recognition of prior learning from higher education completed in one's home country. This latter point was particularly important for Mary - she came to Australia already having completed one and a half years of university in China - basically half of her degree. In coming to Australia she realised that the university would not accept this as prior study so in effect she felt she had wasted that time in China.

*In China it's three years at uni and now it's three years [here] and I nearly finish half and I came here. What I did before is just rubbish. I can't fix it and when I came here I can't apply for credit.*

## ***Framing Mary's story through Bourdieuan lenses.***

### *Habitus and symbolic capital.*

As discussed in Chapter 2, the implementation of initiatives for inclusive practices in China has generally been slow and relates to a culture which tends to shy away from 'difference' (Shang et al., 2011). For this reason it is perhaps not surprising that Mary located the 'problem' as within herself, and consequently experienced feelings of low self-worth in trying to deal with a lack of support at school (*I feel [felt] bad*). Mary spoke about the highly competitive battlefield in China for symbolic capital from a university education and how this battlefield is even more dangerous and violent when those going out to fight have a disability. In a similar way to James, however, even though she still talked about *my problem*, in many ways Mary has 'fought back' and constructed herself as an agent with capital in two fields. Firstly, based on encouragement by her father, and the seemingly grim alternative of *the disability life* which is fraught with discrimination, lack of opportunity and society's belief *that you are not a good person* [if you have a disability], Mary clearly made a conscious decision in China to become educated and to live a life where she could become empowered through education. She then travelled to Australia to up-skill and acquire further cultural, symbolic and linguistic capital in an English-speaking university - something which is apparently highly regarded in China (Waters, 2006).

Secondly, within the Australian university field she has worked with a sense of determination in constructing herself as a student who speaks English in her home life, challenges administrative errors, achieves high marks and has made friends who she can rely on for help. She established good connections with lecturers and got herself a job. In this way her experience is similar to James's as she repositioned herself within the fields of her own country as well as her university in Australia. Once again, as with

James, we see how Mary's formation of the habitus is conscious - an extension of Bourdieu's solely unconscious endeavour (Sayer, 2010). There are also parallels here with James in that Mary's habitus is working against the doxic grain, that is, she is fighting against how society constructed her identity in China as lacking symbolic capital. Moreover, despite the negative attitudes within the doxa of her home country, Mary has still developed an attitude of viewing people for what they are rather than harbouring deficit views (*maybe they [people with a disability] will do things better than the normal person*).

The significant role of encouraging Mary is inextricably linked to the habitus of her family. This "familial or family habitus" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 334) in relation to education is defined as:

the deeply ingrained system of perspectives, experiences and predispositions family members share (Reay, 1998b) on education; that is, the taken-for-granted, unarticulated assumptions about the child's appropriate behaviour and likely trajectory (Reay, 1998b) – university, for example, as an impossible, a possible or an entirely natural future (Reay, 1998b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, cited in Atkinson, 2011, p. 334).

Mary's family clearly assumed that university study was an opportunity for her to pursue. Moreover, arguably part of what prompted Mary to pursue overseas study may have been the desire to remove herself from the doxa of her home country and 'prove' her education as "an entirely natural future" as Atkinson's quote above suggests.

The fact that Mary was not aware of the support systems in Australia before she arrived shows us that her self-constructed identity of adaptability was also well in place

before she came. She has been able to draw upon this important part of her habitus in the new field of settling into life in Australia - finding housing with an English-speaking family, finding a job, getting used to different learning approaches and tackling university administration in fighting for her marks.

*Capital and Field.*

Mary's perceptions of the pervading doxa in China meant in general she was not afforded cultural capital in wider society which impacted on her ability to secure a job. The story that she told about having the medical examination to get into university shows that she was just lucky on that day because *the examiner at that time they just don't want to make some problems*. Otherwise the implied alternative is that she would not have been accepted into the university.

Mary's accumulation of cultural capital means that she felt able to share her thoughts regarding her sense of there being more freedom in Australia compared to China: *we can't say our government is not good... I just know Australia is better than in China because they have a lot of free speech, but in China it's not*. No doubt finding support at the university also contributed to Mary feeling a greater sense of freedom in Australia as she was able to talk about her needs openly. It is also interesting that one of the observations Mary made about her learning experience in Australia relates to the weight of the books here and how that differs from China. She goes on to say that students need to *learn a subject by oneself* in relation to the books being heavy. We can perhaps interpret this as the weight of expectation that Mary has on herself, her feelings about being an independent learner in a new context, and expectations of her family.

Mary talked about herself as being *the problem* or *I'm the person always having problems* (as opposed to the systems). This sense of ownership arguably meant that

when the systems and supports were actually there she was empowered and comfortable in herself to ask for assistance. This implies that her symbolic capital and resultant attitudes have shifted since coming to Australia; she has more agency here in being able to disclose her needs. Hence capital “is not set in stone or universally accepted, either within or across fields” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 22). As a result, Mary enjoys good relationships – she has friends here in Australia and talked about positive interactions with support staff. This accumulation of capital also resulted in her parents feeling happy that their daughter is not only supported academically but is also physically safe in Australia.

Mary was frustrated that prior knowledge from China was not recognised in Australia. She was obviously frustrated and upset by this lack of recognition, which was evident in her use of the word *rubbish*. In this case we can see how

Learning potential is maximized when the student’s cultural capital closely aligns with the school's values and ways of knowing. If, however, a student's cultural capital is distinctly different from the school's, then the student may have difficulty (Stewart, 2010, p. 1).

From a Bourdieuan perspective, Mary’s experience in not having her capital recognised is an example of how the education system “work[s] to ‘consecrate’ social distinctions by cultivating certain ways of acting that have the effect of reproducing social inequality” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 128).

Part of Mary’s frustration was borne out of feeling an inability to fully express the extent of her vision, and how much help she actually needed. Perhaps Mary felt that she lacked sufficient language to be able to fully explain her vision to someone else in English - feelings that speaking a second language can prompt. This difficulty in

communicating may also relate to Mary's habitus – in her own country she had lived for so many years in trying to hide any barriers she experienced in relation to her vision that now when it is safe to fully explain her situation to others, she simply doesn't have the words to do so. This is not uncommon for many students with a disability and can impact greatly on the success or otherwise of a student (Donato, 2008) and is of even greater significance when the student speaks English as their second language. As the next section demonstrates, however, "students' ability to communicate their needs does not necessarily lead to a positive experience" (Donato, 2008, p. 61).

### *Symbolic violence.*

The concept of symbolic violence is a Bourdieuan concept which refers to "forms of coercion" (Johnson, Macdonald & Brabazon, 2008, p. 6). Johnson, Macdonald, and Brabazon (2008) also argue that "the use of symbolic violence by the dominant is often so entrenched in cultural and sociological norms that the dominant party may not be aware that they are perpetuating the norm" (p. 6). Symbolic violence is a very similar concept to the psycho-emotional dimension of disability (Reeve, 2004) as discussed in previous chapters.

Mary was clearly battling symbolic violence on many fronts.

*Maybe the teacher uses Excel, but other people can see it. I actually can't see it, but how can I say just make it bigger? If they make it bigger, I can't see it, too, so I just need to use some extra time to ask the teacher if I can't understand something. Sometimes I feel the lecturer is not very good for me.*

This quote shows that she tried to express how she needed a bigger font, but even that often simply was not big enough for her either. In a similar way to James, even though they both showed high levels of symbolic capital in their levels of

confidence and the way they constructed their identities in relational fields within the Australian university, they were both conscious of not wanting to stand out (*I need to use extra time to ask the teacher*). Furthermore, the situation with the Business Law lecturer's handwriting that was difficult to read also reflects a palpable undercurrent of symbolic violence:

*Business Law is a much more difficult subject in this trimester so I just try to do it and I want to pass it.*

In other words, Mary felt she needed to simply keep her mouth shut and 'get on with it'. In a Bourdieuan sense this shows us how in cases of symbolic violence "the dominated tend to be accepting of the domination (Johnson et al., 2008). This situation is not unlike the experiences of other Chinese international students as portrayed in the literature. Arkoudis and Tran (2007) demonstrate this in relation to a student Wang who they interviewed:

As Wang explained, "Because I want to achieve high [marks], I have to follow them [the requirements] closely." This was even though she revealed that, "sometimes I feel those guidelines are not very reasonable" (Arkoudis and Tran, 2007, p. 163).

Feeling trapped by the guidelines and a sense of wanting to do well by maintaining the status quo is typical of a relationship of symbolic violence as this example with Wang demonstrates.

Yet within the relational field of her Business Law lecture Mary felt she had less symbolic capital than others – her comment *Sometimes I feel the lecturer is not very good for me* shows us that Mary is fighting back against the symbolic violence in not



accepting the ‘domination’ by perceiving the problems she was experiencing as residing in the lecturer and not herself. Arguably this shift was also brought about due to her recalibration of values driven by a field that is generally more accepting and supportive than what she was used to in her own country.

Mary also experienced symbolic violence in regard to space and time. She had difficulty in physically accessing books in the library and the bus timetable because of the height and her vision. Mary’s comments are consistent with the literature which suggests that

for an individual who may rely on things such as elevators to work properly, physical barriers can have a great impact on their education in comparison with other students [in] spend[ing] large amounts of time working through issues of physical barriers (Donato, 2008, p, 185).

Clearly this time wasted could be spent on many other constructive pursuits such as working, studying, socialising, etcetera, as other students would be doing (Donato, 2008). Mary also sees precious time wasted in class with some lecturers (*I can’t see it [the slides in class] so I just waste some time.*) This then costs her precious time outside of class in needing to go to lecturers personally to ask them for further help or in catching up with what she might have missed in class by relying on friends outside of class.

### ***Anna’s story.***

Anna and I arranged to meet outside the campus library. We were both on time and found our way to the group study room. Although accommodating for the specific needs of the interview, the room wasn't particularly inviting. It was a medium-sized,

windowless room, lit under harsh fluorescent lights and felt typically 'institutional'. The artificial lighting was unflattering and made Anna look particularly tired, and I'm sure it had the same effect on me.

The interview lasted for around one hour, and I was surprised by how honest and open Anna became by the end of the interview despite the fact that this was the first time we had met. In follow-up emails with her after the interview her tone was positive about having been an interview participant.

### *Biographical.*

Anna came to Australia in 2007 from Hong Kong. She initially entered school in Year 12 in Australia and then dropped out *for personal problems*. She recommenced study, completing her foundation year and at the time of this interview was in her second year of a three-year Bachelor of Arts, majoring in psychology and archaeology. Instantly this choice of study surprised me as in my teaching roles I hadn't met any overseas students studying Arts, let alone this combination of subjects, and Anna's perspective was that *most Asians, especially Chinese and Hong Kong students came to foreign countries to study business and commerce*.

Anna did not have a 'visible' disability. She told me early in the interview that she had had *mental problems since six and I'm 21 now, so it's been 15 years*. The details of her long standing experiences with anxiety and depression unfolded more during the course of the interview. She spoke of feeling physically ill and not being able to eat, fainting during a presentation, frequently feeling depressed and *sad* and having panic attacks, such as this experience in an Italian class:

That room was so scary and people, a lot of people talking Italian in a very small room and all the voices, I'm a little bit freaked out

Anna did not volunteer many details of her family. The analysis shows how the feelings and experiences related to her family are bound up in her cultural background and her parents' lack of support in recognising her needs. She mentioned that she felt more comfortable living in Australia but that her parents now wanted her to move back to Hong Kong which she didn't want to do. During the interview when she did talk about her family, it was with a distinct undertone of anger, grief and loneliness. She mentioned almost no plans for the future or her ambitions, saying how her 'dream' plans for studying business and taking over her father's company had been rejected by her parents.

Anna spoke about herself in very harsh terminology, using phrases such as *mentally disabled* and *crazy*. She spoke of feeling misunderstood by friends: *if everyone can't be your friend, you may have to think that's the problem, maybe yourself*, and this theme of locating the problem as within herself prevailed throughout the interview. She also spoke of being alienated by family, and a teacher who when she was at school had accused her of *pretending to be weak and poor trying to ask for people's attention, like I'm so desperate to ask for love so I have to try to kill myself to ask for love*. This was one of a few indirect references Anna made to having been suicidal in her past.

#### *Cultural.*

In terms of cultural differences, Anna talked very openly about her experiences of having a mental illness within her home cultural context.

*My country, I'm not thinking about those physically disabled, but someone like me, mentally disabled, my country they don't recognise people as mentally disabled. They just think that we're crazy and you should be locked up in a mental hospital.*

*They [people in my country] don't believe in depression. They don't believe in panic attack and they don't believe in eating disorders. They just think that eating disorder is a teenage girl trying to lose weight. I don't want to lose weight, I want to gain weight, but I can't and what can I do?*

Here, Anna uses *they* to talk about her culture and community in Hong Kong.

This is interesting in itself as it underscores Anna's identification of herself as distanced from everyone else. Anna also clearly identifies herself as culturally different *I feel more comfortable staying in Australia than Hong Kong because I'm more Western.*

This research is complex due to the dualism of cultures that the students were navigating- a new culture in Australia set against their home culture. Any difficulties in navigating these differences are then compounded by having a disability. I asked Anna what she thought could improve her experience at the university and asked her to think about academic, social, physical, financial, and political arenas. Her response took me by surprise.

*How about racial...Racial? I'm Chinese. It doesn't mean the language is poor.*

When I asked her whether she had experienced racism by other students or by lecturers she replied:

*A little bit. I don't know if they understand Chinese. There's no school bullying, they're just trying to ignore you like you don't exist because they don't know how to communicate with Chinese.*

Anna also spoke about how she felt discriminated against financially. This is perhaps not surprising - as an indication, the approximate cost for studying at the

university at the centre of this research for an undergraduate degree is approximately \$30,000 per year for an international student on a full time load. The same course for local students will cost this for the entire degree of four years. It is not surprising then that financial concerns have been identified by international students in Australia as being one of the main sources of stress they experience in being away from home (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). When juxtaposed against the feelings alienation from local peers, the resentment is palpable:

*What's wrong with Chinese? They pay 40 grand to study here and so you can enjoy your educational benefits.*

Anna had attended counselling sessions in both Hong Kong and in Australia and she talked about some of the differences she thought existed in the counselling approaches in each country.

*Western countries have more knowledge about mental illness and in fact my counsellor keeps telling me something like a lot of people in Australia need counselling services*

*Situational.*

Anna spoke of being hesitant to ask for help. When I asked her why she answered, *I don't want people to think that I'm taking credit and get better marks.* This unfortunately happened to Anna with a lecturer who either didn't understand or try to understand her situation.

*When I first came to this university and when I first trying to see a doctor and having new medication which is very difficult, because psychological pills are not a cold or something... and I may have difficulties in class which the teacher*

*himself thought it was a way that I tried to get higher marks... so I told him I was sick and he said it's a way that you try to get higher marks and he said my English couldn't be good because I'm Chinese.*

As this example shows, the attitude of this lecturer resulted in double-discrimination on account of this student's needs as well as her background. I asked her how she dealt with this reaction from this lecturer, she simply stated:

*Actually I didn't. I didn't know that I could deal with that so I did nothing and he just gave me a cross, that's every paper I handed in, a big one.*

This psycho-emotional dimension of disability is also apparent in this utterance where Anna talks about her experience with trying to find a good counsellor:

*I'm sitting here and asking for help and you ask me why I haven't killed myself yet? These things are a little bit irritating, but I'm fine.*

*Relational.*

Anna didn't talk very much about her family until well into the interview so I didn't get much of a sense of the reasoning behind how she ended up in Australia, apart from her saying at the very start of interview:

*I escaped from my country. I have problem, that's why I'm here today and I don't want to stay in Hong Kong so I pick a country that I feel comfortable with and then I come here.*

Anna clearly felt isolated not only in her own country but within the confines of her family, and she uses very strong language here with her repeated use of the word *hate*.

*Even my parents think that I'm crazy. They hate the idea that I'm asking for help and I need help from a counsellor or I need help from the DLU and the special consideration, they hate this idea. They hate the idea that I'm taking medication.*

In Anna's case there is also an apparent lack of awareness of mental illness by her parents.

*[My parents] think that I'm not working hard enough. They think that mental illness is like a block. If you jump over it, if you try hard enough to jump over it, you can jump over it. They think it's like a fever, but it's not that easy. It's something in your mind that you can't figure out and you need help.*

There was also a definite sense of her escaping the pressures of her parents for more than to fulfil herself academically.

*They gave me a deadline that I must find myself a boyfriend before graduation, otherwise they're going to give me an arranged marriage... and this is the 21st century.*

Anna's frustration was also clear in the way she spoke about her friends and their lack of understanding of her depression.

*Even a few of my close friends, they cannot understand about sadness or people who need to ask for help. They have no idea of depression...They think that teenagers should be happy and running after each other and karaoke and clubs. I have a brain. I hate to say that, but I have a brain. I have feelings, I have emotions. I'm a human. I'm not a cat or a dog.*

Given these experiences, it is perhaps of no surprise that Anna concludes *relationships with people are so frustrating.*

*Interactional.*

It is important to say at this point that not all of Anna's experiences in Australia were negative. Anna spoke in positive terms about the help she had received from her counsellor and her responses point to a high level of trust and respect for this person.

Her counsellor told her that

*a lot of them [Australian students], especially students my age... ask for counselling, so I guess that sort of makes me feel better.*

In having been so isolated for most of her life, it is probably not surprising that she found the idea of other students also seeking help comforting.

Anna's counsellor acted as a quasi- advocate on her behalf in terms of notifying staff of her needs (*I'm no longer contacting my teachers. I ask my counsellors to do that*). This has proven to be positive for Anna and as a result the 'good' lecturers:

*understand that I can't go to school as ordinary people. I may have problems in leaving my house so they will be aware that I can't give them a doctor's certificate every time so they're okay with that...I send them emails, they acknowledge that. They will send me back information and stuff.*

***Framing Anna's story through Bourdieuan lenses.***

*Habitus and capital.*

As with James and Mary, the pronouncements made by Anna also demonstrate different symbolic capital that are afforded to students with a disability in different



countries. As discussed in relation to James and Mary, the nature of the dispositions and values of a country determine the way that people with a disability are treated and supported. Anna's experiences in Hong Kong are similar to Mary's in China in terms of feeling like someone from a kind of sub-class. For Mary this was in terms of people considering her to be *not normal*. For Anna, a similar view is implied, adding that the belief is *people like me should be locked up*. It is clear that Anna's feelings of isolation were also no doubt compounded by attitudes driven by wider socio-cultural influence.

Both Anna and Mary's reflections on how they were treated in their own countries point to a lack of symbolic capital in their respective relational fields. In relation to the literature mentioned in Chapter 2 this is not surprising. In the literature review I mentioned how the concept of inclusive education is one that is relatively new in most of Asia, and that values embedded in Confucian philosophy in Hong Kong and Chinese cultures are also a likely contributor to the willingness to thoroughly embrace inclusion (Forlin, 2007, 2010; Gilson & Dymond, 2011; Guozhong, 2006). Hence Anna has gone through a schooling system which in Bourdieuan terms has worked to reproduce the social inequalities at work (Webb et al., 2002) within the wider socio-cultural context of Hong Kong.

Unlike Mary, however, Anna has been unfortunate in not having the support of her family. Anna's familial habitus, that is, her parents' assumptions about Anna's "appropriate behaviour and likely trajectory" (Reay 1998b, cited in Atkinson, 2011, p. 334) has resulted in tension between herself and her parents. For Anna the result has been a discord between the beliefs of her family and her own negative experiences in growing up with anxiety and depression. As a result, Anna lacks capital within not only her social and educational fields but also within her family field.

### *Capital and field.*

Anna's cultural perspectives were interesting. The cultural capital she had generated and the perspectives she shared with me through the process of an interview allowed me insight into the differences between mental health perceptions in her culture and in Australia. Anna's observations of Western countries (*Western countries have more knowledge about mental illness*) and her statement that she feels *more Western* shows that she prefers to identify with the Western students. This is interesting in that:

People in collectivist cultures such as Asian Americans were more likely to attribute mental health problems to internal, personal causes, whereas counsellors influenced by Western psychotherapeutic approaches perceived mental illness as arising from interactions between the person and the environment (Mallinckrodt, Shigeoka, & Suzuki, 2005, p. 230).

The perspectives put forward by the authors above perhaps help explain further Anna's comfort in identifying herself as western. The quote above would suggest that a western perspective would 'allow' Anna to perceive having anxiety and depression as a result of her interactions in relational fields rather than feeling like she was somehow at fault.

The fact that Anna even sought counselling is important as it is inconsistent with the literature which suggests that international students do not take advantage of counselling services offered by universities due to concerns over trust, loss of face, embarrassment, shame or fear of stigmatisation by peers and family (Sawir et al., 2008). Some students would rather suffer through difficulties themselves than speak to a counsellor because of this fear of stigmatisation (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). This feeling is amplified when seeking help from a professional is not recognised as a

legitimate means of support in a student's own culture (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004).

What we see in Anna's case, however, is her shift away from the field of her own culture which constructs her identity as being in deficit, to one where she can openly seek help, and is one of many students who seek help. Zhang (1998, cited in Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004) suggests that this is related to the acculturation level of the student, that is, "the higher the level of acculturation, the more positive attitude there was toward seeking professional psychological help" (Zhang, 1998, cited in Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004, p. 135). Anna clearly feels more comfortable about seeing herself in relation to 'western' students in asking for help. She indicates she cannot rely on her family and friends for support as other students might in relation to her familial habitus. Furthermore, Anna has also managed to leverage support from her counsellor to act as a quasi-advocate on her behalf in terms of notifying staff of her needs (*I'm no longer contacting my teachers. I ask my counsellors to do that.*)

Anna expressed resentment towards local students (*What's wrong with Chinese? They pay 40 grand to study here and so you can enjoy your educational benefits*). This sense of disappointment is underpinned by the increasing perception of education as a commodity (Bourdieuian symbolic capital) and students, particularly high fee-paying international students, as consumers who invest significant amounts of time and money in studying overseas. Furthermore, as alluded to in Mary's case, the capital acquired through study at an English-speaking university outside of China and Hong Kong is generally looked upon favourably by employers (Waters, 2006).

Bourdieu suggests that "the value objectively and subjectively placed on the academic qualification is in fact defined only by the totality of the social uses that can be made of it" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 143). This is relevant to international students in looking at the social contexts of an overseas education. Further, "the value of the

overseas education resides in the particular networks (or ‘social fields’) of mutual recognition within which it is embedded” (Waters, 2006, p. 7). By looking at Anna’s experiences we can see what Bourdieu means by these perspectives. Anna is experiencing a dichotomy in her pursuit of symbolic capital in accordance with the “social uses that can be made of it” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 143). In the networks or social fields of Hong Kong, Anna’s symbolic capital of ‘overseas education’ will be recognised and viewed as favourable, possibly giving her a competitive edge in the workforce. Somewhat conversely, however, in her relational fields in Australia as an international student, she is positioned as someone who is used for her money and is seen by domestic students and some of her lecturers as inferior.

#### *Symbolic violence.*

Students often do not want to disclose that they have a disability for various reasons (Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Gadbow, 2002; Matthews, 2009; Roer-Strier, 2002; Redpath et al., 2012; Swart & Greyling, 2011; Tinklin & Hall, 1999). Based on her experiences of being isolated in Hong Kong in relation to having a disability, it is probably not surprising that Anna felt that she wanted to avoid disclosing her disability at enrolment, claiming that she *tried not to tick the box* (which indicated the need for additional academic support). This is consistent with internalised oppression of disability. The symbolic violence she then experienced when she did disclose her needs was that a lecturer accused her of trying to get higher marks. The fact that Anna *didn’t know that I could deal with that so I did nothing* also made her feel like an individual with no symbolic capital. Her way of coping was *I no longer study that because I don’t want to face him again. If I see the difficulties, I will run; I’m not very brave to face things.*

It's easy to see how a situation like this would be difficult for any student, let alone one who comes from a non-English speaking background. When Anna had a panic attack in her Italian class and had to run out, she commented *who can stand for a student running out of classroom every time?* This is indicative of the psycho-emotional dimension of disablism caused by symbolic violence. These examples show how students feel like a 'nuisance' in speaking out about their needs. In not speaking out, however, the power struggles are maintained within the field.

Anna was also an apparent victim of symbolic violence in relation to local students, saying there's no school bullying - they're [local students] just trying to ignore you like you don't exist because they don't know how to communicate with Chinese. According to Dunne (2009) this kind of behaviour is not unusual - local students at university often report that intercultural contact is "less rewarding than intracultural contact" (Dunne, 2009, p. 233). Local students tended to pursue intercultural contact "only when it was deem[ed] to be 'worth the effort'" (Dunne, 2009, p. 233).

Here we see ambivalence in Anna's identity in how she oscillates between trying to situate herself in the field. On the one hand she identifies with the Western students in how they seek the help of counselling services. In terms of communicating with local students, however, she seems to be struggling through a lack of symbolic capital. So, her disposition doesn't quite fit the social fields she finds herself in. These two sides of the identity coin therefore work at creating ambivalence in her positions (Sayer, 2010).

In a Bourdieuan sense I would argue that Anna has constantly struggled in various fields for most of her life. This ambivalence is a pervading theme for Anna as seen by her not fitting in to the socio-cultural field in Hong Kong or with her family and

trying to learn the rules of the field in the Australian university in attending counselling but struggling against her Hong Kong identity and feeling more affinity with ‘western’ culture. Anna has clearly been living and having to operate in symbolically violent fields for most of her life.

Symbolic violence is also evident in the language that Anna uses to talk about her life, particularly in relation to the following comment:

*I’m sitting here and asking for help and you ask me why I haven’t killed myself yet? These things are a little bit irritating, but I’m fine.*

It is the juxtaposition of *asking me why I haven’t killed myself yet* and her perception of this question being *irritating* which prompts us to consider: why is it merely irritating? In reality, it must be horrible to experience this kind of interrogation. What is it that is preventing Anna from saying so? Again we are seeing evidence of the psycho-emotional dimension of disability and overtones of symbolic violence, that is, ‘I will be a nuisance if I say anything against this’. There is also the undercurrent of self-oppression here as in ‘I’m fine’ when clearly someone who has been suicidal is not fine.

Symbolic violence is also evident here:

*I have feelings, I have emotions. I’m a human. I’m not a cat or a dog...*

Why is Anna talking about herself in relation to animals? Set against a context of continual isolation and lack of support, perhaps it is not hard to see how she has made this connection. Presumably she has experienced other people in her life making decisions for her and not allowing her to take control of her own destiny and ambitions

(as mentioned previously in her desire to help take over her father's business with his retirement, and her parents' insistence that she move back to Hong Kong).

### *Jane's story.*

Jane and I arranged via email to meet outside the library at the campus where she studies. We exchanged phone numbers in an email in case we had difficulty finding each other. A few minutes after the scheduled meeting time I texted her to say I was sitting on a bench near the library in the sun. A young woman approached about 10 minutes later. She looked at me quizzically as if she wasn't quite sure I was the right person. As soon as I said her name she seemed to relax. It was a warm day and Jane was wearing short sleeves and almost immediately I noticed a large, thick scar running from the outside of her right forearm to her upper arm.

Jane told me in one email that I went through a surgery in my right arm after a car accident. So I am having difficulties in writing and restricted movements.

I asked Jane if there was anywhere in particular she would like to go to conduct the interview as I decided the study room in the library was a definite no-go zone after seeing the condition the room was in and how small and cramped it was. We thought the cafeteria under the library would be too noisy and as it was a nice day we looked outside and found a bench with a table in a sunny and quiet spot.

### *Biographical.*

Jane is from Sri Lanka. She completed Cambridge A levels there and then joined one of the offshore partners for the university at the centre of this study in Sri Lanka to study at college level and transferred for the final semester to the Australian counterpart in Melbourne. When we met she was at the end of her second year, doing a Bachelor of

Commerce in Actuarial Studies. (This began an amusing part of the interview as I was also taking notes as Jane talked and I had to ask her how to spell 'actuarial' for my notes).

When asked why she came to Australia, Jane replied *you'll laugh because my boyfriend wanted to come here*. She mentioned that because she was born in Italy she could in fact have gone to Europe although getting European citizenship seemed to be an onerous task. Out of *the U.K., States or here*, 'here' (that is, Australia) ended up being her final choice.

Jane sought help from the DLU after being involved in a car accident which happened on the university campus. I didn't ask for the details of what happened, but she openly gestured to her arm when she was talking about it (*Yeah, it's my right arm. You can see the scar*). She clarified a few questions with me during the course of the interview, wanting to know whether my questions were referring to her experiences 'before' or 'after' the accident. She also asked me at one stage whether she could talk about certain things to do with the university which weren't related to the accident. Jane spoke fondly of her family - two younger sisters and parents all back in Sri Lanka. The sense I got from Jane was that she had strong family relationships. For this reason it was not so surprising that Jane had reservations in coming to Australia. I asked her whether she or her family had any concerns about her coming to Australia to study.

*Yeah, because I was alone. They've been with me for 20 years and to let you go off to a different country, it's difficult.*

I assumed since she had come to Australia that they were also even more worried as her injury was sustained while she was living here. Jane mentioned that they were *very proud* of her. She also talked about having a strong and close network of



friends, family friends and of course her boyfriend although as it turned out her parents didn't *know actually that he's my boyfriend*. On this she explained further: *they know but I won't admit it*. As it turned out, this was related to the fact that he was from a different ethnic and religious group to her - something that is highly significant in Sri Lankan culture set against the backdrop of years of civil conflict.

There was certainly a sense of inner-resilience coming from the way that Jane talked about her experiences in Australia. As she put it: *I'm a vegetarian too so sort of I have a strong mind/head*. It became clear, however, that the stress of living away from home and coping with an injury, being hospitalised for a significant amount of time in a foreign country and coping with constant pain had been extremely difficult. Anna mentioned that she was planning to go home for a few months over the Australian summer:

*it's that I can't do this anymore here. Even though I smile and all that, I have such a lot of pain. I'm trying not to think about it. Living alone, you have to do everything. It's not just doing your studies. There's work at home and all that. It's really frustrating.*

There was a sense of exhaustion and defeat in how Jane had to cope with many of the adjustments of a new country as experienced by many international students, made even more difficult by the trauma of her accident. A large part of the adjustment was also getting used to living alone, away from her tight-knit family and also from a culture where she mentions *there are people hired to help you* (cleaners, drivers). Her self-defence mechanism seemed to be *trying not to think about it*.

However difficult all this sounded, it was not a cry of surrender. Jane's intention was to finish her degree in Australia, with the advice from her doctor that she would

require ongoing support provided by the DLU. Jane considered herself lucky to receive compensation from the accident which covered over \$10,000 in medical bills. Moreover, despite the sound of desperation in the above quote, Jane was still positive about her experience in Australia.

*Relational.*

Jane referred numerous times to having *lots of friends* in Australia. It turned out that she was extremely fortunate regarding the circumstances of her accident in that:

*The girl who was driving, her aunty was here so she took me to her place and took care of me because I couldn't move my arm and all that.*

Jane told me that after the accident she didn't want a note-taker from the DLU to help in lectures. Her concern with someone else taking lectures for her in a subject with a largely mathematical component was that a note-taker might miss some important information. The disadvantage was that she still missed a lot of important information in the lecture.

*It's all maths and all that. It's difficult for another person to take notes down...as a result of that [not having a scribe] I would miss half the notes so I would copy it from my friend who offered her copy of the stuff.*

Jane's friendships and close networks in Australia were vital in getting her through the trauma of the accident and adjusting to post-accident academic life. At times her friends filled the role of support workers, which both the previous and following quotes show:

*Yeah, my friends, they've been really nice. They would carry all my books and stuff around uni. They would find a seat for me in the library. They've been great because I was with them when the accident happened.*

Jane spoke highly of her lecturers and how they were supportive and helpful, much to her surprise: *I never knew there were people like that, who go out of their way.* She mentioned two particular situations in relation to lecturers:

*[The lecturer] enrolled me manually. Otherwise I would have had to stay one year extra here. Certain units are only offered in a particular semester. They're really nice.*

*The lecturers and all are very nice. They gave me extensions for my assignments and I deferred some exams, mid semester exams.*

Even when prompted to provide feedback about any negative experiences with the DLU, Jane was quick to say I am grateful for whatever they have done. Adding only if they can increase the extra time given [in exams], yeah [that would be good].

The one problem which Jane did talk about was more in terms of confusion through lack of communication through the faculty:

*At the start, there was one problem...there was one exam which was supposed to be in the evening, according to my schedule that I got, but apparently it was in the morning. They have sent an email to everyone. There was another friend who was in the same accident. She knew about it. She said 'it can't be the exam'. I'm like, 'no, it's in the evening'. Then, through some luck, I called them and asked and then this lady was trying to call this one and that one. After one hour*

*she was like, 'you've got an exam in one hour'... Thanks to my friend, I knew.*

*Otherwise I would have missed the exam.*

This once again showed how lucky Jane was that she had friends here in Australia.

When I asked Jane what her response was in this situation, she commented: *I thanked them for letting me know. But I was having a heart attack.*

*Interactional.*

Unlike people who may have faced a lifetime of discrimination or negotiation of barriers and negative attitudes surrounding having a disability, Jane was forced to negotiate her 'new' disability in an unfamiliar environment. She told a story about taking the bus:

*There was one time that I was coming in the bus after the accident. I was wearing the sling also. The bus conductor scolded me for taking time to give money. I don't know why he didn't understand that I'm only using one hand...then he stopped and he looked at everyone. He's like, 'you're wasting everyone's time'. Ever since then I stopped going on the bus. I would always walk. I got so scared.*

Fortunately this was an unusual experience for Jane. In general she spoke of positive interactions with her lecturers and the DLU.

*Actually they were very nice because I had last semester one of the exams that I deferred was a pre requisite for one of the units this semester. Then because you*

*can't do a pre requisite and the unit in one semester without doing that particular unit so I spoke to my lecturer and he let me do it.*

Jane also talked about how she was open with her tutors and lecturers about her needs and how this was also positive.

*[The DLU] would send an email to the lecturer and then they would do it [arrange extra time] for us. But all the tutors and the lecturers know about this thing [my injury]. I told them. Even in the tute, if I can't copy the stuff or whatever, my tutor would give me the notes so that I can take my own time.*

The positive interactions with lecturers were also highlighted in their humour and ability to share a joke with Jane. She spoke about doing an exam which was situated near the faculty office. For her break she was asked to leave the room and walk around and she took a walk down the corridor where her lecturers and tutors were surprised to see her:

*[On this campus for my exam break] I had to walk in the corridor of the faculty. Yeah, it was funny. Because I had one exam in the econometrics and statistics department so all my lecturers and tutors are from there. So they're looking at me and laughing, [saying] 'what are you doing here?'*

*Cultural.*

I was struck by how Jane's parents must have initially been horrified and extremely worried by their daughter's accident. I asked Jane how they reacted when they found out what had happened.

*I was too scared to tell them [about the accident] because this happened inside the university. I think the first people to know were the security guards. They came running and everyone was around. At that time my boyfriend – he studies at a different campus, was not here – so I was telling my friends, ‘call him, call him, call him’, because he’s the only one who knows my parents. I didn’t want them to know because they’ll panic. Parents are like that especially in other countries. We are very close to the family. Then they started crying and they wanted to come here.*

Even when this was all happening for Jane, she was ultimately more worried about her family than herself:

*Then I stopped them because the moment they come, they’ll be spending money and all that. They’re not doctors or whatever to help. But I really missed them a lot. It’s the time that you need your family, especially when you have to go through surgery and stay in the hospital.*

I was struck here by Jane’s resilience. This was further exemplified when she started to talk about living in Australia compared to Sri Lanka and what she felt she had gained from the experience:

*When I came here, only I actually became independent and learned to do stuff on my own because at home, if you can afford it, you can have servants, so that’s the way you’ve been brought up and here it’s a totally different thing. You have to do everything on your own with no parents. It’s difficult. But then it’s good. It’s a big exposure coming to a country like this. You gain a lot of life experiences. I think after this accident and all, I’ve been a much better person.*

Jane's academic achievements were the result of sheer determination.

*The other thing is in terms of my study, you have to get Ds [distinctions]. I told you before. I can't write. Actually for every subject, I only studied for like two days and I wanted Ds so badly but I got four Ds so I was like, I can push myself. I never knew I could achieve something that I really wanted so I'm really happy. It's like having real power.*

Jane's situation was one I had not anticipated – that of a student who has not experienced living with a disability in their home country. Since the interview I have wondered how many other students may have been in Jane's situation but returned to their countries because they were unable to cope with being forced to negotiate the unfamiliar territory of a new country and new language, coupled with a traumatic event and living in constant pain. Jane spoke about a close network of friends who I suspect had a huge impact on her decision to stay and continue with her studies, albeit with a trip home for a few months in the middle.

Nevertheless, Jane was still able to provide her insights into what she expected might have been her experience at university in Sri Lanka had she been studying there with a debilitating injury.

*I don't think if I was in Sri Lanka that I would get all this help. People there are really nice but in terms of uni and all that, I don't think they'd go to such an extent, like giving you a scribe, etcetera. Because when I went and when my parents were telling it [about the DLU and support] to all the people, they were like, 'oh really?' No one knew about it...maybe because it's a developing country.*

I asked her about whether she thought the situation with the bus driver in Australia being rude to her could have happened in Sri Lanka as well.

*To be honest public transport in Sri Lanka is not as good as [here]. Everyone's crammed inside. But still they make room for you. They are caring. Because there's a bus conductor there. There are no bus conductors here. It's the driver who does everything.*

Jane had spoken a little about *the racial clashes* in Sri Lanka, and this prompted me to ask her whether she had experienced any racism in Australia.

*Not really. I live with three Australians. They're really nice...It's like it's not the Australians [who are racist]. It's sometimes the Sri Lankans who've been brought up here [who are racist]. The way they look at us is like, different, like we are Aussies. I don't know why they even think like that. We are humans after all. I don't know. It's like they're of a higher class or something like that. They look at you in such a weird way.*

The years of civil unrest in her country no doubt also underscores this sense of territory and cultural identity in an Australian context. Jane's boyfriend was from a *different race and religion* to her, which she found difficult to openly talk about with her family, even after five and a half years of being together.

*Situational.*

The DLU initially provided Jane with a scribe to assist her in her exams which she said *wasn't helpful* for a number of reasons:



*It was a three hour exam and it was the first time that I took help like that...The invigilator didn't know what exactly to do... Apparently you can write whatever you want and then the scribe can write the rest. But it's difficult to dictate what's on your mind to someone else. [So] I was trying to write and then the invigilator was like, 'you can't do that' [write by yourself] and then let the scribe [leave]. I got scared. Then [to the scribe] I was like, 'okay, you can write everything.' It was very tiring because there was a lot of maths. It's difficult to tell someone else to write.*

I asked Jane whether she had been given the option of a keyboard.

*I had that option but I can't type the maths symbols and all that. It was going to take a lot of time.*

It surprised me greatly to find out that the invigilator clearly lacked knowledge surrounding the proper protocol and procedures for an exam, which prompted me to ask about the background of the invigilator (*Do you know where the invigilator was from? Were they just a random person? Were they from a faculty?*) to which Jane responded:

*I think from the faculty. But they weren't given the proper instructions and I didn't know what to do.*

Jane's determination and resilience once more shone through as she explained that despite this ordeal:

*It was all right because I think I made a good choice after that not to have a scribe. My arm kept giving me pain but then I wanted to finish the exams. I was on pain killers and this and that but I did it.*

The confusion over the 'correct' provisions, however, continued when Jane had decided to forgo the scribe.

*First when I got the scribe the doctor filled the form out for 30 minutes extra time for writing. Then the lady from the disability unit, she didn't check it properly. Apparently you can't give 30 minutes [without a scribe]. So then they changed it so the option was 15 minutes...so they gave me 15 minutes extra for writing and 15 minutes rest...the doctor didn't know the rules...even I didn't know the rules.*

Jane was also a little disconcerted by the apparent inflexibility of the rest times and the procedures which dictated how she was to use these rest times.

*But you can't take the rest time to writing time...you can't convert [exchange] it. For the rest time...you can't stay in the room, you have to move out...Sometimes it's annoying to stay out for ten minutes.*

Despite this Jane concluded that the extra time and rest time was the better choice for her to complete her exams, and would be the method of choice for the remainder of her degree.

*The doctor said it's going to take two years for this to heal so that I would continue to get benefits from DLU, like extra time and all that...I hope that*

*[getting ongoing medical certificates] works. It's not as if I'm taking advantage of it.*

### ***Framing Jane's story through Bourdieuan lenses.***

Jane's experiences are somewhat different to the other students' and therefore required an analytical approach which allows for this difference. In the analysis I have tried to show how Jane's changing habitus is inextricably linked to her newly constructed identity in the Australian university environment.

#### *Habitus and capital.*

The accumulation and leveraging of symbolic capital has been at the heart of the experiences in the field of the Australian university for James, Mary and Anna. For these students, the changing nature of their habitus was dependent on how they had constructed notions of self within their new environment in Australia, away from the deficit views inherent in the doxa of their own countries.

For Jane, however, the case was very different. As demonstrated in the interview data, Jane only experienced being a student with a disability in Australia. Her perception of having two 'selves' in this context is suggested in the way she clarified a few questions with me during the course of the interview by asking whether I was referring to her experiences 'before' or 'after' the accident.

As a result she came to Australia without a history of being oppressed. She wasn't brought up in an oppressive environment and she didn't have much of a sense of 'disability' as a construct in her own country as she hadn't experienced it on a personal level. She therefore arrived without this symbolic baggage dragging her down. Her habitus was one based on a strong sense of family, high motivation for academic

achievement and little experience of independent living, set against a backdrop of many years of civil unrest.

The way that Jane talked about herself shows an identity based on strong symbolic capital. For example, she talks about herself as having a *strong mind/head* through being a vegetarian, and the way she pushed herself in her exams to achieve high scores despite being in pain. She worked through her apparent adversity by exercising her strong mind in *trying not to think about* being in pain, being away from home and coping on her own.

*Newly constructing the habitus.*

Jane's positioning changed when she arrived in Australia. She was coping with living in another country without her close-knit family and without hired help. All of a sudden this changed to being someone that needed additional help in all aspects of her life whilst in chronic pain. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of fields is that they are "fluid and dynamic, rather than static entities" (Webb et al., 2002, p. 22) and I would argue that this is of more significance for Jane than the other students.

For the other students, the way they situated themselves was based more upon the fluidity of their habitus in relation to their capital than the existing field. For Jane, it is the fluidity of the field and how she navigates the relational positioning which is at the heart of her experience. Jane has constructed her habitus in the new field in order to navigate the changes in her life in Australia. She now relies on friends to help her and has developed her own quasi-family support networks with friends who helped her through her recovery. Jane's habitus has changed as the result of her environment because of the new field she now finds herself in. As a result, she has discovered that there are people in the university who can help her, which is something that she never

had to think about previously. Moreover, her experiences prompted her to think about what kind of supports would actually exist in her own culture, as she talked about how unlikely it was that her university in Sri Lanka would provide the same level of assistance.

*I think after this accident and all, I've been a much better person.*

Jane's experiences in coming to Australia and reformulating her habitus resulted in what she saw as positive change in her life. She mentioned the fact that she is now a better person not only since coming to Australia but also since the accident; an "ethical dimension" (p. 89) of the habitus (Sayer, 2010). Jane's shift in becoming a better person comes about from a largely emotive reaction to her new field. Sayer (2010) argues that this emotional dimension in relation to the habitus is somewhat lacking in Bourdieuan thought, but I would argue it is clear in connection with Jane, particularly in relation to her comments below:

*My arm kept giving me pain but then I wanted to finish the exams. I was on pain killers and this and that but I did it.*

*I can push myself. I never knew I could achieve something that I really wanted so I'm really happy. It's like having real power.*

Building on an already strong foundation of symbolic capital means that the emotional shifting in the field has now afforded Jane *real power*. We might ask whether this is something that has worked to keep Jane in Australia; I would argue that many students without such a strong grounding in their symbolic capital and sense of self would have returned to their country long ago.

*Symbolic violence.*

As with the other students, Jane also experienced symbolic violence in the new field. Most of the difficulties Jane experienced both on and off campus were the result of a lack of communication and inflexible systems.

The lack of communication meant that she almost missed her exam while the symbolic violence was evident in how she had to handle finding out the information at the last minute (*I thanked them for letting me know. But I was having a heart attack*). There was also confusion in the exam itself which resulted in Jane having to adjust how she would normally take an exam.

*The invigilator didn't know what exactly to do...it's difficult to dictate what's on your mind to someone else. [So] I was trying to write and then the invigilator was like, you can't do that [write by yourself] and then let the scribe [leave]. I got scared.*

*they [the scribe] weren't given the proper instructions and I didn't know what to do.*

*I didn't know what to do* also demonstrates how Jane is trying to navigate this new field without much of a map. As a result in every exam since then Jane has insisted on doing the writing herself and 'putting up with' the pain which in a sense is almost akin to physical violence stemming from symbolic violence.

It's clear that it's not only Jane who has difficulty in understanding the rules of the field:

*First when I got the scribe the doctor filled the form out for 30 minutes extra time for writing. Then the lady from the disability unit, she didn't check it properly. Apparently you can't give 30 minutes [without a scribe]. So then they changed it so the option was 15 minutes...so they gave me 15 minutes extra for writing and 15 minutes rest...the doctor didn't know the rules...even I didn't know the rules.*

The inflexibility of the systems was clear in Jane's language:

*But you can't take the rest time to writing time...you can't convert [exchange] it. For the rest time...you can't stay in the room, you have to move out...Sometimes it's annoying to stay out for ten minutes.*

Words such as 'can't', and 'have to' imply the forceful nature of the field in this case as they imply a lack of choice and disempowerment.

Finally, the symbolic violence inflicted on Jane from the inflexibility of the bus conductor is a clear example of the psycho-emotional dimension of disability and has resulted in Jane now walking everywhere because of her experience of being *so scared*.

## **The Staff Stories – Teachers (Jenny, Veronica, Lauren, Monica) and DLU Support Staff (Terry)**

As I have mentioned throughout this thesis the experiences of working with the Iraqi student Amira (not her real name) who is blind was the driving force for me in pursuing this research topic. Because she did not wish to be part of this research, it is important that from an ethical perspective readers understand the information pertaining to Amira came from the teachers only and not Amira herself. The four teacher participants were all colleagues of mine at the time of the interviews and had all taught Amira at the language centre. Terry was my point of contact at the DLU and assisted me in sending out the email invitations to students. He was happy to be a participant and I gained a lot of interesting insights from his wealth of knowledge.

Amira came to the language centre in May 2008, the week after I had started working there. My husband and I had been living in Ireland for a few years and had decided to move back to Australia via six months in South America. I was semi-interviewed for a casual teaching position at the university at the centre of this study over the phone while we were staying in a Youth Hostel in Auckland on our way back to Australia from our South America trip. I landed back in Australia on the Thursday, met the manager for a face to face meeting on the Friday and had secured three days of teaching work starting on the following Tuesday.

On the Friday of my first week my manager approached me with an offer – he could increase my workload to full time from the following week but the work would be somewhat different. He then told me about Amira who was coming to the language centre to study English preparation as part of a pathway scholarship awarded by the Iraqi government. She would be here for a number of years with the end goal of



completing her PhD in Law through the university. She would need to obtain an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) band score of seven (a very high score – native speakers are usually placed at an eight or nine, nine being the highest possible band score) before she could start her PhD. She was being accompanied by her brother. My role in working with Amira would be as in class support for both her and the class teacher. It soon became apparent that this was the first time the centre had worked with a student who required this kind of support.

Amira was placed in Monica's class for her first 10 weeks with me as the assistant. I found the work with Amira challenging - I had never done this type of work before and it was pure chance that my manager had selected me for the role. Nor did I really know what I was doing. But because it was completely different to anything I had done before it was also extremely satisfying. Amira didn't read Braille so I worked in class doing things like reading instructions to her or dictating written activities and scribing for her. I also helped her work with her laptop as she was just getting used to working with JAWS (screen-reading software) and physically guiding her both inside and outside the classroom.

Amira lost her sight through illness when she was in her late teens. She obtained her Masters in Law in Iraq and as she didn't read Braille she relied on her family who created audio books of her required materials by reading the books aloud and recording these onto cassette tapes. It was clear from the start that she possessed an amazing memory for detail.

After finishing in Monica's class Amira was then placed in an IELTS preparation class where she was taught by Jenny and Lauren. After the first 5 weeks in Jenny's class the tightening of the centre's budget meant it was no longer an option for

me to be employed as her in-class assistant. It was during this time that I applied for a permanent teaching position and was successful. I then shared in teaching Amira as a class teacher with Jenny and then with Lauren.

The centre paid for note-takers from the university who were undergraduate students. They helped us in class with most of the logistical arrangements such as accompanying Amira to different classes - we had a computer class once a week and lessons in the library for example. Amira did not use a mobility cane at that stage so she required assistance in getting around. They also helped in class with setting up her computer, clarifying questions or reading what was on the board when needed. Because the IELTS course was heavily reliant on printed resources we had to scan the material one week in advance of teaching it and upload it onto her computer so she would be able to familiarise herself with the tasks and content before classes.

Amira got her IELTS 7 score the first time she took the test. This was rare – students often have to take the test more than once to achieve their required score. She then made the transition into the university for her PhD. I had some contact with her research supervisor when she first started who was keen to have some advice about some of the methods we employed in teaching Amira. After working on her PhD for around six months, however, her supervisor became concerned over her lack of progress. He had experienced a difficult working relationship with her and found that her critical thinking skills were not developed to the capacity he saw was necessary for PhD study. For that reason she came back to the language centre for another three months and attended a university bridging course which was designed to prepare students for the demands required for higher degree study. Veronica was one of the teachers who worked with Amira over this time, and Jenny and I were asked to provide consultative advice to Veronica in her teaching when needed.

Jenny, Monica, Lauren and Veronica all mention the fact that Amira had a very head-strong personality, which was also expressed by her PhD supervisor. Although I had maintained a good relationship with Amira for the time she was at the language centre and used to visit her in her research office once she started her PhD, it soon became apparent that she was not interested in maintaining a working relationship that was developing into a friendship. In July 2009 I received an email from her telling me not to contact her again, which I found extremely upsetting. I have respected Amira's wishes, even though it was her story I was hoping to give voice to as I thought she had the most interesting and thought-provoking experiences to share. This is the reason why her personal perspective is absent from this research.

*Biographical.*

Jenny taught English in Australian High Schools for ten years before retraining into English as a Second Language. After various jobs she went overseas for seven years and taught in Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand before returning to Australia where she was employed by the university English language centre in 2000. Over the 10 years up until the time of the interview at the English language centre she taught on a number of different programs including General English, IELTS and the Bridging courses into the university. Jenny worked with Amira in IELTS preparation.

Veronica's background was in English and Drama. She received a scholarship from Cambridge to study English Language Teaching and had an MA in Education by research, completed in the area of English Language Teaching with a drama focus. Veronica worked for 10 years as a lecturer and senior lecturer, in teacher training and was the faculty head of the Arts department for six years. She had been a teacher at the language centre for two years at the time of the interview. Veronica worked with Amira

in an intensive English Language preparation course specifically for students with a pathway into post-graduate courses at the university.

Lauren started out *teaching kids maybe 15 years ago*. She did some English teaching to adults for a number of years overseas and had been a teacher at the language centre on and off for three years at the time of this interview, teaching on a variety of courses including English for Academic purposes and IELTS exam preparation. At the time of this interview Lauren was studying for her Graduate Diploma in Education to find work in primary and high schools. Lauren worked with Amira in IELTS preparation.

Monica had an Arts/Law degree, Arts honours, a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching for Adults) and a graduate certificate in TESOL. At the time of this interview she was one year into her PhD which *looks at the discourse around the accusation of Israeli war crimes*. As part of her PhD she was learning Arabic which *has opened up my linguistic understanding of things* in terms of the Arabic speaking students she was teaching. Monica started working at the language centre in 2007 and had worked there on a casual basis since then. Monica worked with Amira in her first 10 weeks at the language centre in Academic English preparation. She was the only teacher who had any experience in teaching a student with a disability; she had worked at a different university in their DLU in 2001, mostly in the role of note taker and coincidentally mostly with students from Arabic-speaking backgrounds. She worked with students with hearing impairments in addition to students who required assistance for conditions such as chronic fatigue syndrome. Monica also worked in *print disabilities* formatting resources for students with vision impairments and had *a good knowledge of [computer] programs available to students with visual impairments and the kinds of things that they needed depending on their disability*.

Terry was the coordinator of the DLU at the university and at the time of the interview had been in the role for just over one year. Prior to that, for several years he was the manager of an adult education service for people with a disability. His move to working in disability services happened *by accident* after doing some volunteer work with an adult training and support service while he was studying for his teaching diploma. He then completed further qualifications by completing an Advanced Certificate in Residential and Community Services (ACRACS) and an Advanced Diploma in Disability Studies with some extra training in I.T. and adult literacy *to give myself more well-rounded teaching and general knowledge*. For Terry *working with students in a higher educational context has been an interesting and rewarding learning curve*.

Out of the four teachers, Monica was the only one who had had any experience in working with a student with a disability. Jenny, Veronica and Lauren had had no experience in teaching a student with a disability before working with Amira, nor were they given any formal training at all before working with her. Nonetheless, the experience had a profound impact on each of the teachers in their own way:

*[Teaching Amira] forced me to be resourceful and creative...I did learn a lot of skills (Veronica).*

*Well I found that I was actually learning a lot about something that was different and was new for me (Lauren).*

*It was rewarding to be involved in the process of facilitating that to some extent so I guess there's an additional reward to teaching but I suppose I'm someone who finds teaching a pretty rewarding role, I enjoy contact with students and I enjoy seeing them improve, whoever they are (Monica).*

*You sort of had a sense [that] you were doing something really worthwhile, we knew we had to stick at it until we got to where we had to get to, and it was kind of like a huge bonus in a way to suddenly find that she had achieved her [IELTS] score! (Jenny).*

Monica, Lauren and Jenny all said they would be keen to work with a student with a disability again given the skills they learnt and the experiences they had.

*Yeah I'd absolutely do it again (Monica).*

*Oh, yeah, definitely I really [would do it again]. It is a challenge but it is rewarding and I do want to help them [students with a disability], and I find it more interesting (Lauren).*

*I'd say I learnt quite a lot of those fundamental things about dealing with someone with a disability...I'd feel more confident...if I ever had to deal with someone again...I'd do it again...I'd be much more confident, and could handle it... I'm learning things I didn't know, it's the knowledge level...we were just ignorant (Jenny).*

Jenny explained her perceptions further in terms of how she perceived my question of 'challenge' as opposed to 'opportunity':

*I found problem with the way you're putting the word 'challenge', as a sort of, you're putting development, opportunity versus challenge. Now, I don't have a negative about challenge...No, no, it was a stretching, but, you know, if you change 'challenge' into a 'problem', which is how it looks here [in the interview question], then, I think you have to say 'a problem, is it an opportunity or a*

*problem', so I think it was a challenge, you know, it was a thing that stretched you, so it was a new element that you had to take on board.*

Terry also spoke about what he found to be the rewarding aspects of his job, particularly in terms of seeing students succeed, in whatever way that may do.

*It's a big responsibility and you can potentially make a lot of difference to someone... For me the rewards are when you see people getting through their degree and for some people, even just a pass is a great achievement. We always hope for students to be as successful as they can be. In most cases, people do complete their degree and may go on to employment... It is rewarding to see people, through perhaps just a few simple interventions, have got through university and had more of a positive than a negative experience along the way...sometimes even if someone can just survive their personal challenges get through their course and pass, that can be a huge achievement and we really respect that.*

*Cultural.*

*Institutional cultures.*

The services that the DLU provides are very much framed by the social model of disability.

*We [the DLU] see not so much the disability as being the issue with the person, it's more the disability within the environment: the environment is disabling (Terry).*

Veronica, however, saw a different side to the culture of students with a disability at the university.

*I think the general attitude towards students with a disability at the university is a sense of avoidance and consideration of what the best outcomes are. It's almost like things are swept under the carpet. There seems to be avoidance for the things that can help and support students and staff (Veronica).*

Jenny and I had had a few conversations prior to this interview about Amira's IELTS score and the fact that she got a band score of seven first attempt was remarkable for any student. We had been concerned before the test that she wasn't quite ready so we were very surprised when we were told she had got the score she required to enter into her PhD. This prompted Jenny to think about the culture of the institutions (the university and the examination board) and whether in fact her score was legitimate.

*In terms of her success we were sort of wondering whether she was pushed through, by either the IELTS staff or somebody. And we can't verify that at all, but it raises for me the issue of - are institutions a little bit easy on these students because they feel sorry for them, do they actually insist on similar levels to other students? (Jenny).*

Jenny suggested two main reasons as she saw it why institutional culture may be 'a little easy on' students with a disability:

*One might be sympathy, the other one [reason] might be that they want to get them through, to get them through the institution, actually out of the institution and out of their hair. You know, to kind've get rid of the 'problem' (Jenny).*

At the centre of the conceptual framework for this study are collaborative work practices. A large part of Terry's job as a liaison officer was to maintain relationships



with other parts of the university and to develop a strong culture of collaboration in order to best meet the needs of the students.

*If a student comes to us they might need other services such as counselling, or library support: learning skills, access to library materials, other services within university that they may not be aware of or may not think to access, so we can also act as a point of referral for them as well. Being able to access a support network within the university can be really important to their success.*

According to Terry liaising on behalf of international students was a large part of the job in that *sometimes international students can have difficulty with communication*. In this kind of situation,

*with their consent, I might ring a lecturer or key staff person on the student's behalf, or send them an email. Occasionally, other support staff can intervene as well that the student trusts. Sometimes, it might be appropriate to liaise with another staff person, with the student's consent, who we can help bridge that gap of information and take any further action that might be required, or make a referral (Terry).*

For Terry, collaboration was key insofar as the DLU's mission to be working as *an impartial agency of support and advice for university staff, including lecturing staff and student services staff. We want to support the lecturers to make the right decision. We want to build on that positive attitude and support and nurture it. Hopefully, the more awareness and understanding people have, perhaps the more accommodating they can be in an appropriate way and feel comfortable about asking us questions (Terry).*

Unfortunately this sense of collaboration was not felt amongst the teachers.

Jenny talked about her sense of there being a lack of collaborative culture in working with Amira:

*There's one thing about collaboration though and it was the fact that this student had so many personal issues where they were confidential issues, and then, it meant that people like [managers] were in the know, but you and I were not, and that...I can understand, you must keep the confidentiality of the student, because that's essential. But this funny thing about the confidentiality is that it often makes it difficult for the whole group to feel like a team. And so we knew there were things affecting her progress but we were not a part of the 'in' group that knew what they were. And some of those were very serious. Yeah, so it's a bit like, you get on and do your job and...you know what I mean? It's difficult, we weren't part of the...we weren't a complete group. I would think that there needs to be a team but there needs to be someone who's in charge of that team (Jenny).*

This was interesting to me as a research insider. I was actually made privy to the confidential information that Jenny refers to here about Amira when it was all happening. There were some very serious legal issues concerning her family and her support here in Australia. I was asked by the manager to come into his office one day when Amira was absent which was very out of character for her. My manager didn't tell me details but I was told some general information and the gravity of the situation which explained her absence from class. This manager then informed me that he did not want Jenny to know as he thought she would overreact to the news. I then had to continue teaching not only with the knowledge of this serious situation which was affecting the student, but also not being able to share this with my colleague. Eventually

Jenny found out from another source and, as I had thought, she was very pragmatic about it and disappointed we had not been told out of courtesy. I never told Jenny that I had known all along. This example once again points to the collaborative culture which was lacking in the relational field between teachers and managers.

Veronica also experienced a sense of management withholding information from her:

*I was only given four days' notice that I was going to be teaching this student, and had no knowledge of teaching students with a vision impairment.*

Moreover,

*I also wasn't able to liaise directly with the DLU or with her law supervisor - that had to be done through my manager. The reason for not being able to liaise directly was never explained to me (Veronica).*

It is unfortunate that this was the case for Veronica because according to Terry these are exactly what DLU service provision caters for.

*We have provided some training to staff on working with students with a disability, but in the main it is provision of advice and information to individual staff (Terry).*

The lack of collaboration was also felt by the teachers in terms of how supported (or unsupported) they felt. Veronica's feelings of wanting *more support from other staff* certainly resonated with Monica and Lauren.

*Actually having more people involved [in the teaching] would have been good, like I had a number of people approach me and say 'oh I heard you were doing this' but no one really knew about it (Monica).*

Monica felt that there was a lack of understanding of the workload which was required. We both had one particular leading teacher say to us that we shouldn't be complaining about all the extra work from scanning because it was purely a matter of good time keeping.

*You feel like saying [to the leading teacher who made this comment] 'if you had a go at doing this, you'd understand that that's actually the nature of what happens with the workload when you're modifying materials and classes and you're thinking about the class and how things are going to work' (Monica).*

We were both highly insulted by this comment from our colleague, especially in view of the fact that Monica and I had both proven ourselves to have exemplary time management skills in balancing the demands of PhD study with a highly intensive workload in our jobs.

Lauren also spoke about how she felt a sense of tension within the teacher/management culture of the institution.

*I think they [management] just wanted to ignore us...that's sort of how I felt...it was really really hard. And it was funny because we were thrown into this, and in the end we felt that we were the difficult ones, which was ridiculous, because they [the management] were the ones who gave [us this role], and then they just expected us to deal with it and for them to do nothing, which I find ridiculous...if they're going to feel that we're the ones who have to do it then they also are*

*responsible, especially admin, they can't just dump it on us, but that's what they wanted to do, and just move on with things, which is ridiculous (Lauren).*

The resentment Lauren felt as a result is palpable:

I'm just a teacher, I'm not in an important position.

Veronica felt that there was

*generally a problem with communication in the organisation anyway which was really highlighted in working with this student; it all seemed to just fall apart.*

Jenny, Monica and Lauren all agreed that bad communication made them feel like they had no support. Lauren's feelings of being *ignored* by management were echoed by Jenny –she told me after the interview that talking to me about our experiences of teaching Amira was like the debrief we all should have had but never got. This truly made me feel a sense of validation of my research, and a real privilege to be an insider in being able to hear about what my colleagues had been experiencing during a time which for all of us was very stressful.

Probably one of the most significant ideas to come through these interviews with the teaching staff was to do with how they felt that not only was there no adequate training provided to us before undertaking this role with Amira:

*I really felt like I needed more training, from at least a month before I started working with her (Veronica).*

There was also a feeling that the culture in the language centre was one which was not encouraging any kind of up-skilling. As Veronica says, training was never offered to any of us the whole time we were working with Amira.

*I wasn't ever offered the chance to go on any kind of training course and I discovered a lot of useful information later on the uni website which would have been useful at the start, but by the time I discovered it, I was too snowed under with the demands of the course (Veronica).*

*I felt like I developed quite a lot during my teaching experience, but I also feel like more resources and possibly even PD's [professional development sessions] could have been run (Monica).*

Lauren and I were both interested at one stage in doing a course on teaching people with a disability at university.

*There was a course I wanted to do [on teaching people with a disability at university] and I asked the head of my department if they would assist, and I asked if they would pay for me to do this course because I wanted to work and continue to help others who would come to this [English language] course, and others with a disability who would come to this university and I wanted to work and to improve my training and knowledge so that next time it would be easier and that next time we would, as a university, be better. However, I had no [offers of financial] assistance and nobody was interested in [me doing] this, and I found that disgusting, that really made me angry because I thought we were told that we had to help and train and educate these people with disabilities and then we weren't given any assistance, even when we asked for it, so that really made me very angry (Lauren).*

I also asked one of the managers if I could attend this short course which would have cost them a nominal fee and involved my attendance over 5 days. They refused, saying that this student was a 'one-off' and that they couldn't see the value in me attending such a course. I could have afforded to pay for it myself but I would have been denied time off to attend. Lauren and I were told at the time that it was not worthwhile us doing the course because 'there would probably not be another student like Amira coming to the language centre'. As it turns out, since Amira in 2008/2009 there have since been (to my knowledge) three more students with a disability come to the language centre.

This experience affected Lauren deeply.

*I kind've started to look elsewhere [for work] when that happened [with the manager]. I started to think 'what am I doing here, this [working with Amira] is not my area' because I do want to do this [training] but I can't do it here so I suppose I'll have to find another job (Lauren).*

The university bureaucracy resulted in us working within highly inflexible systems. This hindered the extent to which the teachers felt they were able to collaborate with other areas of the university and created difficulties in some of the logistical arrangements for Amira. The major issue we experienced was with I.T.:

*We came up against...some kind of demarcation dispute between DLU and our I.T. staff...our I.T. staff said they couldn't load JAWS up on the computers in the CALL [Computer Assisted Language Learning] lab, so there was some demarcation disputes between different units and who was responsible for what...that's the structure of the independent business units here in this*

*university...so...whether that's just entrenched...you do come up against that bureaucracy a bit (Jenny).*

*There were a lot of day to day issues that had to be dealt with which ideally should have been done before she started with us, such as getting a computer in the lab set up so it could be used for JAWS, which took a week to set up, and dealing with these kinds of logistics was very challenging (Veronica).*

Because the collaborative culture for us teachers to work with the DLU directly was not sufficiently managed, it was unclear to us who should have been dealing with what. At the time we assumed that the DLU also dealt with I.T. issues, but through interviewing Terry I found out that this in fact was not entirely within their jurisdiction.

*Students who are registered with us can use computers with assistive software in these rooms [in the library]. We have laptops that students can borrow, or use in exams, or tests that have screen reading software like JAWS. We provide information and support for assistive software, but we're not I.T. experts (Terry).*

Not only did we have to work with internally inflexible systems but external systems also proved to be extremely difficult to navigate and work with. When I first started working with Amira I was shocked by how discriminatory other teachers could be, but justified their actions or comments by saying 'we are treating her like everyone else.' One situation that made me furious involved the IELTS exam. One of the writing components is a task where students are required to write a response to their interpretation of visual information given in the form of a chart or a graph. The thrust of the task relies on how well a student can interpret the visual information. To me it seemed obvious that Amira should be given an exemption from this task. After all, a



student who was deaf would not have been asked to sit the listening part of the exam. I was amazed at how hard I had to push management to try to get an exemption for Amira, and when they finally saw my point, we applied to the examination board who insisted that she complete the task. Not only did this place a tremendous amount of pressure on Amira on top of the pre-exam stress, it also created a nightmare for the staff. We had to convert the information from the graph or table into text, but being mindful of not interpreting the information for her as that was the point of the task. (For example, if the task involved a table, we would write something like ‘this task involves a table with the heading ‘Numbers of international students in Australia from 1999 - 2004’. In the left column there are six countries – China, Vietnam’ etcetera. ‘The number of students from China in 1999 was X, in 2000 was X’ and so on). The cognitive strain on Amira was enormous as she had to listen to all the numbers and try to choose the significant numbers in order to make comparisons across countries with the data. It was absolutely draining for all of us and to me seemed utterly useless, and yet it was something that she was forced to do. Terry articulated similar ideas in talking about the fair treatment of all students.

*Equal opportunity doesn't mean equal treatment, as some people think, because one person's needs may not be true for someone else: you treat it on an individual basis. Just because someone gets an accommodation, it doesn't mean everyone will get it. It just means in their case and at that point in time, they require a particular accommodation. [The aim of equal opportunity is]to try and level the playing field: to give people the same kind of opportunities to develop and reach their potential as other people enjoy, so that they don't have to worry about access issues.*

*Perspectives on international students.*

Terry talked candidly about the inclusion of international students with a disability in Australian universities. He mentioned the fact that *the federal government does not provide funding for international students with a disability*, but despite this the DLU is

*naturally committed to providing them with the same level of service as other students. It can be challenging when a student arrives from another country and they may not know anyone, particularly if they are on their own and isolated. That's challenging for anyone, and if a person also has a disability, that's an extra challenge, and that's something we're working towards supporting even better than we do now.*

The challenges for these students as Terry suggested are borne of more than purely academic support requirements.

*Academic support is obviously what our core business is, but it's also important that the student is linked in to a social network, a peer network, to help them get around the university, and to access social events. Even access to general university life, whether it's a seminar, or a talk, or a barbecue; can help a student feel welcomed and a part of the wider community. I also think it benefits their academic work.*

Terry was quick to point out the knock-on effects that a positive student experience could have.

*If you've got international students doing well, then going home they may talk about their positive experiences and thereby promote a very positive image of the university.*

It was clear that Terry had an awareness of some of the differences and difficulties that student might experience as a result of living in a new Australian culture. He gave an example of how confusion or a level of discomfort may occur regarding levels of academic formality:

*Students may notice the informality of Australia, including the realisation that they can call teachers by their first name: Joe, or Ann, rather than professor, or sir, or madam, or whatever term they use.*

According to Terry students could find acculturation difficult as a result of getting used to both studying and living independently, where perhaps this expectation of independence was not the norm in their home country.

*Occasionally, some students, understandably, may expect many things to be done for them. They might've come from a culture within their society where they had people to provide direct support. Of course in Australia our aim is to facilitate appropriate accommodations, but it's also to empower and support that person to ask for things, to take ownership of their own learning and responsibility for that as much as they can.*

Nonetheless, according to Terry, students seemed to be willing to adapt to Australian inclusive cultural ideals.

*Students understand when you explain that in Australia, we aim for people to be as independent as possible, to empower that person, it's not to disadvantage them. Of course if they need a certain support or accommodation, it will be provided, but we also encourage students to take some responsibility for that.*

Terry's perspective on these students resonated with me:

*If you're used to a very supportive family and community network in your home country it would be daunting to go to another country without your support network, to cope with a different language, different culture and a disability as well. I respect and admire people who do that.*

*Teacher perceptions of Amira's culture.*

When Amira first came to the language centre she relied on her brother for mobility in getting to and from university, and note-takers, teachers or students in guiding her to other classrooms or toilets during class time. She had relied heavily on her family for assistance in Iraq and was not used to or able to walk with a mobility aide such as a cane or guide dog. Yet as Jenny explained, the managers continued to push her to receive mobility training which caused a lot of distress for Amira as well as tension between Amira and a couple of the managers.

*We kept getting this message from management that [Amira] was not willing [to be independent], and this is where the problem came, because we [the teachers] were on her side, but there was this feeling from management that they were unhappy with Amira, feeling that she should do more [for herself] ... I kept getting a negative [feeling] from them...that Amira was resistant - she resisted the white cane and things like that.*

Being *on her side* as Jenny puts it essentially meant that we teachers talked to each other at length about why Amira might not want to use a cane for mobility instead of being guided by another person, and that we were willing to be more patient with her in making her own decision about whether this is something she wanted to do. Amira didn't like to talk about it, but we made our own assumptions based on what we knew about her background.

It was interesting to hear the teachers talk about Amira's culture. Veronica and Jenny thought about Iraqi culture in terms of how they understood the empowerment of women there.

*I think it was significant that this student was from a country where women are not empowered (Veronica).*

*There were mobility issues because she wasn't meant to go anywhere without a male relative, she couldn't live without a male relative, she wasn't meant to make decisions without a male relative... So it would have been a totally different kettle of fish if you'd had a male sight impaired student from Iraq (Jenny).*

While Monica and Lauren talked about the context of the importance of the family:

*I do come from a Arabic family myself, which informed to a greater extent my cultural knowledge of the kinds of things that these students experience...for example family involvement in Arabic and Turkish contexts is very high, they want their children to be able to get a good education...the emphasis of education for the next generation is extremely strong...[but] when I talk about*

*family support it's not that I don't think that people wouldn't have family support from an Australian background or a non-Arab background, but I definitely would say that there is a sense of real devotion to that person's goal in one or more members of the family (Monica).*

*She was a very determined woman, so she seemed to show that even in her own culture she was able to achieve and she got very far in her culture but as I said I think that was just due to her family support, but maybe it was also the education department there or the education sector in her country, I'm not too sure. She did seem to have quite a good position in her own country, I mean, she was working...she was educated by her family however she did get her own job which was very good (Lauren).*

*In her own country there was absolutely no assistance there, that's what she told me, and that's another reason why she never learnt Braille as well because everything she learnt was from her family (Lauren).*

But all of these comments about her culture were purely our own conjecture and as Veronica suggested *I think we also have a real lack of understanding of her cultural context [in Iraq].*

*Perspectives of own culture.*

Terry's perception was that Australian socio-cultural perspectives of disability are still dominated by the medical model, but that there is a gradual shift occurring *with advances in legislation and positive publicity.* However,

*people still have that concept of needy people: they need stuff: they need extra this, they need extra that, funding. In other words, they're always in deficit,*

*which is what I call the deficit theory. I can understand where this comes from, because certain supports can be expensive, particularly for people with high support needs. However it would be nice to see more positive examples and role models of people who make a very valuable contribution to society, but they just happen to require certain equipment, or software, or whatever is appropriate to manage their lives.*

Jenny and Lauren talked about their sense of Australian socio-cultural perceptions of disability.

*I think Australia has a unique culture about disability. It comes from...we love to see people punching above their weight. Now, what Australians love to see is someone without a leg winning a gold medal at the para-Olympic games, that's what they like. So Australia has that 'ignore your disability, punch way above your weight, be a hero, don't complain' ...Australians are very good at helping people, I don't know for how long, they certainly would help a 'one-off' situation, like on a train, but I don't know what you'd characterise as the social norms of disability in this country and culture.*

Jenny had told me when we first started working together that she had a daughter with schizophrenia which I think makes the following statement even more compelling:

*Australians are not good with the hidden disabilities - the ones you can't see. Because they have that whinging thing, you know 'if you're depressed, get over it', that kind of thing. So I think Australians are fairly intolerant.*

Lauren had lived and worked for a number of years in Europe (Italy and Austria) and her views came from a comparison of disability there with Australia.

*I think in our society and culture [in Australia it] is actually worse [than Europe] which is quite sad...a lot of people seem to segregate people with disabilities, and certain disabilities maybe more than others, ones that you see and you notice. People [here] just aren't really taught how to be with people with disabilities, how to live, how to work with people with a disability. For example where my partner is from [in Italy] there are a lot of people with a disability around where he's from and they're just getting on with their lives like everybody else. And they're assisted with the family, not the government. However they are given the chance to live in society like everybody else. I just find here that's funny that people don't mix as much (Lauren).*

Terry was relatively positive about the changes in attitude he had witnessed over the years in the Australian cultural context of disability in that *there's been a lot more of a transition from a medical model of disability towards more seeing disability in the social/cultural sense*. As Terry saw it, this shift had resulted in Australians generally seeing people with a disability as *people who have a lot of potential to contribute to society*.

Terry believed the shift away from deficit views could occur through a reconceptualisation of perspectives by people learning to focus on

*the positive contributions people can make rather than any disability or medical condition they may have. Most people have got something to offer, whether they're a higher or lower achiever, it doesn't matter. We should move right away from the sympathy vote, and look at empowering people in our community.*



*I believe there's a lot of good will in our society towards people with a disability, but some people are not sure what to do with it. What's the next step? I think integrating people in to education and employment really helps, because of course most people with a disability experience higher incidences of unemployment, despite all the laws that prevent discrimination.*

*Perspectives on creating a knowledge culture.*

A strong knowledge culture within the university is something that all the teachers felt would improve both the teacher and the student experience. The focus for the teachers was very much on the tenets of universal inclusion, meaning training and support for all staff, as well as students.

*We need training. And the DLU also needs to look at the psychological support, even assertiveness training for students, more than just looking at the physical all the time, because if a student's going to survive, they need that kind of assistance, don't they? (Jenny)*

*Every faculty needs to have a member from the DLU who then trains the teachers who are dealing with students with disabilities (Lauren).*

*I think people should be given more teaching experience or just training to teach people with disabilities...I think as a teacher you need to...be given training...We [as educators] have the problem, the fact that we don't know, and don't have this experience or training which we really should have as teachers and organisers, we should be getting training in this area. I know it's hard because there are so many different kinds of disabilities. However I still think it's very important (Lauren).*

Monica also talked about the importance of *building on knowledge that has been accumulated at any one time, and developing a stronger set of resources* for example through the establishment and maintenance of a database or some other system for sharing

*where knowledge is going to be accessible in that unit...so that you've got an informed staff and knowledge transfer and a better and more positive attitude about it rather than people feeling burdened (Monica).*

These ideas were based on Monica's experiences where in working with Amira:

*there were a number of moments of breakdown in terms of the accumulated knowledge that some people were getting [and it] wasn't necessarily passed onto the next people adequately and so I think that was an opportunity lost by the organisation because I'm sure that if someone [another student with a disability] turned up now, they'd almost be back to scratch in terms of their knowledge of how to deal with it (Monica).*

For Lauren this knowledge-sharing also extended to policy issues

*With the policy, every teacher and everybody who is dealing with students should be given training in working with or being involved with people with disabilities or even depression, and dealing with things like psychological issues...the policy in general, should be expanded and it should be taught, we should know what this policy is (Lauren).*

Both Veronica and Terry thought about this question in terms of universal access and how inclusive practices can work to create positive educational and social outcomes for all students.

*Regarding the future, in terms of teaching, there needs to be greater awareness for everyone, regardless of whether you will be involved in teaching a student with a disability or not. There needs to be training in awareness of disabilities, which should be as natural as learning to read and write... others see students with a disability as 'different', and it's a pity that we still tend to focus on the disability rather than who the person actually is (Veronica).*

The way that this can be achieved as Terry saw it, is through an approach to inclusion which fosters the notion of universal access in that accessibility is

*not just for people in wheelchairs, or people with a print disability, although it does affect them. Access is better for everyone. For example, if you've got a website with plain English, simple links, simple structure, then someone from an international background's going to find that a lot easier to access. In regards to the built environment, if there are good lifts and ramps, that doesn't just benefit people with a disability, it benefits pregnant women, it benefits women with babies in prams, it benefits workers that carry heavy objects on trolleys, or elderly people with mobility issues with a walking stick or frame... someone might present a lecture in video format and that's great, but if a person has hearing loss, it's not accessible to them unless it has captioning, which is relatively easy to do. It does require extra time and money, of course, but again, someone from a non-English speaking background is also going to benefit by that too, because they can follow the language easier if it's in a written text*

*format as well as a spoken format. It's about thinking broadly...Good accessibility usually has a much wider application than the primary purpose. It might take extra money and resources to put in place, but the long term cost benefits are worth the investment. The trick is getting people to see that improving accessibility is actually a smart thing to do, as well as a good thing to do.*

*Policy perceptions.*

Perhaps not surprisingly, Terry was more informed about the university's inclusive policies and resources than the teachers as it is an integral part of his job as a DLU support worker.

*there is legislation about supporting students with a disability and again, all the policies around that. There is a staff disability policy, and a Disability Plan...We do have some resources on our website about teaching students with a disability. For example there's the ADCET [Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training] website which has some fantastic resources about all different sorts of disabilities, teaching people with those disabilities, including whole resources for teachers. There's also the inclusive practices web link and that's has a lot of information about students with disabilities and different ways of approaching and presenting information, different teaching styles you might use.*

Part of Terry's job is to be aware of and to understand policy issues as well as making sure that others are informed about them.

*It's part of our job to try and explain to students that they have a responsibility to communicate appropriately regarding their accommodations and follow university policy and procedure.*

Jenny and Monica spoke about their perceptions in terms of the wider implications for policy implementation and the role which universities play in the push for working towards a culture of inclusion:

*Universities tend to be an institution more or less a bit of an ivory tower, a little bit cut off from the rest of the world, but you'd expect a university to be on the cutting edge of all of this...the university's obliged to do something about it [inclusion] so whether that gets out to the ordinary community...People like you and me and other lecturers who are teaching and attending information sessions, then this must have some kind of flow-on effect into the community. We think higher education should be taking that leadership position, but really I think it's the government who should take it...what could improve the situation? I don't know...the social side of things is always an issue, isn't it? Social inclusiveness as well as academic and it comes down to whether the kids accept them as humans or are they in that category of 'odd', 'different' (Jenny).*

*I think that universities can be a really powerful advocate for policy implementation because students are not employees and in fact we now think of them as being clients or customers, and not even necessarily students. And given that the DLU's role is primarily to facilitate their time at university, they have an opportunity to implement things, to the best of their ability, given funding etcetera. And certainly producing graduates who do suffer from various disabilities is probably an important signal to the wider community that these*

*people certainly have competencies and specialist knowledge and abilities so I'd say that that is important (Monica).*

The teachers had a mix of experience of and familiarity with equity and diversity policy at the university. Lauren admitted that she was *quite ignorant* of policy issues - hence her desire to see this information disseminated and taught more explicitly.

Veronica said she *became familiar with it along the way* and was generally positive about the policies themselves.

*Generally the university seems to be very well equipped for people with a physical disability in getting access to classrooms etcetera...I do know that this university are very aware and want to advocate equity and diversity for all students (Veronica).*

The complicating factor as Jenny saw our experience was

*The double disability here [with Amira]; we've got the sight impaired but also an overseas student. [International students] need more time, it's always time. They have a disability with regards to Australian students.*

I had provided all the participants with a copy of my questions prior to the interview. When I asked Jenny about her knowledge of the university policies regarding students with a disability it was clear she had done her homework in preparation for the interview. She had brought with her a number of printed copies of different policies from the university website to show me as she talked about them.

*I looked at the [policies] website when we had this student, and it was around about 2004/2005 when there was a lot of work done on it. Previous to that I*

*wasn't aware of their policies, mainly because it just wasn't an issue. I'm aware that there's not much said in these [refers to printed copies of policies]...there's [reads from policy] 'mobility and medical conditions, learning disability, hearing, psychiatric, vision'...but as you're aware, not much that talks about an international student.*

The language centre operates as an entity which is part of, but separate to, the university. It is owned by a private company which gives a lot of its profits to the university. This worked to place teachers in a strange positioning in relation to the university proper - we worked for a functional part of the university but never really felt like we were part of the greater university structures and systems despite being governed by their policies. This also worked to create tensions and contradictions within the culture that we worked in as teachers - the managers seemed to operate differently to what was strictly stipulated in the university policies - because we were working in a different context. Our context was constant face-to-face time with the students even over the university summer breaks (our busiest time) as opposed to university lecturers who would get a certain amount of time away from face-to-face teaching through the year. This made professional development opportunities limited and a lack of funds also made this difficult.

As time progressed over the period when I worked at the language centre, it started to become apparent to me that the centre was having financial troubles. This was around the time we were no longer allowed note-takers in class, which in teaching the IELTS preparation class proved extremely difficult for logistical reasons such as the need to remove Amira from class in practising for certain parts of the exam. In considering the policy documents, however, we assumed that the language centre would have been able to justify the 'exceptions' to their provisions as Jenny pointed out:

*Then we get [refers to policy document] 'exceptions' in part 10, [reads from document] "it wouldn't be unlawful if it failed to comply, if you could prove unjustifiable hardship on the provider." So this is in here, these are the exceptions; this is the 'out'. "If the institution can't provide...." which would be the money side of it. For example, right now, this place [the language centre] would definitely go for that, they'd say 'we can't afford to', yeah, absolutely. So the [reads from document] "estimated amount of expenditure required to be made shouldn't be unjustifiable", and here, "there will be possible adjustments which are not reasonable, there is no requirement on the provider to make unreasonable adjustments". So these, 'what's reasonable, what's unreasonable', these are built in.*

While my question about policy had been aimed at capturing the extent of the knowledge of the staff regarding general inclusive policy, Jenny had been looking for policy which was explicit in mentioning international students and/or international students with a disability.

*[With Amira] we've got the double disability here, we've got the sight impaired but also an overseas student, whose English was very good...She really was unusual. Other students would have more language problems than her. She could pick it up [the language] very quickly and had a prodigious memory. So she never had any problem with the listening, really. But the only thing I could find for international students, there was this one thing about extended time for overseas students to take exams.*



We were both somewhat surprised by this policy that suggested international students should get more time to read in an exam situation. Jenny agreed that this should happen

*They need more time, it's always time. They have a disability with regards to Australian students...international students get more time to read...that was the only reference to overseas international students was that they would get extended time in their exams.*

We both wondered aloud whether students were actually aware of their right to claim this extra time. There was evidence, however, of movements around the refining and redefining of policy in the university, as Jenny discovered from her 'homework':

*[Reads from printouts] "inclusive teaching strategies are now included as part of the graduate certificate of higher education", that's become part of the course in the last three years...and then there's a review which says within five years, that would be this year, this year it should be reviewed.*

Terry had some interesting perspectives about policy and I liked the way that he spoke about the importance of legislation for inclusion in seeing the parallels between legal and behavioural change and adaptation.

*That's why laws are important, because it can be hard to change attitudes, but you can change the behaviour. A law can say that certain behaviour is not allowed. You can't smoke in the building any more. You can't drop litter on the ground any more. Whatever your attitude is, it doesn't matter: that thing you were doing, you can't do it...with the equal opportunity laws it's about people becoming aware of those and like I say, peoples' attitudes are catching up with*

*the laws and the policies so people understand what's acceptable and what's not acceptable.*

*Situational.*

Terry defined the general aim of the DLU as being

*to support our students at university and in other settings to be as independent as possible. If there's an accommodation that enhances a person's independence and integration in to the mainstream, then that's the ideal we always aim for.*

In terms of the pragmatics of service delivery, Terry described the multifaceted aspects of the DLU in providing

*note taking support, alternative formatting, organising AUSLAN [Australian Sign Language] interpreters, assistive software, alternative exam arrangements and supporting students that require flexibility in assignment deadlines. We may review ways of perhaps modifying the work space with equipment and addressing more systemic issues, such as the built environment, where the students may experience barriers. We also support staff, but students would be the main part of our service provision.*

Terry was very positive about the services provided by the DLU and he made a point of saying that *in most cases, accommodations aren't that difficult and it's not that problematic*. How these services have a favourable impact upon the experience of a student is something that he found a rewarding part of the role.

For the teachers, the daily pragmatics of teaching Amira were different to what any of us had experienced before. There were a number of logistical and pedagogical adaptations needed for Amira in class.

*Well there were clearly physical ones [accommodations required], such as asking her did she need guiding...guiding to the toilet, guiding to the library area, guiding to the class. There were other teaching accommodations that were needed, we were asked to be verbal in our instructions, we had to say exactly what we were doing, so that required us to make some kinds of changes in our teaching style. And to remember to do that...to tell Amira whether you were leaving her presence and to say who you were when you came into her presence so she knew who you were (Jenny).*

*I couldn't rely on using CLT [Communicative Language Teaching] ... I couldn't rely on the group to 'just engage' with each other. I also couldn't do things like role plays...sometimes I could but I had to do things like get the note-taker to read the instructions to her...in those situations I had to be flexible but rigid in the delivery. But there certainly wasn't the same amount of freedom for me as a teacher having this student in the class (Veronica).*

*She needed JAWS [on her laptop] so she had to sit up the front of the class near the power point... I had to have the room arranged differently as well so as to facilitate this (Veronica).*

*In the ESL context I'd say I was more conscious of having very communicative, small groups of students to assist one another, so less pair work and having stronger groups of perhaps 3 or 4 to propel the task. Also perhaps more clearly assigning roles in the class and so allowing the student with a visual impairment*

*to be perhaps a scribe... being clearer about what roles the group members would play so that there was no confusion and that students were able to participate without feeling that the visual impairment was a disability, and that people weren't feeling 'handicapped' by that (Monica).*

Amira was required to undertake the four parts of the IELTS exam – listening, speaking, reading and writing. For the listening exam she was given extra time and a specially formatted CD which was prepared by the examination board (Cambridge). The CD was accompanied by a transcript which indicated where, during the listening exam, the CD could be paused. As Amira did not read Braille, the invigilator had to read her the questions in the section, play the CD, pause the CD where indicated and get Amira to say the answer for him/her to write down. She could listen twice but the CD could only be paused on the second playing. A large focus of the IELTS preparation classes was getting the students to do practice tests but this procedure was impossible to do with the other students in the class. Jenny therefore talked about the need to have space to make sure this could be done:

*Being able to withdraw Amira from the class to do listening and things like that was essential. There were times when we didn't have the space to withdraw her. And, we were competing with a class in that room, the workshop room, so sometimes it's just physical space can be a problem in here...you actually need rooms where you can withdraw the student (Jenny).*

Finding the right resources to use was also challenging:

*The work was challenging as I had to source appropriate materials for a program which hadn't been prepared – this mean that I was teaching a Law student in a Business class (Veronica).*

*I definitely spent a longer time planning and thinking things through very carefully in multiple ways because obviously other students were still going to require reading texts, so in terms of thinking of how things would work as an auditory text for this particular student given that she was going to be required to still be able to pick out the details from texts both for her own studies and for IELTS. I certainly relied on a much wider range of resources in the end (Monica).*

*We needed the note-taker, that was absolutely essential, preferably a room where you could withdraw a person easily because there needed to be withdrawal for things where her speaking answers would have interrupted the class (Jenny).*

According to Terry the DLU does not receive any additional funding for providing assistance to international students with a disability. In order to work within financial constraints the DLU has developed another approach aimed at bridging both academic and social support.

*Another challenge is providing one-on-one, individualised social support that is not funded, yet can make a significant difference to a student with a disability; especially one from an international background. We are now working with student services and student volunteering groups to look at recruiting student volunteers to establish a buddy system to provide meaningful peer support.*

*Workload.*

The time required to plan these logistical and pedagogical processes created extra work for everyone working with Amira.

*The workload probably doubled in terms of preparation time...and possibly even more because the student herself required a lot more personal time for going through written tasks in particular (Monica).*

Amira had not learnt to read Braille; it was not a learning mode she felt comfortable or confident in using. Before she came to the language centre the assumption was made that she was a reader of Braille but she had clearly not been consulted about this. The main difficulty was that the DLU would convert documents into Braille for us, with a six week lead in, but not scan documents into soft copy to be read by screen-reading technology such as JAWS. Braille was useless for us, as was the six week wait, as our courses were five weeks. The system was designed to suit Braille readers and university courses which ran over an entire semester and used the same book throughout. The nature of English teaching is very different to university lecturing in that teachers will often use a variety of sources which can change sometimes on a daily basis. Even though Amira didn't read Braille, the centre invested a large amount of time and money in having resources converted into Braille format, and also had Braille signs made (on the toilets for example).

To make matters worse, the language centre was starting to have financial troubles. Initially:

*we had one of the other teachers doing scanning for us, until it just got too prohibitive for him, he was just sick to death of it, so then we did it. Again, in the perfect world we would've had an admin assistant, somebody who was doing that for us instead of us doing it (Jenny).*

This *perfect world* as Jenny mentions would have been one where we were given administrative support for scanning our resources. Scanning added tremendously

to our workloads. It was also problematic that the version of JAWS which Amira was using did not read PDF files so we had to scan into Microsoft Word and reformat the text so that it was linear and remove all the pictures. A lot of the IELTS textbooks rely on pictures and visual stimulation so this was difficult to work with. Also, textbooks for English language courses are often written in a non-linear way for example, an exercise might require student A to turn to page 131 and student B to turn to page 135 for a pair-work exercise. All of the teachers spoke about the difficulty involved in scanning.

*With the books, we had to scan them, that was a nightmare. You wanted to do one exercise which was so simple with the other students and we had to scan everything, and some exercises you just couldn't do because it was that difficult, she couldn't see so we had to work out how she could do the exercise because it wasn't like other students where they could look at pictures or compare or give your opinion it's very different for somebody who cannot see. Also the fact that she couldn't read Braille as well was something that we found difficult, even though none of us had any experience in reading Braille either it was funny, it was like we were thrown into it, and we were getting no support or assistance from other people in the business (Lauren).*

*We had lots of problems with the scanning, the scanning was an issue...all of that was built into the workload. I learnt a lot about scanning, now I'm a whizz at scanning! (Jenny)*

*In preparing for the class, I had to scan documents and then email them to the student a week in advance to give the student an opportunity to read the material. I had to meet with her twice a week. I had to learn about scanning, how to format the text so it could be read by JAWS (Veronica).*

Jenny spoke about the demands of the increase in workload and organising the logistics of scanning the resources:

*Workload is one and a half...I remember just sitting down and plotting it out like a military exercise...breaking it up into steps...I can remember saying, 'now on Wednesday I have to have Monday's lesson'....Why? Because on Wednesday I'd have to find it, by Friday it would have to be scanned and re-programmed, 'cos we had to readjust [reformat] it, then it had to be got to Amira by Friday afternoon, so that she could do the lesson on Monday. So Wednesday, I was looking at Monday's lesson. As long as you plotted it out, and you kept up with the schedule, you could do it, but it had to be that kind of thing. So it was thinking ahead all the time. And of course you were teaching some other class as well, on the Wednesday/Thursday, you had to prepare some sort of class as well as try and keep on top of that so yeah, time and a half...it was definitely a workload issue.*

*Making it up as we went along.*

Monica spoke about the extent of the knowledge she had in working with a student with a disability and the training she had received in her previous job.

There was a little bit of training at the DLU but it's very general training, they don't necessarily train you for any specific student you're going to have because there's a very wide range of disabilities at university and there are also people with what I would classify as physical disabilities who are either unable to manipulate a pen or don't have full mobility and I never did work with students like that (Monica).

*[At the other university where I worked] there was training at the start; I think it was a one or 2 day workshop, speaking to various people from the unit. I had*



*additional training when I started doing print disability work and a manual that was given to me and with all my print disability work, the woman who was in charge of that at my university was very generous with her information, so she taught me how to use new systems as technology (Monica).*

Even with her experience, however, Monica says that she had *no knowledge of how to handle things at the start* when Amira first came into her class.

Jenny, Lauren, Veronica and I had no relevant experience we could draw upon in teaching Amira, and had not been given any prior training or access to resources to learn from. As Lauren says *we had to work it out ourselves* - something that she was required to do not only in this job but in previous roles:

*I was forced to teach kids that did have these certain disabilities, but nobody even told me or gave me an idea of how to teach them, so I kind've had to find out myself...which was difficult...and you also feel responsible...I love the students and I want them to succeed, so I put a lot of time and effort into each individual student.*

Veronica mentioned that *I was basically learning as I was teaching*. Veronica and Jenny talked how they tried to educate themselves:

*I actually did an experiment myself one day at home where I blindfolded myself for a couple of hours just to try and get some kind of insight into how it must feel, and it was very disempowering and frustrating. I realised the fact that we use and rely on the printed word so much. So in my classes for example I had to slow down [with my instructions] (Veronica).*

*I had very little knowledge of how to deal with a blind student; we had to learn as we went along (Jenny).*

*Pay.*

Lauren and Monica were employed as casual teachers when they were working with Amira, as was I for the first 15 weeks of working with her. The feeling with both Lauren and Monica was that they were doing way more work than the 'average' casual was doing, but for no extra remuneration or recognition.

*All the extra work I did I didn't even get paid for that which was...I mean I like to help of course but come on you do need to get paid for the time that you've put into something... it was time consuming...but I wasn't paid for the extra work, and I cared for the student so I did it anyway but I do think that the university should have put on more training or I should have been given more from the university to assist this student and not just expected to know and to do it in my own free time. Also the other employees shouldn't have had to do that either. It was very stressful (Lauren).*

*There's a one hour allocation for a main teacher per week to deal with all students and obviously you do more than that anyway, but this student really required one or possibly 2 hours that were going to be just hers in addition to class time, for you to go painstakingly through her written work, and talk about what was going wrong, and that was partly her personality, but actually regardless of that, I can't really see how one could do it more effectively anyway given that she did have a visual impairment - it's a new language and she's trying to get all the information aurally so I think those things weren't really taken into account. If there had been some kind of paltry acknowledgement in*

*terms of monetary remuneration, I wouldn't have that kind of sour taste about the increase of the workload, it wouldn't have needed to reflect the actual increase of the workload, but it would've needed to reflect that there was an increase in workload so I think that would have been quite important and would have made me feel quite differently (Monica).*

Not being acknowledged by more pay had an effect on the quality of the end product in class which Lauren felt she was delivering:

*Yes, so I was maybe getting [paid] an extra hour or something, but I was spending hours on doing the scanning, and I started to avoid exercises where I would have to print out or scan things because it was too time consuming which is bad, it should have been there already. It was like starting from scratch, and I would have been happy to do it if I had been paid to do it and I kind of felt like a slave after a while (Lauren).*

There also seemed to be inconsistency in knowing if extra money could be claimed.

*It was apparently suggested to the other person who was teaching her [Amira] in the initial stages that if we felt that we should be claiming more money then we could. He never passed that onto me until a lot later on, and I was reasonably angry at the time (Monica).*

*Interactional.*

*Inclusion/exclusion.*

All of the staff agreed that students with a disability should be included in classes with other students. I think it was clear that Jenny in particular had thought about the question carefully and I appreciated her honesty:

*It's their absolute right to have the same educational opportunities any student without a disability...they must be included in mainstream classes because the socialising is extremely important. They need to participate in group work, and all of that needs a lot of management from the teacher. Having said that though, I am absolutely convinced that were I employed to take Amira as a one-to-one student, you know if I'd been employed to teach her everything in IELTS for 5 days a week it would be so much easier for her and for me and for everybody...if I'd had a room where I could have taught Amira IELTS, that would have been so much easier I'm quite aware of that...the optimum, luxurious situation would have been to have that...you know, within the budget. So while we're saying they should be included in mainstream classes, there's no doubt in my mind that in terms of teaching them what they needed to know, particularly when getting over an IELTS hurdle, if your institution or the student could afford it, there's no doubt that one-to-one teaching would be optimum for them (Jenny).*

The teachers spoke about the fact that they were all highly conscious of the other students in the class and how they had to balance their responsibilities with both Amira and the rest of the class.

*That's the dilemma, and it was the dilemma for us. You could see body language or you would be sensitive to the fact that some students felt, rightly or wrongly,*

*that she had to be the focus and the class had to change to meet her needs, which meant that they were, quote, 'not getting a normal class experience'. It didn't matter in EAP [English for Academic Purposes], the girls in EAP were very nice to her but when it got to IELTS things changed...maybe the IELTS students are more 'I've gotta get through the exam' and so they were less tolerant of difficulties in this area and she did create difficulties in the class. And some felt impatient, you could tell. So, as a teacher you're pulled between the two. The other students pay high fees, you know, they need to get the teaching and here's the situation where the institution wants to be inclusive...so, it's a dilemma, there's a tension there, but it just has to be managed I think, in the teachers' thinking and probably the class (Jenny).*

*There was some reluctance from the other students when she first joined the class (Veronica).*

*Often I felt that we were focussing too much on [Amira] and maybe ignoring the rest...it's hard because the rest of the class didn't have a disability...By the end I think she interacted more with the class which was good, because we were learning as teachers, we were learning, because maybe we focussed at first too much on her because we were thinking 'oh no, she has a disability, she needs all our assistance, she needs our care', but we should have realised we don't have to focus on her, she's perfectly capable...the only thing is that she has this disability and we just have to help in certain areas, but not pampering which I often did. But that just comes with experience I suppose. I think we could have been taught a lot more, before someone had actually told us. But it was a great experience (Lauren).*

These feelings were tinged with a sense of guilt in terms of making the experience positive for all students.

*I found it was hard to focus on the other students suddenly because I was her note taker for about 15 weeks so I really got to know her and then I had all these new students, and it was hard because she wanted me all the time to help but then I became the teacher and I had to teach everybody not just her but I did find that really hard in the end...and then she got really offended a couple of times because I was ignoring her...which I felt I had to start to do...but then I felt bad...but I had to...to try and focus on the other students, not just her (Lauren).*

*Putting her in some groups I felt maybe bad because I didn't know whether the others in the group wanted [to work with her]...for them it was also difficult because for a lot of them maybe they hadn't worked with someone or studied with someone with a disability so I felt that if I was putting some of them in a group that maybe they wouldn't like it, but in the end it wasn't like that and they worked quite well (Lauren).*

*I sometimes felt guilty of giving her more time in class to complete her work. She was initially in a class of 17 students but this was then reduced to a class of 14 (Veronica).*

*The logistics of interacting with other areas of the university.*

It was also difficult for the staff in organising the time to interact with those in other areas of the university who played a role in supporting Amira. The staff talked about problems in maintaining open and consistent communication with managers, I.T. personnel, note-takers and DLU support workers. Veronica thought that there was generally a problem with communication in the organisation but that this was amplified

when working with Amira. Veronica's experience exemplifies the extent of the difficulties in communication.

*I would often rely on getting information third- hand. It was time consuming having to send so many emails, talking on the phone as well as ad hoc face to face meetings... Working with a class of that size while also working with this student was a new thing for me, as was working with a note-taker. I also had to liaise with the DLU, although I wasn't able to directly liaise with them, I could only make contact with them through my manager (Veronica).*

*Success.*

The success of students with a disability in the university setting, according to Jenny came down to their interactions with staff in terms of support:

*What contributes to the success [of the student] is support in a word...they need all sorts of support. Physical, teaching, time...assignments and overheads and materials got to them earlier than to the others so that they can read before the class so that the teacher has to be willing to work on a different time scale.*

*Materials have to be modified into an e-learning environment, so that they can be accessed by their software programs. All of that needs to be done, that's what contributes to the success of the person (Jenny).*

These comments from Jenny echoed Terry's opinion that success for the students is based on sufficient accommodations which are in turn based on interactions with the people in the university who can make that happen.

*[Support] might just mean, for example, gaining extra rest time in an exam. It might be having access to accessible print materials, such as electronic copies,*

*or Braille documents. Without appropriate accommodations, the student would have difficulty functioning academically. Making information accessible to students in the same way and on the same basis, more or less, as it is to other students is critical (Terry).*

Not surprisingly all of this would only be possible with staff being supported as well:

*In terms of the success of these students there really needs to be support given to lecturers, teachers and so on who work with these students with additional needs. There should be training, time to learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and also to have support from managers during the process (Veronica).*

*The note-takers were brilliant, we wouldn't have survived without them. Lauren did note-taking for five weeks, and then we switched to the DLU girls who were great, they were just great. They were just the right kind of student ...self selected for the kind that could handle the job and did really well...they were great. And so things became a lot easier where there was a note-taker (Jenny).*

*[For a student to succeed] the teachers definitely need to be accommodating towards including students but there definitely needs to be things put in place, there needs to be appropriate software, there needs to be appropriate technological equipment, and note taker if that's a useful thing or at least an aide in class if the student's going to require someone to read to them. And possibly advocacy either from the DLU or depending on the confidence of the student, their own advocacy, but all of those things (Monica).*



Jenny was adamant that personality was a huge factor in how staff managed their day-to-day workload while responsible for the teaching of a student with a disability:

*Well, it had to be the right staff. For whatever reason, I don't know why people take to it [teaching a student with a disability] ...Lauren did, very much so, from her background, and yourself and myself we kinda clicked on it, but there are other staff, who didn't, and who found it too hard and withdrew from it, and I can think of two...so it was...I don't know what it is... then we had all the professional helpers, the essential things like the DLU...It's the willingness of the staff involved to work extra and particularly the timely delivery of materials to the student is an important part of it (Jenny).*

Monica felt that it was also down to the students themselves in terms of whether they were successful in achieving their goals.

*The personality of the student and their own sense of motivation and desire to obtain a particular goal, and their own sense of agency within that, so having their needs met by making sure they make those needs clear...I'd also say that having a unit or a facility or an environment where those needs that they are articulating can be met, is very important, in terms of being able to access materials, in terms of having classes in which they're not excluded from (Monica).*

*Relational.*

Terry was positive about the relationships which were generally fostered between lecturers and students. His experience was that *the vast majority of lecturers are very understanding and accommodating...Generally, they're really flexible and*

*supportive and some particularly so in working with a student with a disability.*

According to Terry, building a good relationship between the student and lecturer is vital. For Terry in this regard the role of the DLU was to:

*encourage students to communicate as best they can with lecturing staff, to explain their situation if they feel comfortable doing that and to give teaching staff the best opportunity to support them in turn. Without that dialogue, without that information, it's very difficult to understand what a person requires, what's appropriate. We see ourselves as part of that process, or can be part of that process of providing appropriate information with the student's consent, of course.*

Establishing good relationships is important for both lecturers and students alike.

Without the proper information, miscommunication can create problems for both parties.

*Sometimes people apply for special consideration after the due date and we try to discourage that. If the lecturer or tutor doesn't know why a student didn't attend class, or why they couldn't get work in when it was due, what are they meant to think? They may not know about a student's disability because they haven't been told. We always encourage students to communicate on their own behalf and establish good working relationships with their lecturers (Terry).*

The information that the DLU provides to the lecturers regarding students is comprehensive and looks at areas such as:

*What's the diagnosis of the condition? What are the impacts on the person?*

*What are the recommended adjustments, or accommodations? What's the time*

*frame? Some conditions are more short term, some conditions are fluctuating, that is to say, they're probably going to be ongoing, but they can improve, or they could deteriorate; and other conditions, as I've said, are quite permanent and they tend not to change over time (Terry).*

*External consultation with people such as doctors is important*

*to document what a person currently requires. What's appropriate for them in the circumstances? We're guided by that documentation to inform other members of the university, particularly lecturers to assist them to understand what's required in a particular case. It's important obviously that this is carried out in a timely and professional manner... if a student gives them a letter from us, a lecturer might call us to have a chat about whether the student's request is reasonable in the circumstances (Terry).*

*Teachers - self in relation to Amira.*

It was interesting hearing the staff talk about their own relationships with Amira, how they reflected on their behaviour in working with her and also their memories of what she was like as a person. As Jenny had said to me, this was probably the first time that everyone had had the chance to talk about their feelings and to reflect on their experiences with Amira.

*There seemed to be a spectrum of how students would respond to Amira – they would either treat her as an alien, or be too nice. I also found myself trying to be in the middle but sometimes moving to either end of the spectrum... I think her attitude in being headstrong and obnoxious was part of a defence mechanism, because I think deep down she is an incredible woman inside...it would be ideal for her to find a partner (Veronica).*

*It was difficult for me because we kind've become friends (Lauren).*

*I think I worried about ignoring her because of her disability, which is ridiculous, but because of her disability, and this sounds terrible, but you feel you have to care more, but you should treat them all as equals whether they have a disability or not, but you automatically think 'oh no, but, she needs more help' (Lauren).*

*She actually had a very rich imagination and so she could appreciate things that other students were also getting visual stimulus from. She had a very strong understanding of description and poetry and metaphor and things like that. She was also actually very familiar with French literature from memory so a lot of things that I had anticipated would be excluded from the learning environment ultimately weren't - I do think to some extent that was personality specific. Also her general knowledge was extraordinary...I do remember a particular occasion in the case of [when we were studying] biography that she actually knew the life story of the person in question and stood up and told everyone, it was about Nelson Mandela, it was extraordinary. So her own intelligence and general knowledge in the context of language learning was a huge asset, it's certainly different when you go to university and you're dealing with more content matter and subject knowledge, but in the context of the ESL classroom, her general knowledge was actually a real asset in the class to be honest (Monica).*

*She was remarkable, and she's not even really representative of a woman from Iraq...she's totally asymptomatic...completely! I mean, she didn't cover [her hair with a scarf] (Jenny).*

The teachers also reflected on why in retrospect they felt suited to this particular teaching role with Amira:

*My background pre-disposes me to have the views I do...I think it's because of my background that I have that attitude. Because I have people on the fringe of my family with mental illness and I was married to an alcoholic, da da da, what else you want to pick up [laughs] ...so, you know, I'm pre-disposed to want to pick up the underdogs... I think...what frightened a lot of staff off was the unfamiliar...[working with Amira] was obviously going to be more work...more than they wanted to handle (Jenny).*

*I thought that [working with a student with a disability] might be a way of working with people who I thought were interesting and an aspect of that care-providing role that I would find interesting...and also because it's hard enough when you're not really fighting against anything so I felt admiration I suppose for people in that role (Monica).*

While Lauren reflected on how the experience solidified the attitudes she had always had,

*But my views haven't changed because I get along with absolutely anybody and everybody, I love people, doesn't matter if they've got a disability or where they're from, and I find it very difficult to be with people who are very close-minded (Lauren).*

Veronica's reflection showed what she had learnt about some of her pre-conceived ideas

*I also made this assumption with [Amira], that perhaps she would be nice and kind because of her disability, when in fact she wasn't, she was extremely headstrong (Veronica).*

### ***Framing the staff stories through Bourdieuan lenses.***

Bourdieu's theoretical resources of field, capital and especially habitus, are useful for exploring the possibilities and tensions which exist under specific schooling circumstances (Hardy, 2010, p. 435).

The “schooling circumstances” for this research as pertaining to the staff experience are teacher experience, relationships between teachers, power struggles between teachers and managers, teacher reflexivity and educational structures. In looking at the staff I particularly like this ‘formula’ which Bourdieu uses to explain the interrelatedness of the concepts of habitus, capital and field and how these are realised as the practice.

(Habitus x Capital) + Field=Practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101).

I refer to this formula at the end of the analysis and show how these elements fit together in relation to the staff experience.

#### *Habitus.*

Terry differed somewhat from the teaching staff. His role as liaison officer meant he was working with students in a different capacity to the teachers. Working with students with a disability was something that Terry had chosen to do. This was in contrast with the teachers who hadn't necessarily been given this choice. As a result of his role, Terry had a comprehensive knowledge of inclusive issues, practices and policies. Terry's choice to work in the area of service provision for students with a

disability was arguably shaped by his habitus and he spoke a great deal about inclusive ideals: access for all, empowerment and respect, and the importance of his role.

*It's a big responsibility and you can potentially make a lot of difference to someone, so we take our role very seriously (Terry).*

Terry's individual habitus shows he is *au fait* with the tenets of inclusion while the individual habitus of the students correlated with their experiences in the new field of university in Australia.

For the teaching staff, however, I have drawn upon notions of a collective habitus (Burke, Emmerich & Ingram, 2013; Nash, 1990; 2002; Reay, 2004) which functions as a "unifying cultural code" (Nash, 1990, p. 433). Collective habitus was developed by Bourdieu as a means of theorising the collective practices of groups of individuals (Burke, Emmerich & Ingram, 2013). The collective habitus for the teachers is an important mechanism in delving further into how they make sense of their experiences with Amira. The following analysis shows how:

collective habitus reveals the complex interplay of not simply the individual in their socio-cultural location, not simply of habitus and field, but of the collective and interrelated practices of multiple individuals within a particular field (Burke, Emmerich & Ingram, 2013, p. 166).

The collective habitus also helps to understand the teacher perceptions of their suitability in working with Amira. For Reay (2004) suitability of the role in terms of habitus prompts us to ask "How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in?" (Reay, 2004, p. 441).

For example, Jenny talks about her history and tendency to *want to pick up the underdogs*; Monica talked about her sense of *admiration* for teachers who worked with students with a disability and how this shaped her interest and knowledge trajectory in the area. Jenny also mentioned how Lauren *took to it* [teaching Amira] while for Lauren this was because of her ability *to get along with absolutely anybody and everybody*. This sense of the components of “knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions” was also evident in the way the teachers spoke about their relationships with Amira. For Veronica and Lauren this meant they had difficulty in knowing how to relate to Amira. In this way the collective habitus works as a way to underscore processes through which “teachers know how they should care” (Barber, 2002, p. 384).

I think carrying out the interviews after the teachers had finished teaching Amira added the space for them to reflect more on the experience and, as Jenny said to me, acted as a debrief. As a result I think there was already an inbuilt sense of reflection apparent in the interviews. Despite the stresses endured in their time teaching Amira, this sense of distance from the actual day-to-day, ‘in the moment’ experience meant that their collective habituses pointed to an overall sense of having done something worthwhile and meaningful in working with Amira.

Jenny, Lauren, Monica and Veronica constructed their own ideas of Amira’s culture and how she had been ‘shaped’, that is, her past education and what her family life was like. The teachers had constructed Amira as ‘headstrong’ and ‘determined’ and spoke about their perceptions of why this was so. For Veronica and Jenny their construction of Amira’s past reality was that she was from a country where *women are not empowered* (Veronica), *couldn’t make decisions without a male relative* (Jenny) and where *there was absolutely no assistance* (Lauren). These assumptions were made by the teachers as a result of the projection of their individual habitus into a field they



knew very little of (Amira's home context). Furthermore, Veronica's assumptions about disability meant that she had assumed *that perhaps [Amira] would be nice and kind because of her disability*.

The collective habitus of the teachers was also evident in the way they spoke about their feelings of guilt in relation to the other students who were in the same class as Amira.

Here we can see how

habitus is embodied; it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions [it is] expressed through durable ways of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70).

The teachers' habitus is exemplified in their awareness of other students in the class. For example, Jenny mentioned reading the body language of the other students; Lauren and Veronica talked about the difficulty of striking the right balance with the other students and trying not to give Amira too much attention. Monica mentioned how she was aware of whether students in a group task working with Amira would feel *handicapped* by having her as a member. All of these situations are exhibitions of the embodied habitus of the teachers.

### *Capital.*

Looking at the staff experiences through Bourdieu's conceptual tool of capital helps to make sense of cultural perceptions pertaining to disability. Jenny's comment that *we love to see people punching above their weight* suggests that she sees Australian culture as largely only valuing people with a disability if they create their own capital, or as she puts it, *someone without a leg winning a gold medal* - a kind of 'proving themselves'. The way Terry spoke about people with a disability reflected how he ascribes a great deal of symbolic capital to students that he works with. He talked about

how at the DLU *we see not so much the disability as being the issue with the person, it's more the disability within the environment: the environment is disabling* and was adamant about the importance of recognising *the positive contributions people can make rather than any disability or medical condition they may have.*

Capital also relates to how the staff talked about what enabled a student to be successful. For Monica how the students viewed and leveraged their own capital was intrinsic to their success.

The personality of the student and their own sense of motivation and desire to obtain a particular goal, and their own sense of agency within that (Monica).

Knowledge is a form of capital (Webb et al., 2002). For Veronica *training, time to learn new skills, acquire new knowledge*, that is, acquire capital, was inextricably linked to student success. This echoes Ferfolja (2008) who argues that:

Providing...teachers with opportunities to develop contextually relevant...capital may contribute to the production of confident and culturally knowledgeable future teachers (Ferfolja, 2008, p. 81).

This was reflected by Terry who suggested that

the more awareness and understanding people have, perhaps the more accommodating they can be in an appropriate way and feel comfortable about asking us questions (Terry).

The issue, however, is not only how teachers acquire this capital through training.

Jenny, Monica, Lauren and Veronica all spoke about how they would have valued more collaboration from colleagues and an infrastructure to enable knowledge transfer within

a collegiate environment. Indeed, it is through the means of existing knowledge transferences that new knowledge can be generated (Stewart, 2010).

I would argue that flexibility is a kind of knowledge capital; teachers need to know what being flexible is and why it is needed. It is clear that all of the teachers interviewed needed to be flexible in dealing with the various challenges in teaching Amira such as the day-to-day logistics of overseeing her mobility, withdrawing her from class, liaising with other areas of the university and preparing scanned material. The way that all the teachers spoke in the situational section of the data presentation is evidence of how they were being flexible on a number of different levels. For example, Jenny talked about the physical requirements of teaching Amira, Veronica talked about adapting her teaching style from Communicative Language Teaching while Lauren and Monica spoke about workloads and how they managed their time.

*Field.*

According to Bourdieu, the organisation of spaces is a physical manifestation of social space. These spaces are structured according to which agents dominate (Ernste, 2006; Widdop & Cutts, 2012). For example in a university setting, if ramps and lifts are not available, this shows how people without impairments dominate the space.

According to Bourdieu “the physical structure of the urban life may be viewed as symbolic battlegrounds; territories that are fought over; a struggle going on to appropriate space” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 123). For Terry, levelling the playing field in a physical sense means creating universal access. For example,

*if there are good lifts and ramps, that doesn't just benefit people with a disability, it benefits pregnant women, it benefits women with babies in prams, it*

*benefits workers that carry heavy objects on trolleys, or elderly people with mobility issues with a walking stick or frame (Terry).*

According to Terry, the aim of inclusion is to level the playing field: *to give people the same kind of opportunities to develop and reach their potential as other people enjoy* (Terry). Because the physical space is a mirror of the social space (Ernste, 2006; Widdop & Cutts, 2012) creating universal access in a physical space such as a university building can open the social space and create a holistically inclusive environment.

Terry also mentioned how, despite the lack of funding for international students, the DLU is *committed to providing them with the same level of service as other students*. Terry understood how a new relational field would be *daunting* for international students with a disability coming here without a support network. *That's challenging for anyone, and if a person also has a disability, that's an extra challenge* (Terry).

Staff experienced a number of tensions and contradictions in many relational fields while working with Amira. As Bourdieu suggests “a field is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 17). According to Terry, conflict and contradiction can occur between students and lecturers if lecturers are not aware of the needs of the student:

*If the lecturer or tutor doesn't know why a student didn't attend class, or why they couldn't get work in when it was due, what are they meant to think? They may not know about a student's disability because they haven't been told* (Terry).

Spaces of conflict were evident in the ways the teachers spoke about inclusion – a *dilemma* as Jenny suggested - in balancing working with a student with a disability with working with the other students in the class. Guilt as part of the habitus was the result of operating within this space of conflict and delicate balance. This was compounded by the competition between the other students in the field. Jenny talking about the tension with the other IELTS students is an example of the high stakes of competition for a good score in the exam.

Through comparing the perspectives of Terry with those of the teachers it is also evident that there is discrepancy and contradiction in their experiences of inclusive practices. The teachers openly talked about their difficulties in operating as inclusive practitioners within various managerial, structural and logistical constraints. This contrasts with Terry's opinion that *in most cases, accommodations aren't that difficult and it's not that problematic* (Terry).

There was also a sense that not everyone in the relational field was following its rules or being good team players. This is evident in the way that the teachers spoke about feeling that there was little open communication with management or any sense of collegiality. This is also reflected in the apparent dissonance that the teachers felt existed between other areas of the university (mainly I.T. and the DLU) - an apparent mutual exclusivity of purpose between units (Donato, 2008), which was not mentioned by Terry.

As discussed in the literature review, policy plays a large role in dictating how the rules in relational fields govern the game to be played. And yet most of the teachers had little or no familiarity with the governing policies of the university. This is significant in that from a critical theory perspective, policy serves as a way of

perpetuating and maintaining the status quo of the powerful in the field (Hill & Robertson, 2009). This is something I discuss further in the next section in relation to symbolic violence. Despite this lack of awareness, however, Jenny and Monica clearly recognised the importance of inclusive practice within universities as having an influence beyond the academic context - a recognition of the extent to which educational institutions are “embedded in broader socio-economic cultures - through processes in which schools and their catchments mutually shape and re-shape each other” (Barber, 2002, p. 384). This was discussed in the literature review as the ‘Cycles of Cultural Influence’ (Chapter 2, Figure 2.3). Jenny talked about how our experiences with Amira should have had some kind of *flow-on effect into the community* - a kind of sharing of capital outside the field. Monica mentioned her belief that *universities can be a really powerful advocate for policy implementation*.

Management clearly wanted Amira to play by their rules in the field. In the manager’s eyes students needed to be independent regardless of their cultural background. Although Terry talked about the goal of helping students to become independent in Australia, it was framed within the terms of open communication with students and explaining cultural reasons for independence (this being the socio-cultural goal for people with a disability in Australia). I got the sense from Terry that moving towards independence is something that wouldn’t be forced on a student, and that measures would be put in place to enable the gaining of independence in the most supportive way. For Amira, however, a struggle occurred between her and management in relation to their perception of how she needed to develop her independence – they wanted her to have mobility training in how to use a cane. They wanted her to start reading Braille. Amira felt comfortable with neither of these situations. Both of these issues were pushed onto her continuously but she held on strongly to her values. As Jenny says, the result was that *we kept getting this message from management that*

*[Amira] was not willing... I kept getting a negative [feeling] from them...that Amira was resistant.*

### *Symbolic violence*

Both Jenny and Lauren thought that people with a disability are not valued in Australia for what capital they may have and as a result Australians are *intolerant*. Veronica mentioned that in India, her country of origin, *anything different isn't understood and makes people feel scared*. This was a common theme from the students who were interviewed. Intolerance and lack of understanding are forms of symbolic violence in that these attitudes deny people with a disability access to symbolic capital.

The teachers also spoke about their perceptions of how the university 'deals with' students with a disability. This was couched in terms of processes that were seen as 'secretive'. Jenny talked about how she felt Amira was *pushed through* [the system] either as the result of sympathy or as an attempt to *get rid of the problem*. Veronica's perception was that there was a lack of consultation with the student regarding possible the best support systems. These comments point to how educational systems "maintain the pre-existing order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 20). This happens unbeknown to the agents in the relational field of the educational system. Students thereby become complicit in the creation and maintenance of unequal power distribution (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

This secrecy and apparent lack of transparency, of going "behind the backs" of the teachers as the quote above suggests, was also evident in how Jenny and Veronica spoke about their experiences with management. Jenny talked about not being privy to information about Amira: *people like [managers] were in the know, but you and I were*

*not* and Veronica explained how she *wasn't able to liaise directly* with others who worked with Amira the reasons for which were *never explained*. Because of Terry's position in the relational field as a DLU worker, these are practices that he would not have seen or experienced. Again these are clear and apparent forms of symbolic violence enacted against the teachers in being denied access to knowledge which they felt would have helped them in their job, and in turn would have helped Amira's learning.

As I discussed previously I think the fact that these interviews were conducted once the teachers had all finished working with Amira was significant in that they were able to be more reflective through having the time and space to think about their experiences. I think at the time of working with Amira we were all victims of symbolic violence. I know I certainly was in thinking that this kind of unsupportive behaviour by management was just "the natural order of things" (Webb et al., 2002, p.25). A case in point here is with the attitudes and comments Monica and I encountered from the leading teacher who accused us both of having time management issues. At the time we had no way of 'fighting back', and as Monica said in retrospect, we might have fought back by saying something like *if you had a go at doing this, you'd understand that that's actually the nature of what happens with the workload when you're modifying materials and classes*. But at the time, we had to *just get on with it*, as Jenny said. Feeling unsupported, being denied access to extra training, the lack of recognition of the extra work we were all putting in and feeling like we were making it up as we went along were the ways in which the power was maintained over us teachers. Lauren's quote *I'm just a teacher, I'm not in an important position* said it all in terms of how oppressed we felt in the relational field.



The example I cited of Amira being forced to complete a visual component of the IELTS exam was also I think one of the most unjust examples of symbolic violence I witnessed. Although I didn't know it nor could articulate it at the time, I think this is an example of how as a critical educationalist I was seeking "equality of outcome" for Amira rather a mere equal opportunity "to get on in a grossly unequal society" (Hill & Robertson, 2009, p. 308).

I would now like to return to this Bourdieuan formula: (Habitus x Capital) + Field=Practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101).

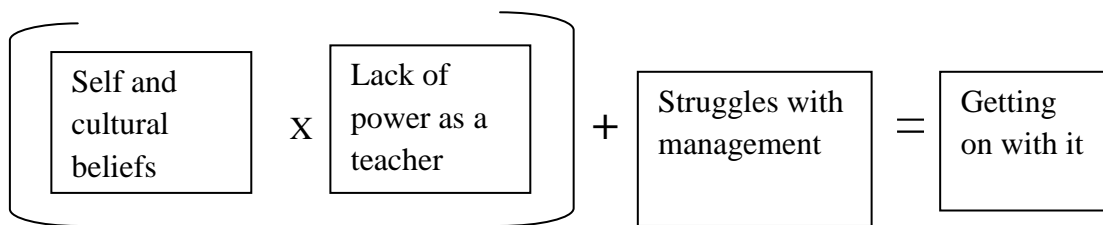


Figure 6.1. The staff practice of 'getting on with it' as a Bourdieuan formula.

"Getting on with it" is the practice the teachers were required to adopt as a result of the self and their cultural beliefs (as discussed in relation to habitus), lack of power as a teacher (their capital) and struggles with management (their field). It can thus be seen how using Bourdieu's theories in this way helps make sense of why and how teaching practices manifest themselves as they do.

## Document Analysis

Education is not a neutral enterprise. It is a highly politicised space where agents with symbolic power engage in political acts, whether they are aware of it or not (Apple, 2004; Ballard, 2012; Bourke & O'Neill, 2012). In the case of universities, these political agents are educators and policy makers. Policies are the rules of the social spaces or field (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor 2005; Webb et al., 2002). According to Peters, (2007) "Every written policy document deploys a particular discourse as both

tactic and theory in a web of power relations” (para. 13). Educational institutional practice and policy maintain power discourses (Reed-Danahay, 2005). Policy stipulates the ways in which institutions want agents to relate to each other within their social spaces. Policy analysis helps researchers answer the question ‘what are the rules in the field?’

For the analysis of the rules in the field for this university I analysed the Equity and Diversity policies; there are no ‘Disability policies’ as such. For the purposes of keeping the name of the university anonymous I will not be using the exact citation criterion for the documents in this discussion. The Equity and Diversity policy consists of one webpage which outlines the purpose and scope of the policy and the policy statement and who is responsible for its implementation at the university. The page also has information about the policy status, its key stakeholders, endorsement body, and provides links to related state and federal equity and diversity legislation.

The Equity and Diversity university policy itself is relatively easy to navigate to on the university website. Taken at face value it appears to ‘tick all the boxes’ in terms of the aforementioned areas it covers. However, in examining these documents through the lenses of VRM, the picture looks rather different. The policy statements and steps to implementation are vague. For example, one of the implementation steps points to “providing an inclusive and flexible environment for students and staff by identifying and removing any remaining systemic barriers to equitable access and participation” (University Equity and Diversity policy webpage) but does not stipulate *how* that is to be done. The language could also be alienating for students because of the legal tones (Supple & Agbenyega, 2013).

Moreover, it was interesting that although students are governed under this policy, there is no apparent inclusion of the student voice in that it is written in institutional terminology. It's obvious that the fact that the initiatives are littered with policy-speak that they have been written from a 'top-down' perspective (Supple & Agbenyega, 2013). Students are also not listed as one of the key stakeholders of the document. If I was a student from a non-English speaking background looking at this policy for guidance I don't think it would be very useful because of its vagueness and impersonalisation.

On the main Equity and Diversity webpage which links to the policy there are further links to programs and support and contacts for students. There is also a link to the 2010-2014 Disability Plan which is a 15 page document outlining more of the specifics related to the implementation of inclusive practices across the university and how this is happening. While a useful resource for staff, again this document is not very student friendly in its language, volume or scope. It does not address students directly, has a lot of text to navigate through and is written in terms of strategic targets rather than the pragmatics of support for students. There also is no stipulation of seeking feedback from students with a disability in order to inform ongoing policy development.

For students seeking help from the DLU the service provisions and steps to take for support are written on the website. The steps suggest that students first complete a registration form and seek appropriate medical documentation before making contact with the DLU. This struck me as somewhat user unfriendly and overly bureaucratic. I would have expected that enquiries to the DLU would have been welcome; instead the tone of the webpage was very blunt and uninviting.

I also found this statement on the DLU somewhat disconcerting: “The DLO [sic] takes into consideration the impact of your disability in the academic environment” (Disability Support Website). I think this statement encapsulates distance, power and deficit in its language and tone. I would argue that in order to be wholly inclusive the statement needs to be changed to something like “The DLU will work with you to establish the relationship between our academic environment and what you need in order to achieve your best outcomes at this university.” Although the DLU should be welcoming, this webpage portrays it as somewhat distanced from the lived realities of the students. I’m also not sure why the website refers to “DLO” instead of DLU.

Although the policies seemed to have the student voice absent from their documents, I was pleased to see that there is a personalised page with profiles of different students with a disability studying at the university. The main Equity and Diversity webpage in itself is user friendly and less institutional. Visually it looks more colourful and welcoming.

## **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I discussed my understandings of reflexivity within a Bourdieuan framework, my perceptions of the elements of myself that I brought to this study, and how this impacted on my data collection and analysis approaches as both an insider and an outsider.

I presented the data for each of the interview participants – as individual cases and stories for the students and as a collective case for the staff using Denzin’s (2001) typologies and thick descriptions, and used Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field to show my understanding of the experiences of the interview participants. The resulting analysis was shaped by a thorough interrogation of the data

using VRM. I also applied the same process of analysis to policy documents for the university at the centre of this study.

The following chapter draws together the findings of the analysis chapter and provides links between the cases. In doing so, I present the answers to the guiding research questions for this thesis.

## **Chapter 7 Answering the research questions and recommendations**

The focus of this study was an investigation into the experiences of international students with a disability at one university in Melbourne, Australia. Data from both staff and students were collected in order to gain insight into different perspectives within the respective relational fields. While previous studies have focussed on international students (such as Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Kettle, 2005; Kell & Vogl, 2008; Robertson, 2011) and students with a disability separately (such as Barton, 2007; Donato, 2008; Goode, 2007; Hopkins, 2011; Orsini-Jones, 2009) this research looked at the unique cohort of students who have both a disability and a first language other than English. This was referred to by one staff participant as a ‘double disability’.

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions that were presented in Chapter 1 and situates these findings within current literature. While each student and staff member shared an individual and personal account of their academic journey at one Melbourne university, some common themes have emerged in light of the overarching research questions for this study. In Chapter 6 the analysis of the results pointed to how knowledge and attitudes of the staff, the cultural influences in Australia and other countries, institutional cultures, physical, logistical and social barriers, policy, communication, inflexible systems and social networks all contributed both to the extent to which James, Mary, Anna and Jane had positive or negative experiences in Australia and to how successful the teachers felt in their roles as inclusive practitioners.

Before discussing what the results revealed regarding the research questions, it is important to consider a summary of what these individual and personal journeys and

experiences tell us about issues of power, culture and agency from a Bourdieuan perspective.

For the students, Chapter 6 showed how students need support to generate capital in their new relational field of the Australian university context. The data showed how there are significant differences between how symbolic capital is generated and recognised in Australia and in the home country of the students. In general, however, one of the reasons the students travelled overseas in the first place was to generate new symbolic capital. Furthermore, in the cases of Mary, Anna and James it became apparent that students have the ability to recreate their own habitus. Finally, the students' experiences showed how when there is a lack of recognition of symbolic capital this results in symbolic violence.

For the teaching staff in this study, there was a collective feeling that management did not allow for training in working with Amira and as such, they were not given the chance to increase their knowledge capital. However, their conclusions were that the experience of working with Amira made them better teachers overall - the collective habitus of the teachers seemed to point to a sense of satisfaction in helping people to achieve in the face of adversity against systems and cultures which weren't necessarily conducive to fostering this achievement. Finally, the teaching staff all spoke about their experiences of symbolic violence within the field of dealing with managers and other colleagues, and how it was difficult working with little support.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings in light of the three main research questions. The first research question asks:

***What strategies and resources do international students with a disability at the case study university experience as supporting or hindering their academic and social development and achievements? (That is, what are the facilitators and what are the barriers as conceptualised as part of this study?)***

In view of the first research question, three main themes were identified as pertaining to knowledge and attitudes, cultures and the self.

## **Theme #1: Knowledge and attitudes**

### **Staff knowledge and attitudes towards students.**

The findings suggest that the students found the knowledge and attitudes of staff as the most important part of their overall experience in Australia. The students interviewed all had at least one positive experience with a lecturer or member of staff such as a counsellor. These positive interactions with staff were the result of the pedagogical and practical knowledge of the staff (capital) as well as their attitudes towards their students (habitus) and are integral to the success of students (Agbenyega, 2007; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Al Khatib, 2007; Boyle, 2012; Deppeler, 2012; Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Kashdan, 2002; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2012; Mitchell, 2005; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Poplin & Phillips, 1993). This is important from the perspective of attracting prospective students to Australia to study and utilising positive feedback from students who have had good experiences with faculty members and support in the university.

Of particular relevance to this study is how a student's opinion of a university as a whole is often influenced by their experiences with staff (Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). In this vein I would argue that it is unlikely that James



would have spoken about the university in such glowing terms (reiterating throughout the interview the amount of support and generosity he had received at the university) if his lecturer hadn't given him helpful advice.

This is not to say that the students didn't have any negative experiences. Barriers created by a lack of knowledge about different disabilities and available support mechanisms coupled with a lack of sensitivity were experienced in particular by Anna and to some extent also by Mary and Jane. This is also an important issue which may influence the degree to which successful inclusion can be realised (Holloway, 2001; Donato, 2008; Dutta et al., 2009).

Another barrier is created when students are accused by lecturers of trying to gain an unfair advantage over other students; something Anna experienced. This is reflected in the literature as a common theme (Donato, 2008; Gadbow & Dubois, 1998; Matthews 2009; Riddell et al., 2007; Swart & Greyling, 2011; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010) particularly for those students who don't have a 'visible' disability (Swart & Greyling, 2011). Mary spoke about her frustrations at not receiving the degree of assistance she needed, while Anna's story about the lecturer who accused her of trying to get higher marks understandably caused her great distress. Mary and Anna felt unable to speak out about their feelings to anyone which resulted in internalised stress and frustration:

*How can I say just make it bigger? If they make it bigger, I can't see it, too, so I just need to use some extra time to ask the teacher if I can't understand something. Sometimes I feel the lecturer is not very good for me (Mary).*

*I no longer study that because I don't want to face him again (Anna).*

This internalised stress is not uncommon and clearly contributes in making the situation for the student worse (Roer-Strier, 2002). The prominence of literature surrounding attitudes and its effect on the student experience (such as Agbenyega, 2007; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Al Khatib, 2007; Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Kashdan, 2002; Mitchell 2005; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2009; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Poplin & Phillips, 1993) and the importance which the students ascribed to these attitudes in these interviews shows how the lack of sensitivity and awareness for the accommodation of students with a disability is “a more significant concern than availability of funds” (Dutta et al., 2009, p. 13).

## **Theme #2: Cultural Influences of a Country and Institution**

In Chapter 2 I discussed how culture is a contextually significant influencing factor regarding the extent to which inclusion is or can be realised within particular settings.

This conceptualisation of the cycles of cultural influence became most apparent through the interviews with the students in terms of how the culture of their respective countries influences inclusion in that country (Aguerrondo, 2008; Lambe, 2007). In Chapter 2 I discussed the history of inclusion in Sri Lanka, China and Hong Kong which pointed to cultures where inclusive practices have been slow to come to fruition (Sri Lanka - Campbell, 2011; Rieser, 2012. China - Dauncey, 2012; Feng, 2012; Fisher & Jong, 2008; Xu et al., 2005; Yu et al., 2011. Hong Kong - Chen & Mak, 2008; Gilson & Dymond, 2011; Forlin, 2007; Poon-McBrayer, 2010; Sorenson, 2008; Tsang et al., 2003). This correlated with the student experience: Mary and Anna spoke about the comparative lack of support in their home countries and institutions in China and Hong Kong respectively, while Jane hypothesised about the degree of support she may or may

not have received in Sri Lanka with her arm injury, which was less than what she was receiving in Australia.

The exception in this regard, however, was James. Literature from the U.S. reflects movement towards a paradigm shift in higher education away from deficit models and towards engaging a richly diverse learning environment which allows for student ownership of learning, while at the same time focuses on the engagement of all students, for the benefit of all students (Higbee et al., 2010; Landin, 2010). There is also evidence that there is an increase in the number of students with a disability entering universities and colleges in the United States (Donato, 2008; Dutta, Kundu, & Schiro-Geist, 2009; Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010; Landin, 2010; OECD, 2011; Salend & Whittaker, 2012) which can be attributed to various legal, academic, historical, philosophical and social changes (Donato, 2008; Sachs & Schureuer, 2011; Salend & Whittaker, 2012). However, James spoke about how he thought the culture was more competitive in the U.S. and that in Australia the attitude was much more *laid back*. He drew parallels with this pervading competitive doxa of U.S. culture and the extent to which he felt supported at university in his own country. His perception of the culture being more welcoming and less competitive meant that he felt more supported at university in Australia.

All of these parallels drawn by the students show the connections made between the extent to which the culture of the country drives how supported they felt at their own university and the university in Australia.

It would be interesting to follow up this research with the students once they got back to their own countries. I would be especially interested to know if they noticed any changes in their habitus once back in their home country and whether they become

agents of change after their positive support in Australia. I would like to know how they experience any recent policy developments in their own countries, particularly in China and Hong Kong where it is suggested that movement towards a more inclusive society is now afoot (China- CPC & SC, 2010; Dauncey, 2012; Feng, 2012; Xu et al., 2005; Yu et al., 2011. Hong Kong – Forlin, 2007, 2010; Rose & Forlin, 2010).

In Jane's case, because she had not experienced living with a disability in her own country it was difficult for her to get a sense of the culture which exists there towards people with a disability in her home country of Sri Lanka. Her feeling was that she would not have received the same level of support at university in Sri Lanka as in Australia. It would have been especially interesting to follow Jane's journey from university in Australia back to her home country to get a sense of how she compared the two countries. Similar to Hong Kong and China, there is suggestion that there are changes happening with policy in Sri Lanka through the development of the Sri Lankan Disability Rights Movement, run by and for people with a disability (Campbell, 2011; Rieser, 2012).

### ***Policies and educational systems.***

As discussed in the literature review, policy is important in reinforcing “the ideology and ethos of the institution” and in shaping “the development of strategies and procedural guidelines for implementation of service design and delivery” (FOTIM, 2011, p. 81). In the literature review I also discussed the ‘process of interpretation’ as informed by May and Bridger (2010) which points to the ideology of the institution and shows how strategy and policy impact upon the experience of stakeholders in the institution and the symbiotic relationship between the mission and culture of the institution.

Educational institutions can often inadvertently pathologise difficulties as inherent within students as opposed to the systems within the university through their policy documents (Ainscow & Miles 2008; Forlin, 2007; Hanafin, 2007; Sheridan, 2010). This is through the expectation that students need to 'prove' their needs and conform to the bureaucratic systems of the university through the procedure of self-disclosure of a disability (Donato, 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Gadbow, 2002; Matthews, 2009; Roer-Strier, 2002; Tinklin & Hall, 1999). The inflexible bureaucracy of how students are required to disclose their needs and needing to 'prove' this is indicative of an institutionalised medical model (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). This fosters an institutional culture where disability is equal to inability (Swart & Greyling, 2011). With self-disclosure often comes the fear of discrimination (Donato 2008; Fuller et al., 2004; Gadbow, 2002; Matthews 2009; Redpath et al., 2012; Roer-Strier, 2002; Swart & Greyling, 2011; Tinklin & Hall, 1999) and fear of alienation brought about by drawing attention to a disability (Swart & Greyling, 2011). This was a theme common to all the students interviewed – they did not want to be singled out by asking for assistance from the DLU as it made them feel as if they were 'different'. James mentioned how he didn't feel comfortable typing instead of writing by hand in an exam because of the possibility of judgement by fellow students or his lecturer. Anna mentioned how she *tried not to tick the box* which indicated a disability on the university enrolment form because she was worried about the possible ramifications of such disclosure. Jane said that she *doesn't want to be seen as taking advantage of extra help* even though her doctor said it will take at least two years for her arm to heal. James mentioned how he didn't disclose his needs at first because he actually wasn't sure how ADD was going to affect him in a new environment. Indeed, adding to the complexity of the issue for the students was the fact that they had not received support in their own countries, and as such possibly did not know what to expect by taking that step here in Australia.

The document analysis in Chapter 6 showed how students at the research university must complete a registration form and seek appropriate medical documentation before contacting the DLU. On its website, in the section offering advice to prospective students with a disability it is stated that: “The DLO [sic] takes into consideration the impact of your disability in the academic environment”. In light of the findings of the current study, it is suggested that this should read as: “the DLU will work with you to establish the relationship between our academic environment and what you need in order to achieve your best outcomes at this university”. The former wording expresses how policy is often written largely in accordance with individual deficit models with “little concomitant impact on institutional practices” (Hanafin et al., 2007, p. 437), and are assimilationist in nature; they expect the student to fit the system and not the other way around (Sheridan, 2010). In this way policy acts as a barrier because students are required to prove their needs as stipulated by university policy.

The results gleaned from the students show that there is a need to consider the policy governing invigilation for students with a disability during exams and make both staff and students aware of the policy, particularly in view of what is and isn't allowed under alternative exam conditions. For example, Jane found it difficult to dictate what was on her mind in a mathematics exam to the scribe and tried writing by herself but then the invigilator said this was not allowed.

*It was very tiring because there was a lot of maths... It's difficult to tell someone else to write... The invigilator didn't know what exactly to do there...I got scared (Jane).*

Studies have found that students with a disability face difficulties such as wasting time trying to sort out additional support and navigating bureaucracy (Donato,

2008; Holloway, 2011; Redpath et al., 2012; Swart & Greyling, 2011). This was reflected in the results from this study, particularly for Mary who felt that a lot of time was wasted in class because she couldn't see what was projected onto the wall, and that she had to spend a lot of additional time trying to tell her lecturer exactly what it was that she needed for the class. She also found the amount of required reading stressful because she couldn't see the print very well. Mary also experienced difficulties finding books in the library because of the higher shelves and not being able to read the call numbers on the books. She also sometimes had problems reading timetables or maps because of their height.

Another finding in relation to this question was in terms of flexible systems. The students expressed different ideas regarding the way they would like to see more flexibility within the systems of the institution. James mentioned how he would like to see the systems of the university change to be more accommodating of the needs of students such as him who experience debilitating anxiety before exams. He spoke about how *there is more focus on exam outcomes rather than progress of the course itself and application of the knowledge throughout the course*. He felt that *the time constraints of the exams are too strict and don't allow a true indication of how a student might understand the content*. In light of this perhaps, it's not surprising that the literature suggests that being flexible and adjustable for students in terms of their needs has a huge impact on students and their academic achievements (Agbenyega, 2007; Holloway, 2001; Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010; Waterfield & West, 2010). If students are allowed input regarding their own assessment tasks then all students have the ability to recognise their strengths and can be empowered by their choices (Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010; Waterfield & West, 2010). Furthermore, flexibility in content delivery recognises the strengths and needs of

students in view of different learning styles (Basham, Israel, Grayden & Edyburn, 2010; Matthews, 2009; Poth & Winston, 2010; Swart & Greyling, 2011).

Flexibility in terms of support would also benefit students such as Jane who experienced some difficulties in her exam in terms of working with a scribe. She found the system of working within the strict parameters of what a scribe can and can't do very difficult. Her experience echoed results from participant "Niamh" in Hanafin et al.'s (2007) study who remarked that:

It is very difficult to keep your train of thought when dictating. I always do badly in my exams [when I have to dictate] whereas in my ordinary essays I reach a high standard (Hanafin et al., 2007, p. 441).

Jane was also clearly frustrated with the apparent lack of knowledge on the part of the invigilator who didn't seem to know exactly what her own role was with Jane. Mary too was frustrated with a system that didn't recognise her prior learning in China.



## **Theme #3 – The Self**

### **Social networks.**

Swart and Greyling, (2011) found that “participants regarded the practical and emotional support from peers to be very important, and the lack thereof was experienced as a barrier” (p. 95). Friendship was also found by these researchers to be an “important protective factor” for students with a disability at university (p. 95). From a Bourdieuan perspective social capital is important in explaining how individuals mobilise the “benefits and services” provided by others in pursuing their goals (Carpiano, 2006, p. 166). Examples of the importance of social networks (social capital) to the participants include Mary talking about the many friends she had who helped her (for example if she needed to copy their work) and how her friends in China were also an important support for her as she received no assistance from the university itself. Similarly, Jane’s friends helped her enormously in adjusting to university life, by, for example, carrying books, accessing lecture notes etcetera since the accident.

### **Empowerment by study abroad.**

Brown (2009), Clarke (2009), and Dwyer (2004), have underscored the transformative power of an international sojourn in their studies, pointing to an increase in cross-cultural understanding, self discovery, increased confidence, improved critical thinking skills and an enhanced sense of independence.

In the present study, James thought that further study abroad would *expand his horizons educationally*. Mary felt that she couldn’t fulfil her knowledge at home whereas she thought a study abroad experience would enable her to do this. She also talked about learning to become independent as a result of study in Australia.

Interestingly, Anna's view was that she felt more affinity with Western culture and that she favoured the counselling approaches in Australia as opposed to Hong Kong.

However, she also expressed frustration about her difficulties in communicating with the local students. Jane felt proud of herself in terms of her new-found independence away from Sri Lanka. Her experience was that living in Australia was difficult but good because she felt a proud sense of achievement.

*You have to do everything on your own with no parents. It's difficult. But then it's good. It's a big exposure coming to a country like this. You gain a lot of life experiences. I think after this accident and all, I've been a much better person (Jane).*

### **Self-determination, communication and knowledge.**

Swart and Greyling (2011) found that belief in one's own potential to achieve is related to self-determination and motivation levels and significantly impacts on the success of the student. This was significant for the students I interviewed. James talked about being diagnosed with ADD but how he didn't consider it to be a *crux*; Mary talked about how hard it was for her growing up with her *eye problems*, which she was once embarrassed about but could now talk about openly. Anna's experience of a lack of support in Hong Kong made her more determined to do well academically in Australia. She was also happier working with the counsellor here in the knowledge that other (local) students also sought help. Jane coped impressively with living alone in Australia despite suffering from constant pain in her arm and being used to the assistance of maids and other help at home in Sri Lanka. She also enjoyed a sense of achievement in pushing herself and achieving high grades.

Self-determination can also influence the extent to which students can express their needs to others and assert themselves. Individuals who have a clear idea of what they need are better able to articulate their needs to others (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Communication with lecturers, however, was also something that students found difficult. Mary was frustrated about trying to tell lecturers how bad her eyesight was. She felt like she was nagging some of her lecturers to make visual material bigger as when they had magnified some of the resources for her they still weren't big enough. She also found it extremely difficult to try and ask for extra help from the other members of the class. Mary's frustration could have been because of her language or simply from not being able to clearly communicate her needs effectively (reflected in literature by Donato, (2008)). Furthermore, having to repeat requests over and over like Mary had to, takes up important time that could be spent in other ways, for example socially, and as such can lead to social alienation (Donato, 2008; Swart & Greyling, 2011).

In terms of knowledge, in the current study, none of the students were aware of the university's equity policies before they came to Australia, nor did they have much working knowledge of them during their university study. This is consistent with findings that many staff and students are simply not aware of their institution's policy on disability (Caruana & Ploner, 2010; FOTIM, 2011). Again this is a significant finding, particularly in light of other students who may be similar to James, Mary and Anna in wanting to study overseas but not knowing what support systems might exist for them.

The second research question asks:

***What strategies and resources do practitioners at the case study university experience as supporting or hindering the development of effective inclusive practices for international students with a disability?***

In view of the second research question, three main themes were identified as the same basic themes as the first research question - those pertaining to knowledge and attitudes, cultures and the self.

## **Theme #1 – Knowledge and Attitudes**

### **Pedagogical knowledge, attitudes of others.**

In relation to Research Question 2, Monica was the only one out of the four teachers I interviewed who had had any experience and/or specific training in working with a student with a disability. While the teachers found the experience challenging, they all showed a willingness to accommodate Amira in their class, and to adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. Despite the teachers doing all they could to modify their teaching practices, all of them felt that they could have done better with extra training. As the analysis showed, it was very much a case of *making it up as we went along*.

The way the teachers spoke about their work with Amira contrasts with literature which suggests that there is a direct correlation between the amount of professional development, training and experience a teacher has of inclusive practice and their willingness to accommodate students with a disability in their classes (Eloff et al., 2002; Enjelvin, 2008; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Ryan & Struths, 2004; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Because of this, the teachers I interviewed could all be considered as

“interventionist” (Jordan, 1997; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2009) that is, those who take responsibility as a practitioner in educating all students and making adjustments and modifications as necessary (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan et al., 1997; McGhie-Richmond et al., 2009).

What the staff did acknowledge, however, was a failure on the part of the university to provide them with sufficient professional development, orientation and ongoing support. This was found to be a significant barrier for the teachers interviewed.

*I was only given 4 days' notice that I was going to be teaching this student, and had no knowledge of teaching students with a vision impairment...I wasn't ever offered the chance to go on any kind of training course... I also would have appreciated more support from other staff (Veronica).*

Not having access to ongoing support adds to the stress of the situation for teachers, which obviously also has an effect on the students (Barrett 2008; Donato, 2008; Forlin, Keen, & Barrett, 2008; Eloff et al., 2002) and no doubt would have had an impact on Amira's academic experience.

Literature shows how teachers often express a lack of confidence in their own abilities as teachers in working with a student with a disability and express feelings of inadequacy over whether they have the ‘right’ skills for the job (Donato, 2008; Forlin, 2007; Jordan, 2009; Orsini-Jones, 2009). This was also consistent with the views expressed by Jenny, Veronica and Lauren. Teachers may also have difficulty in establishing a clear pedagogical direction for the student because of the lack of guidance (Orsini-Jones, 2009) as was also the case with Lauren who said:

*The funny thing is that we had to work it out ourselves...it was the first time that we had a student who was blind...that was just like, wow, what do we do, how do we teach, and we had to work it out. And that was hard... it was time consuming as well (Lauren).*

These difficulties can then be compounded by not knowing about the specifics of a student's disability (Donato, 2008). While the teachers felt very much that they were making it up as they went along, the assumptions made by management regarding how Amira would approach her learning (using Braille for example) added to this stress for both the staff working with Amira as well as Amira herself. Teachers making assumptions about learners' needs prevents students from gaining access to the most appropriate assistance for their situation and wastes time and energy (Swart & Greyling, 2011; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

The teachers also expressed the feeling that there was a lack of collaboration when they were working with Amira. Jenny felt that management was withholding information; Monica felt that other colleagues didn't really know or understand the extent of her work with Amira; Lauren felt ignored by management; Veronica felt there was a fundamental problem with communication within the organisation. There was also a sense of tension regarding the increased workload – the manager who made the comment to Monica and I about us not having sufficient time management skills to cope with the increased workload still makes me angry!

It is unfortunate that the teachers experienced such isolation in working with Amira. As I discussed in Chapter 3 and the theoretical framework for this research, collaborative models can help all teachers in their professional development and create a sense of camaraderie and support within teaching communities. These communities of

practice provide opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and are at the heart of the conceptual and Whole Schooling frameworks. Collaborative work practices aid in supporting teachers and in doing so, creating positive outcomes for students (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Deppeler, 2012; Dyson et al., 2004; Mentis, Kearney, & Bevan-Brown, 2012; Morrison, 2007) and thereby become drivers for political and social change. Developing practices through working in interprofessional learning groups (Mentis et al., 2012) or professional learning communities (Deppeler, 2012) provide teachers with opportunities “to learn *from* and *about* each other” (Mentis et al., 2012, p. 297, original italics). It is interesting to think about how our experience in teaching Amira could have been so different if we had been able to develop a more collegial working environment.

## **Theme #2 – Cultures**

### **Culture of the country.**

Discussions about the culture of the country were more relevant in terms of the question of support for students because of their various backgrounds. While the staff views regarding culture were interesting (for example Terry thought that the culture in Australia is one dominated by deficit views; Lauren thought that compared to Europe, Australia lagged behind in its attitudes to people with a disability; Jenny thought that Australian culture likes to see people ‘punch above their weight’). In terms of the day to day experiences of the teachers, these cultural perceptions didn’t seem to have much of a relationship between what the teachers found supportive or a hindrance.

It was, however, their views of Amira’s culture which seemed to have more of an influence on their working lives as inclusive professionals working with Amira. Considering the relations between Amira and the teachers can be conceptualised in

terms of a Bourdieuan field; a “configuration of relations” (Grenfell & James, 2004, p. 510).

For example Veronica thought it was significant that Amira was from a country where *women are not empowered* and that there was a relationship between this cultural background and Amira’s behaviour (headstrong and sometimes arrogant). Jenny’s assumptions were based on how she thought Amira had limited independence in Australia because she was female. These cultural assumptions were also realised in terms of how the teachers spoke about their relationship with Amira; Veronica talked about Amira being *headstrong and obnoxious*; Lauren spoke about how she and Amira became friends; Monica spoke about Amira’s rich imagination and Jenny mentioned how she thought Amira *wasn’t even really representative of a woman from Iraq because*, for example, she did not cover her hair with a scarf as she assumed all women in Iraq did. These postulations were put forward by the teachers who worked with Amira as a way of trying to understand her and some of the difficulties they had in working with her (such as her sometimes not wanting to take direction from teachers). As Bourdieu states, the field can “generate its own problems rather than receiving them in a ready-made fashion from outside” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 112). In other words, the teachers were generating some of their own ‘problems’ in relation to their relationship with Amira which had nothing to do with the outside world or quite possibly the reality of Amira’s habitus.

### **University culture.**

The culture of the university had more of an impact as a support or a hindrance for the teachers in their day to day workings with Amira. Veronica and Jenny felt the culture of the university was about avoidance and trying to push students through because of sympathy. In terms of the university policy, Terry was the most positive out



of all the staff. His understanding was that there was a generally broad awareness that staff had of policy. This is perhaps not surprising given that dissemination of policy is a large part of his job. However the experience of the teachers was quite different. Veronica talked about how she thought that, due to their policy the university was well equipped to work with students with a physical disability. A difficulty she faced, however, was the fact that she only became familiar with the policies as she was teaching Amira rather than being aware of them from the start. Jenny had a good knowledge of the policies mainly because she had looked at them immediately prior to the interview but pointed out that there was little regarding disability and international students. In reference to Research Question 1, these findings are consistent with the literature which suggests that staff and students have little awareness of university inclusion policies (Caruana & Ploner, 2010; FOTIM, 2011).

The university's systems were also difficult for the staff to navigate, particularly in working with I.T. Jenny and Veronica in particular spoke about the difficulties they experienced in trying to work around demarcation issues with IT such as dealing with the assistive technology programme JAWS. Fragmented approaches from different areas of the school or university (such as I.T., administration) often results in a lack of resource mapping (Dutta et al., 2009; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004; Orsini-Jones, 2009) and in the case of the teaching staff, confusion over who was responsible for what.

We as teachers were also at the mercy of external systems. For instance, Amira having to do the Task One of the IELTS exam (interpretation of a visual diagram) is an example of how equal opportunity is often misconstrued as equal treatment. As Terry explained *equal opportunity doesn't mean equal treatment, as some people think, because one person's needs may not be true to someone else: you treat it on an individual basis*. The fragmented approach to Amira's exam preparation meant that

management were of the belief that she had to fulfil this component of the exam without appeal, when I was arguing that I thought an appeal was valid. A collaborative and united team who understood Amira's needs, in consultation with Amira herself, would have been a powerful force in seeking exemption from this task from Cambridge examiners who govern the IELTS exam.

A lack of resources was experienced as a major hindrance for the teachers who worked with Amira. Workloads increased exponentially for us mainly because the resources were not available to help with the scanning and preparing documents for class. This was not met with an increase in remuneration for sessional employees who are paid on an hourly basis. Even though this is perhaps not surprising - Terry mentioned how international students with a disability don't bring extra funding to university to cover the provision of their needs - it was disappointing, and this is something that needed to be communicated with the teachers from the start. As Monica said

*I definitely would have felt that additional remuneration was warranted. And particularly additional remuneration was warranted when I felt that I was contributing a particular skill set and expertise that no one else had as a sessional teacher (Monica).*

Although the costs associated with inclusion are more economically viable than the alternative which is borne out of discrimination and exclusion – education, training, support and access to employment as opposed to welfare entitlements (Gadbow & Du Bois, 1998) it is perhaps not high on the priority list for universities to take this into consideration for university students who potentially will not be employees in the same country as that in which they completed their international degree. Perhaps most

importantly for Amira, a lack of sensitivity and awareness for the accommodation of students with a disability is actually of more significant concern than funding availability (Holloway, 2001; Dutta et al., 2009). The fact that her teachers were sensitive to her needs and did the best they could without any additional resourcing speaks volumes for these teachers as both professionals and caring individuals.

## **Theme #3 – The Self**

### **Intrinsic qualities and being flexible.**

These findings show an inextricable link between the habitus of the teacher and the extent to which they practise inclusivity. Jenny talked about how the teachers who worked with Amira had to be the *right staff* in terms of their personalities. This is demonstrated by the fact that Lauren, Monica and Jenny said that they would teach another student with a disability in their English as a Second Language classrooms. This is also reflected in the literature - the habitus of the staff is a fundamental influencing factor in the creation of an inclusive environment for students (Agbenyega, 2007; Donato; 2008; Klibthong, 2012; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Swart & Greyling, 2011). Swart and Greyling (2011) point to the degree of significance of these attributes:

Positive attitudes from lecturers and accommodative teaching are experienced as very supportive, and intrinsic qualities such as patience, kindness and caring attitude make a difference (Swart & Greyling, 2011, p. 100).

In the analysis chapter I summarised these ideas by talking about the collective habitus of the teachers in relation to how they saw the “fit” between themselves as people and of teachers of Amira.

The staff interviewed generally believed that all students have the right to learn together but mentioned how difficult this was in practice in terms of the awareness of other students in the class and meeting their needs. Jenny in particular reflected on how she saw the overall benefits there could have been for Amira in working with her one-to-one. The teaching staff spoke about how they needed to be flexible in their delivery in working with Amira and certain constraints of working with her in class. Some of these mentioned were making sure Amira could sit up the front of the class to access a power outlet for her laptop (Veronica), adapting tasks such as role plays (Veronica), being conscious of making all instructions in a verbal manner rather than written and making these clear (Jenny), having an awareness of pairings and groups and dynamics in the class (Veronica, Jenny, Lauren, Monica). It is important that the teachers were able to adapt their teaching styles - flexible and adaptable approaches in terms of assessment, curricular and teaching practice are also an important part of pedagogical knowledge; being inflexible can cause barriers for students (Holloway, 2001; Redpath et al., 2012; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010; Waterfield & West, 2010). Being flexible in their roles therefore was not only important for Amira but also for the teachers themselves – not being flexible would have caused Amira distress and in doing so would have created stress for the teachers.

### **A rewarding experience.**

Finally, all of the teachers spoke about how they had gained something rewarding from their role in working with Amira including being more creative (Veronica), learning about different teaching approaches (Lauren), seeing a student such as Amira improve (Monica) and a sense of *doing something really worthwhile* (Jenny). These teachers agreed that their confidence as inclusive practitioners had grown. Terry

also spoke positively about his role in working with students with a disability and making a difference in their lives.

Literature also supports these perspectives in that teachers who experienced working with students with a disability later reported that their confidence in teaching grew, which had a significant effect in reducing negative attitudes (Agbenyega, 2007). In effect, therefore, teachers find that the whole experience of teaching a student with a disability supports their development of effective inclusive practices overall.

The final research question for this thesis asks:

***How can the knowledge gained from this research be applied in other higher education institutions?***

The key findings below help articulate my recommendations for reconstructing/reconceptualising inclusion in higher education.

## **Working Towards Reconstructing/Reconceptualising Inclusion in Higher Education**

The results from the interviews indicate that students and staff feel supported and have positive experiences when symbolic capital is in alignment with the cultural contexts of the institution and the country. When this does not happen, staff and students feel unsupported and have negative experiences. The results from the students seem to suggest that one positive interaction with a staff member can influence a student's perception of the entire university. The question this poses is: how can these positive interactions be optimised? The findings from Research Questions 1 and 2 point to a number of ways this can be achieved in terms of answering this final research question.

## **Staff who know what they are doing and are positive about it.**

What is apparent throughout the data is how cultural norms (both institutional cultural norms as well as those pertaining to a country) perpetuate perceptions of disability while at the same time acting as a catalyst in driving the extent to which both staff and students feel supported (Supple & Agbenyega, 2013). For example the staff interviewed for this study spoke about how their managers failed to create opportunities for professional development of their teachers or to establish clear mechanisms for communication and the sharing of ideas between their staff. This resulted in the creation of an unsupportive culture.

The experiences of the students showed how positive interactions with staff occurred when the staff knew what accommodations their students needed. Perhaps the students were just lucky that their lecturers knew what to do. The staff who I interviewed spoke about how they wanted more knowledge about support systems and policy but at the same time showed an understanding of the links between their experiences in working with Amira and how this had made them better teachers overall.

The conceptual framework in Chapter 3 shows how staff are important agents in working alongside students to promote inclusion, which is supported in literature (Ballard, 2012; Borland, 1999; Donato, 2008; Dutta et al., 2009). As the data from this research and literature for the previous research question indicate, staff are adamant about needing ongoing training in inclusive practice (Eloff et al., 2002; Enjelvin, 2008; Orsini-Jones, 2009; Ryan & Struths, 2004; Swart & Greyling, 2011).

Perhaps it is somewhat obvious that awareness-raising of policy and university processes needs to be included in any training - the results of my research certainly showed a lack of understanding and awareness of both policies and processes.

However, I would argue that there also needs to be a deeper level of involvement from teachers in becoming engaged in critically examining policy while at the same time being aware of how policies are realised by students' everyday experiences in the university under these policies. For example, staff might be unaware of how alternative assessment practices may not necessarily be the panacea they might assume; Jane for instance found a scribe extremely difficult to work with due to the cognitive challenge created by needing to dictate to someone. Such processes can have the effect of students being "reduced to operational semi-literacy" (Hanfin, et al, 2007, p. 441) as happened with Jane, and, therefore, not performing to the best of their ability.

Awareness of and engagement with the ideas above I think underpin a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be an inclusive practitioner. It then follows that inclusive teacher training should be grounded within a critical educational standpoint which underscores the importance of educators as pivotal agents in the "*maintenance and expansion of the social universe of capital*" (Jaramillo & McLaren, 2009, p. 17, original italics; see also Ballard, 2012). In other words, teachers need to be made aware and continually critical and reflective of their role as socially powerful providers of symbolic capital. In this way:

teachers might learn to juxtapose their personal theories, visions, sense of belonging, or identities with the realities of school and push back on the institutional and social narratives that push on them (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 151).

A critical educational practice also takes into account the unique knowledge-base which students come from, drawing attention to the importance of a non-deficit approach to education which values individual strengths (Smith, 2012; Soresi et al.,

2011) and does not make assumptions about students based on how their disability might be 'categorised'.

The problem lies with just how to incorporate this training in an effective way which represents a more cohesive approach to training than merely an 'add-on' (Mills, 2012). The reality is of course that teachers are already over-stretched and have increasing workloads which make any additional training problematic.

From the results of the teacher interviews, all the training in the world is perhaps useless if there is no support thereafter. Training, therefore, needs to be done in a collaborative way and should not be imposed by managers but negotiated with staff in a collegiate manner, as is central to the conceptual framework. Furthermore, the symbolic violence experienced by the staff was highly apparent in that they felt that they faced a mammoth task in supporting Amira and that support from management was sorely lacking. We might conclude from the comments made by staff that they continue to 'do the best that they can' without recognition or encouragement to increase their symbolic capital through training, thereby increasing their symbolic capital. Perhaps also if students tend to be talking about their experiences as positive then this is considered as satisfactory on the part of managers and supervisors, particularly in a context where students are being viewed more and more as the 'consumer'.

There was a sense, however, that managers and colleagues did not understand the extent of burnout the teachers felt because of their added responsibilities and excessive workloads. As a result the teachers felt unsupported in the field and alluded to feelings of resentment over the fact that they were the ones 'targeted' to have a student with a disability in their class. This indicated that they felt they had no symbolic capital in their network of relations (field) with staff.



Any teacher training needs to focus on the importance of a collaborative work ethic, that is, working in collaborative ways helps to create an environment where all students feel comfortable in disclosing, sharing and communicating their needs. This environment of collegiality is of utmost importance if staff are to respond effectively and efficiently to student diversity by sharing ideas and supporting each other while developing reflective practice (Pym & Kapp, 2011). The major implications gleaned from this study highlight the importance of professional development of staff in increasing and leveraging their symbolic capital. A positive work ethic for all staff could be fostered through participation in professional learning communities and creating a work culture where all staff become capable in utilising comprehensive resources provided by the institution to support students. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to training which includes information on theoretical perspectives on disability, legal issues, appropriate accommodations for students, communicating with students who have a disability and teaching resources is key (Burgstahler & Doe, 2006). Strategies and procedures also need to harness the symbolic capital of the students in becoming active participants in the learning community and using their knowledge and experience in educating staff (Izzo, Hertzfeld, Simmons-Reed, & Aaron, 2001).

Opportunities for teachers to learn from each others' symbolic capital in learning communities allow a space for professionals to engage with others, and encourage a collaborative work culture (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Deppeler, 2012; Dyson et al., 2004; Mentis et al., 2012; Morrison, 2007; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Learning communities are underpinned by a focus on student learning rather than teaching (Deppeler, 2010; 2012; Vescio et al., 2008). The focus on the best outcomes for students is the common goal for the learning community. Arguably this could have served to help the staff who were interviewed in this study as a sense of isolation was implicit in many of their comments. A wholly inclusive approach which sees

professionals being inclusive towards one another is integral to facilitating positive learning environments for all students (Donato, 2008; Mentis et al., 2012).

In this way it can be argued that effective inclusion is akin to effective teaching practices overall, and that enhancing inclusive practices will benefit all students (Carrington et al., 2012; Jordan et al., 2009). Training needs to make explicit the connections between approachability, flexibility and helpfulness of lecturers and how this is inextricably linked to students' overall experience of the university (Fuller et al., 2004; Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny, & Neela, 2007; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). The experiences of the students I interviewed also reflected this.

### **Policy is not isolating.**

If staff and students are to have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the policies which guide inclusive practice then the language needs to be written in non-deficit terms and be easily accessible. As discussed in regards to Research Question 1 there are often problems in policy in that they are conceptualised and, therefore, written largely in accordance with deficit models and are assimilationist in nature (Hanafin et al., 2007; Sheridan, 2010). The wording in the quote from the DLU website as discussed in Chapter 6 and also mentioned in the previous research question is a case in point here: “The DLO [sic] takes into consideration the impact of *your disability* in the *academic environment*” (my italics). I would argue that this should be the other way around (how the academic environment might cause barriers for you) and have suggested alternative wording of this statement.

Furthermore, I have personally found the name Disability Liaison Unit misleading. As a highly anxious student myself during exams in my undergraduate years, I would never had thought to seek help from such a unit. ‘Disability’ to me would

have meant having a physical disability, despite the fact that I was always almost debilitated by the anxiety that exams caused me. In fact, the way a unit such as the DLU is named has far reaching implications for those who access their services in that merely its name can limit or promote access. When students feel the name is pejorative, the likelihood of accessing the service is low because of the likely stigma attached. Perhaps if the name of the unit was different, more students would avail of its services. 'Unit for Academic Equity and Excellence' (otherwise known as the UAEE seeing universities love acronyms) could perhaps be an alternative name?

In the U.K., the voices of all stakeholders in policy have started to be recognised. The Disability Equality Duty (2007) in the U.K. enables stakeholders to move beyond the traditional scope of "what is to be done" towards not only "who is to do it?" but also "how is it to be done?" The Disability Equality Duty "demands the inclusion of disabled voices in decisions with regard to the policies and procedures of public bodies including higher education institutions" (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010, p.7). As such, the onus for public bodies has moved beyond mere inclusive policy writing into a clear, transparent and consultative process for all stakeholders to be involved in. The Disability Equality Duty, therefore, seeks to create an alignment between the symbolic capital of the institution and that of its stakeholders.

These ideals echo "democracy, community, support, partnership and a space for all" - the main tenets of the Whole Schooling framework. Students and staff are recognised in terms of the symbolic capital they can offer the institution, rather than the other way around: In practice this means:

In order to further disabled student involvement, institutions should pay attention to the value of the student voice, ensuring that it is respected, encouraged and recognised. By listening to disabled people, institutions can benefit from a unique insight into how institutional processes and practices are experienced, which will help them to eliminate discrimination and enhance the quality of the student experience. Furthering student involvement likewise calls for collaboration to be valued, recognising the benefit of working with disabled students in terms of the quality and quantity of what can be achieved (May & Felsing, 2010, p. 36).

In doing so, policy-making moves towards a Bourdieuan vision; “a shift in institutional culture, in the values and traditions that characterise how an institution, its constituent parts and individuals operate” (May & Felsing, 2010, p. 41). Based on the analysis of the policy documents for this university, consultation with staff and students would significantly increase awareness of the policy. Also, a revision of the accessibility of the documents in terms of pre-induction is required if students are to be made fully aware that the policies exist. As part of training under a critical theoretical standpoint, staff could be encouraged to consider the following:

Who actually wins and who loses as a result of the policy – which (‘raced’ and gendered’) social class, or social class layers (or ethnic group, gender, religious or other group) gain, or, alternatively lose power/wealth/income/educational and economic opportunity as a result of the policy? In other words ‘who gets the gravy, and who has to make it?’ (Hill & Robertson, 2009, p. 312).

As the analysis of the policy documents for this research demonstrated, as well as the knowledge gap of the participants of the policies themselves, neither staff nor students are the ‘winners’; that glory seems to be reserved for the university systems.

The findings from this research also point to the need for a rethinking of the policy of assessment and its practices. Hanafin et al.’s (2007) findings that many of the difficulties experienced by students in higher education are directly linked to problems surrounding assessment procedures was also the case for this research – Anna’s lecturer accused her of wanting special consideration to get higher marks, Mary was worried about accessing materials for exams, James was worried about writing too slowly and being anxious about the exam and Jane had difficulties working with a scribe. Jenny, Lauren and I also saw the stress that preparing for the IELTS exam caused Amira, particularly for the visual component of Task One, not to mention the pressure it also placed on us teachers. This is consistent with the findings of Hanafin et al., (2007) who suggest that “there is plenty of evidence that prevailing assessment practices are suitable neither for all students...nor for all institutional purposes” (Hanafin et al, p. 437).

### **Being a valued part of the university community.**

If the elements mentioned above are reflected in current movements towards creating an inclusive environment (staff who know what they are doing and are positive about it; policy which is not isolating and is written in a collaborative way) this ideally creates an environment where all students feel as though they are a valued and empowered member of the university community. A welcoming environment where students don’t fear being judged or discriminated against is conducive to a more inclusive learning environment, and this makes it easier for staff to work with students in a collaborative way. Staff have a lot they can learn from students in terms of the specifics of their disability, what is helpful, what is not, etcetera. That is why the

conceptual framework places both staff and students as important collaborative stakeholders in the process.

As reflected in the results for Research Question 1, self-determination on the part of the students is also an important part of being empowered agents within the university context. Designing feedback processes for university policies and procedures situates students as empowered agents whose voices are respected and encouraged.

International students with a disability can possibly feel more isolated than other students due to both being from a different country and having a disability. As discussed in the literature review, literature in the past has focused on the deficit model of international students (see Biggs, 1997; Littlewood, 1999, cited in Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Robertson, 2011) and students with a disability (Harris, 1971; Martin et al., 1988; Wood, 1980; cited in Barton, 2007; Goode, 2007) and their attempts to acculturate into their new settings, but not on international students with a disability. It is true that it can be difficult for international students in particular to feel engaged with their new university due to differences between the new and former cultures. Dealing with linguistic challenges can also cause difficulties for students (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnes, 2005). From a critical theory standpoint it is, therefore, important that the institution finds ways to cater to individual students by adopting methods that facilitate engagement and interaction for students. The importance, however, is the type of engagement – the aim is for every student to feel welcome, connected, honoured and respected (Best, Supple & Tout, 2011). As I have found out, this is difficult, but achievable, and the results are a joy to witness.

I have referred throughout this thesis to how, as a result of this research into inclusion, I was offered a job in 2010 as a lecturer in Students Supporting Student

Learning (SSSL) at Victoria University in Melbourne (not the university at the centre of this study). In my role at SSSL I work with student peer mentors who are involved in a range of programs from subject-based support programs to cross-university programs such as the Peer Writing Space. The main purpose of this role is working with the strengths and talents that students bring with them as both learners and peer educators.

Student peer mentoring programs have been shown to be beneficial to students on a number of levels such as transitional, social and academic, across a variety of demographics such as non-English speaking students, international students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Best, Supple & Tout, 2011; Elliot, Beltman & Lynch, 2011; Hryciw, Tangalakis, Supple, & Best, 2013), indigenous students (Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007), mature-aged students (Hryciw et al., 2013) and students with a disability (Boardman, 2003). Mentoring programs are also beneficial for staff for example in reducing time taken for answering questions that previous students may be capable of answering such as administrative queries or questions about processes (how to access lecture notes or use online systems). Peer mentoring also establishes a cycle of communication between staff and mentors where mentors can be drawn upon by lecturers to provide feedback from students they work with in regards to the subject, assessments and, content delivery (Best, Supple & Tout, 2011). The near-peer relationship means that students are more likely to tell a mentor about problems they are having in the unit than the lecturer themselves.

The movement away from traditional types of learning with the lecturer/tutor as the gatekeeper of knowledge reflects a shift from teacher-centred learning towards learning which is student-centred and facilitated by near-peers (Best, Hajzler, Pancini & Tout, 2011). Peer learning is influenced by a range of theories including critical theory. As an approach to learning, peer mentoring works to reduce power between agents. This

is an ideology reflected by the critical works of Freire who advocated for more equitable relationships and collaboration for learning between teachers and learners (Freire, 2005). The transmission of peer knowledge through purposeful academic settings, as opposed to 'buddy systems' or organised social gatherings, have been found to have the most impact on student engagement and retention by fulfilling both academic and social needs for both mentors and mentees (Best, Supple & Tout, 2011).

Student peer mentoring is also a response to the belief that institutions need to try and fit the student, rather than the assimilationist model that assumes that students must fit the institution. The latter disregards the strengths of an individual's identity. The challenge is for institutions to “develop ways in which an individual's identity is affirmed, honoured, and incorporated into the organization's culture” (Tierney, 2000, p. 219).

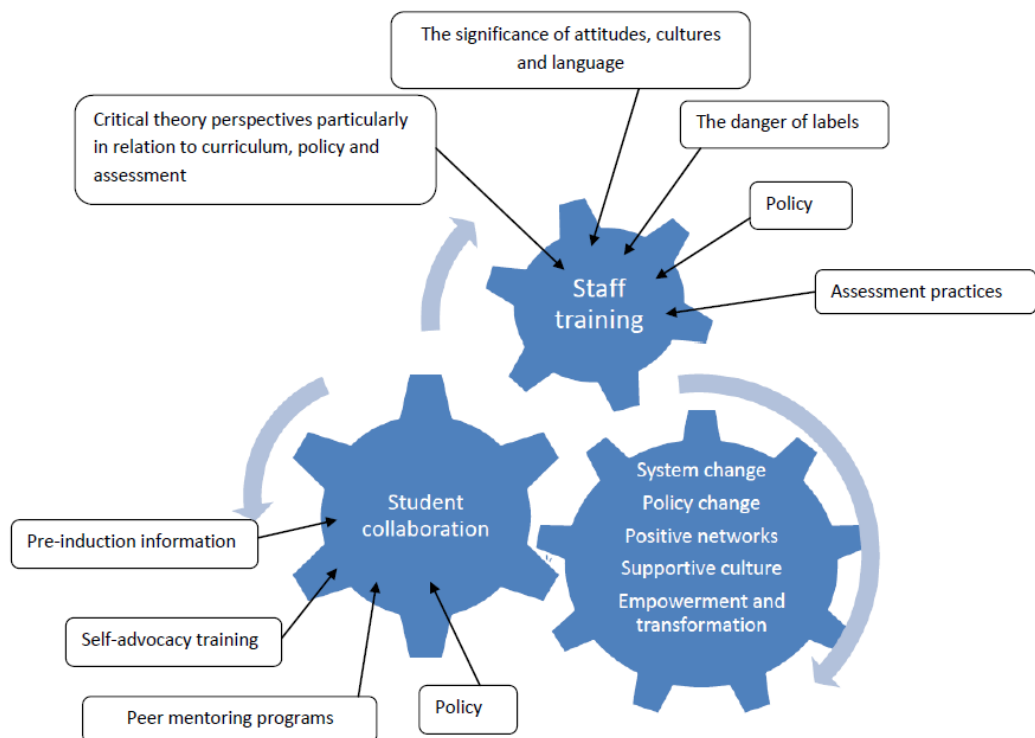
Working with students in their capacity as student peer mentors has certainly been an experience that has made me think very differently about learning. It is really satisfying to work in a job that makes the most of what students have to offer as mentors, and seeing their transformation from working with students in helping them to learn is nothing short of amazing. I recently completed some progress interviews with our Writing Mentors and every one of the 10 mentors interviewed said how much they loved their jobs because of the capacity it gave them to learn about themselves and to feel connected to the university and to other students. While this is anecdotal evidence in terms of the transformative potential student peer mentoring can offer, the statistics speak for themselves year after year, and our VU SSSL end of semester evaluations certainly also reflect the many benefits of these programs.

(<http://snap.vu.edu.au/staff/students-supporting-students-learning-sssl/sssl-documents/evaluation-reports>).



## Directions for future inclusive practices

A Bourdieuan perspective seeks to orientate thinking towards a task and creating change (Web et al., 2002). In light of this I have created the following models which I hope will contribute to new directions for future inclusive practice. Figure 7.1 shows how staff training and student collaboration are inextricably linked not only to each other, but are also fundamental to the drivers for system and policy change, the creation of positive networks between staff and colleagues, student to student as well as student to staff. The eventual outcome of these drivers is towards empowerment and transformation for both staff and students.



*Figure 7.1.* Future directions towards inclusion.

As per the results in Chapter 6 and the discussion of Chapter 7, the important elements for staff training include perspectives which are grounded in critical theory. As

the results show, an awareness of policy is a fundamental factor for the support of students. A critical perspective helps to uncover the hidden agendas of policy and how it may serve some agents' interests and not others. That is, there needs to be a consideration of the politics behind the policy (Slee, 2011). Critical theory lenses also allow a deeper insight into the collective attitudes and culture of an institution and how these impact upon the learning environment. Critical theory helps to uncover how language is used in policy in creating labels for students and how this is dangerous in neglecting to take into account individual needs and strengths.

Collaboration with students is also important in driving institutional change. If information about the support provided by universities is available to students before induction, this can have an influence in terms of whether a student decides to study there. As with the students I interviewed, I think this would have been an added incentive for them to choose the university, as well as being a factor in alleviating concerns parents might have had over the support their child would receive overseas. My results also pointed to the importance of self-advocacy and determination in helping students to articulate requests for additional support. It would be beneficial for students to be given some kind of training in these skills.

Furthermore, as this chapter has also shown, the transformative power of student peer mentoring programs is significant and something I have witnessed first-hand. They are a powerful support tool for universities to utilise for the benefit of all students, and the increase in self-confidence levels reported by both mentors and mentees also results in the further development of self-advocacy skills. Finally, in this chapter I also discussed the movement in the U.K. for students to be consulted as stakeholders in the policy processes of their universities. This is vital in honouring the student voice while

also acting as an important mechanism for students becoming more aware of policies in their respective universities.

In terms of policy, I have created a flow chart (Figure 7.2 overleaf) based on the results of this research. The flowchart shows what I see as the ‘4 Guiding Principles’ vital for successful and meaningful policy creation in universities. The main idea behind the principles is to ensure wide dissemination and consultation with both staff and students. The reason I have created a flow chart is that my aim is for staff, students, and policy makers to engage with the document as a way of thinking about the current processes which are in place at their institutions. Once each of the guiding principles has been established (by consultation process on equity policy; dissemination of policy; inbuilt training for staff and students; non-deficit language) each of the principles needs to be revisited under a process of institutional scrutiny to ensure an ongoing cycle of quality is being monitored and maintained (Guiding Principle 5).

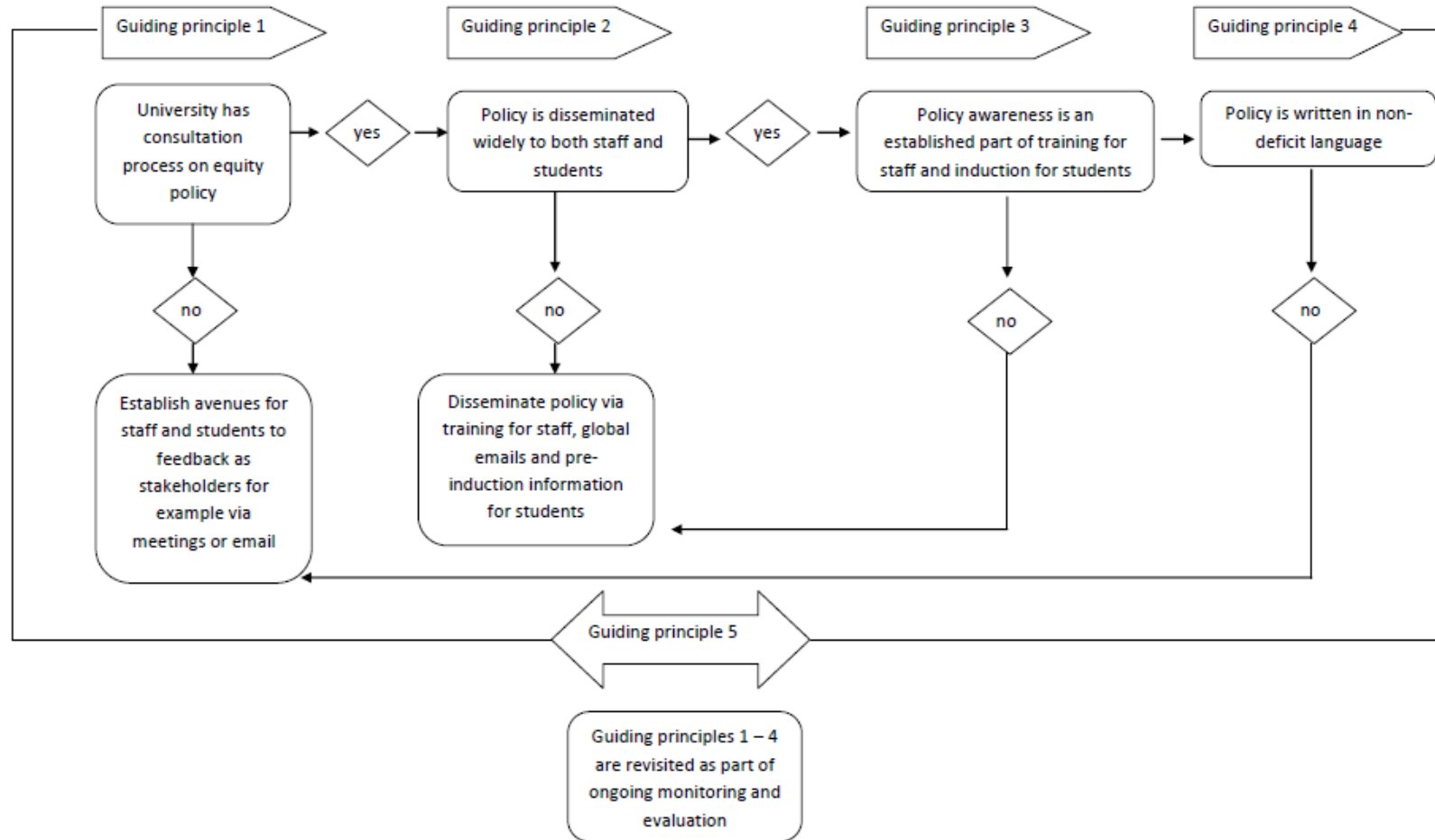


Figure 7.2. Flowchart for inclusive policy practices and procedures.

In the spirit of collaboration, in July 2012 I presented both Figure 7.1 and 7.2 at a small forum of university staff. I had 18 participants at the presentation who I polled at the start of the presentation via an interactive quiz. Their answers revealed the following:

50% of the audience *agreed* that their university has established mechanisms for policy consultation about equity and diversity issues.

100% of the audience *disagreed* with the statement “the equity and diversity policy at my university is widely disseminated”.

75% of the audience *disagreed* and 25% of the audience *strongly disagreed* that the equity and diversity policy at their university is easy to access.

50% of the audience were aware of the terms ‘medical model’ and ‘social model’ of disability.

75% of the audience *disagreed* and 25% of the audience *strongly disagreed* that policy awareness is a well-established part of training for staff and induction for students at their university.

100% of the audience knew that ‘people with a disability’ is the preferred terminology in Australia over ‘disabled people’.

The participants then split into small groups and discuss Figures 7.1 and 7.2.

For Figure 7.1 it was felt that training should be compulsory for all staff and could be included as part of a work plan for continuing staff and induction for new staff. The main question that the participants discussed was in terms of the delivery of

training – making it something that all staff do, but something that isn't onerous or simply a 'tick the box' meaningless task. The group who discussed this model at length talked about how training should be done in an 'awareness raising' manner rather than something which is didactic and tells staff what they can and can't do. It should also involve students and in fact one suggestion was that training be delivered to students and staff together and that students could deliver some of the content to staff. The group also talked about disability as a wider cultural concept akin to cultural difference and that the training should be delivered as such.

In terms of Figure 7.2 there was a palpable sense of the audience feeling a disconnect between policy and practice and that policy was often present in governance but often overtaken by other priorities. There was very much the belief that the policy is simply a rhetoric that is used to satisfy external accountability only, and that there is a lack of modelling of the policy by Senior Management. As Question 2 from the quiz above indicated, there was very much a sense of there being dissatisfaction with the ways that policy is disseminated throughout their university and while the audience indicated that the dissemination strategies I mentioned in Figure 7.2 have their limitations (for example Global Emails to staff get deleted or are simply not read). It was also difficult for us to come up with alternative means to 'get the message out there' to staff. In terms of students, some of the suggestions made were to incorporate policy awareness as part of Orientation Week (the week before lectures start at the beginning of the year) and to have a page in university student diaries which provides information about policy or at least internet links and contacts for where to find further information. One important principle for any documents aimed at students it was felt, is that it needs to be 'free of management speak'.

What I liked most about this presentation was the fact that it ended up much more like a discussion and opened up some interesting debates. If nothing else I hope the process reinforced my own attempts at being an inclusive educator through working collaboratively and seeking feedback from other academics.

## **Limitations of this study**

One of the main limitations of this study I think was to do with the sample of students. The policy of the university at the centre of this study is that I had to recruit the participants through DLU so I was unable to use methods such as advertising on posters for example. This essentially positioned the DLU as gatekeepers. Because of the small sample these results cannot be generalised too much in terms of the experiences of international students with a disability who study in Australia. Further regarding the sample, it may have been coincidence but the fact that all the students I interviewed had had generally positive experiences made me wonder whether that was the very reason they came forward. Perhaps students who had had a negative experience felt less inclined to be involved in an interview where they may not have been comfortable talking about their dissatisfaction. There may have also been concern on their part that speaking too negatively would somehow impact on their grades.

For me, time also proved a limitation in terms of undertaking follow up interviews with the students to look at the continuity of their experiences (or lack thereof). At the start of my data collection I was in the midst of a battle with my then employer about taking time off from teaching in order to collect my data. It was during this time at one point I thought I wouldn't be able to continue the research because of my prohibitive timetable and the lack of flexibility from my managers despite their initial expressions of support for this research. In some ways this was the final straw for me and was a catalyst which led me to take on my work with Victoria University,

Melbourne (not the site for this research). I collected the data when I was in between jobs and negotiating new employment conditions as well as working on the opposite side of the city to where the participants were made meeting for follow up interviews all the more difficult. Ideally I would have liked to have met the students at least two more times during their study to see whether their experiences had changed, and would have especially liked to follow up their experiences in terms of returning home to their own countries. The time and geographical restrictions also meant I was not able to include these students as researchers (as part of participatory action research for example) in the study. This is definitely something I intend to pursue in future research endeavours, particularly in the context of working with student peer mentors.

For Mary, Jane and Anna, even though they all had very good levels of English, perhaps speaking about their experiences in English may have limited the extent they felt that they could fully and naturally express themselves.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

In light of the results of this research, the following section outlines areas for further possible consideration in the future.

The decline in international student numbers at Australian universities has become the impetus for the federal government to determine what action may be taken in order to overcome the effects of this slow down (MacDonald, 2012). The government's formation of the International Education Advisory Council (IEAC) and its discussion paper *The Development of an International Education Strategy for Australia* aims to raise a number of themes for discussion in the development of an international education strategy for the next five years (IEAC, 2012, p. 4). Further research in an Australian context could look at the progress of this document and how students' rights



are represented within the discussion. This paper, however, only considers the context of Australia. According to James (2012) at present there are no studies which explore the issue of equity outside national borders. Therefore:

An international project is needed to consider the equity issues in international higher education, in particular, to examine how more comprehensive and more refined databases might be collected to monitor student demography in the context of global cross-border student flows (James, 2012, p. 103).

I have spoken at length throughout this thesis about the importance of the student voice and how the unique, lived experience of the student is vital to consider in the process of creating wholly inclusive educational environments. Ideally, research needs to be designed in collaboration with students within a participatory research framework (Swart & Greyling, 2011). A participatory research framework utilises co-constructive and collaborative methodologies (King & Horrocks, 2010). In my role at VU I am looking to work with students in developing research with them about using learning spaces as Student Peer Mentors. I recognise the inherent challenges behind not merely the processes of data collection but in helping the students to learn and to improve themselves through empowerment and ongoing reflexivity (Heron & Reason, 2001).

Future research, therefore, might investigate further the experiences of international students with a disability in terms of participatory research. Another avenue could be looking at a more longitudinal situation of what happens once these students go back to their own countries and whether their experiences abroad have changed their personal outlook and future prospects, and whether this fits into the supposition that the habitus of the individual can change as a result of life experiences.

Further research could also consider a comparison between the experiences of international students with a disability and local students with a disability in order to further explore issues of culture. There is also scope for looking at the experiences of students with a disability from refugee backgrounds instead of international students.

There is also further scope for investigating the impacts of peer mentoring programs for both international students, students with a disability and international students with a disability. In my current work as an academic I am a Chief Investigator in a research project which looks at the experiences of international students from China and their navigation of language and cultural issues in Australia.

The question I would like to pose for myself as a matter of further investigation and reflexive practice is: how can we work towards calibrating forms of capital for the good of all students and staff as both practitioners and researchers in inclusion? “Re – framing the field, Re –righting language, Re – searching for inclusion, Re-visioning education” are the ways in which Slee (2011, p. 154) conceptualises this happening. The four approaches posited by Slee (2011) assist stakeholders in generating symbolic capital in looking at areas such as “engaging the constituents; new research partnerships”; “recognising transformations and conservations”; “framing a values framework for researching inclusion and exclusion”; “inclusion as an educational aspiration and strategy; educating teachers for community; engaging teachers and community in policy development” (Slee, 2011, p. 154). The re-calibrating of these perspectives are powerful approaches to creating learning communities and empowering individual agents for change.

Finally, I agree with Leask and Carroll (2011) who suggest that:

We need fewer, if any, studies that document the unsatisfactory experiences of students, both home and international, resulting from a failure to take planned and strategic action to promote positive cross-cultural interaction (Leask & Carroll, 2011, p. 657).

The following chapter is the concluding chapter for this research in which the key ideas from this thesis are summarised.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this research was to identify current practices in inclusive education by looking at a small cross section of teachers and students, in order to inform best practice. By doing this, my aim was to discern teacher attitudes related to working with students with a disability, and to explore the lived experiences of students at the same university.

The guiding purposes of this research as outlined in Chapter 1 were to:

- a. Represent the student voice, that is, to document lived experiences and insider perspectives with regard to university level education as an international student.
- b. Explore *current practices* with the aim of identifying gaps in order to inform *best practice*.
- c. Discern staff attitudes related to working with students with a disability.
- d. Establish staff professional development needs.

My research aimed to explore these ideas in a way which realistically represented the student voice, so a qualitative approach was deemed the best. Through Bourdieu's conceptual tools I was able to analyse and make educated suppositions as to why students and staff felt the way they did about their experiences. Teaching staff were interviewed in order to present their perspectives of working with one international student with a disability and one support staff member was interviewed in order to consider the people behind the policy and support of the DLU. The study used Voice Relational Methodology (VRM) and thick description as a way of trying to capture the essence of the participants' experiences. This methodological approach of listening to

the authentic voices of the interviewees was underpinned by Bourdieu's critical theoretical concepts which consider the experiences of the participants through the lenses of capital, habitus and field in order to further understand the complexities of social relations and power between agents. These critical lenses provided me with the means to articulate new directions in policy making as informed by the lived experiences of all the stakeholders involved in the research. Inclusive educational policy and practice which is underscored by critical theory as I have demonstrated in this thesis "goes beyond political analysis to pursue a politics of transformation. In this regard it asks not only the traditional question of what is to be done, but also, who is to do it?" (Pothier & Devlin, 2006, p. 9).

## **Contribution of New Knowledge to Theory, Policy and Practice**

This thesis makes a contribution to new knowledge in three main areas: theory, policy and practice.

The unique cohort of students that this study looks at is one of the main contributions of this study, as non-English speaking students with a disability studying at an Australian university has not been explored. The cultural perspectives allowed insight into how existing socio-cultural norms in the students' own countries resulted in them feeling unsupported in Sri Lanka, China, Hong Kong and the U.S. The juxtaposition of the students' comments regarding their perceived level of support in Australia against their own notions of disability driven by culture (for example Anna's words about how *they lock you up* in Hong Kong if you have a mental illness) clearly results in what we see as a positive reflection of their experiences as a student in Australia. In other words, the students who were interviewed all came to Australia with minimal expectations of how their particular needs would be met due to their respective

home-country experiences and the lack of symbolic capital in their own countries - even for James from the U.S. Of course these students did also give some examples of where they felt unsatisfied with how their needs had been met at their university in Australia but in general the insights gleaned from the interviews were different to what I as a researcher had anticipated.

Of significance particular theoretical significance was the students' ability to push against how society might construct them as 'disabled', and how the habitus can be consciously formed and changed depending on the field. For James this was significant in terms of how society may see his ADD as something negative, but for him it's actually something positive. Society in Mary's culture had also positioned her in deficit terms but she had consciously pushed against this. She had completed her school-level education and had started her degree in China with little support. Anna positioned herself as western. Finally, the way that Jane spoke about how her study abroad experience demonstrated how self-determination and the experience of studying abroad can result in an ethical shift in habitus.

The implications for policy and practice were discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to the need for collaboration between staff and students, training, consultation and dissemination of policy and of working towards cultural change within universities. This requires working *with* students with disability and not *for* them. The contribution this study has made at a policy level is the flow chart as presented in Figure 7.2. This presents a number of guiding principles and for steps towards rigorous and fair policy consultation, implementation and awareness training. Furthermore I have suggested possible policy rewording for the Equity and Diversity policies for the university at the centre of this study to reflect a more inclusive ideology.

The contribution towards inclusive practice in higher education was also part of Chapter 7. Figure 7.1 highlighted an all-systems approach to inclusion at a university level by suggesting the integration of staff training with critical theoretical perspectives informed by students and staff working together.

## **Research and Transformation**

I am not suggesting that this research has given me all the answers. A discussion I had with my research supervisor early in the process of my research revealed to me how a PhD thesis often creates more questions than it necessarily answers. From a Bourdieuan perspective:

To become aware of the mechanisms which make life painful, even unliveable, does not mean to neutralize them; to bring to light the contradictions does not mean to resolve them (Bourdieu, 1993, cited in Bauman, 2005, p. 1097).

In some ways bringing to light the contradictions inherent in the study can be at once a frustration and a revelation. It was the process of writing this thesis which I think had the most profound impact on me, and as a result I felt that I became enmeshed simultaneously in two research projects as suggested by Glesne (2011) and Swart and Agbenyega (2010): one about inclusion; the other about myself and my positioning as a researcher, a practitioner and a person.

Finally in light of my current circumstances I feel the following quote by James (2012) best summarises how I now feel as a practitioner and researcher of inclusion:

The importance attached to equity in higher education is unsurprising. It touches our beliefs about justice and our hopes for a fairer society, for social change and for national development. It also touches our hopes for our own families (James, 2012, p. 83).

The particular resonating factor here for me as James (2012) above expressed is the hope for my own family. At the time of writing this my first child is only 4 months old. I hope that the main philosophies I have learnt regarding inclusion and social justice are ones that I can instil and foster in him in view of value adding to a new generation.



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## **Appendix A Email to Teaching Staff**

Dear Colleagues,

As you are probably aware, I am undertaking a Masters in Education by research under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Education.

The aim of this study is to conduct research into accessibility and support for international students with a disability via case studies of students and staff at one Melbourne University in order to help lecturers, teachers and support staff to develop good teaching practice and methodology, and to help inform policy and procedures.

This is an area which has not been the subject of much research. It aims to be beneficial for lecturers, students and staff about what is helpful and supportive, and the areas that perhaps need to be changed or improved.

I would like to request your participation in an individual interview. It is envisaged that this will take 30 - 45 minutes. You can choose whether I will record your voice or simply take notes. In each case you will be given a transcript to check and approve before the data is used. I will send you the questions prior to the interview.

The names of all participants as well as the university will be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in any publications.

I am currently on leave but ideally I would like to schedule interviews to start in term 7, from week 4.

Please reply to this email, stating whether you would like to participate or not. Please let me know if you have any questions about any aspect of the research. If you are interested in participating I will forward you an explanatory statement which provides more information about the study, and a consent form. I will also be in contact regarding a mutually convenient time to meet.

The decision to participate is up to your discretion; you are under no obligation whatsoever.

The chief investigator for this research is my supervisor who can also be contacted regarding any questions you may have about this research:

Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega

Monash University

Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor

Early Childhood Education/Inclusion

Building A, Peninsula, Frankston, Vic 3199 Tel: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

Briony

# Appendix B Explanatory Statement Teaching Staff



03/08/10

## **Title: Inclusion for international students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

This information sheet is for you to keep.

### **Student research project**

My name is Briony Supple and I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Masters in Education by research at Monash University.

### **Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?**

Through contact with the disability liaison unit at your university, I am aware that you are a lecturer or teacher of an international student/s who has registered with the disability liaison unit as requiring extra assistance for their study.

### **The aim/purpose of the research**

The aim of this study is to conduct research into accessibility and support for international students with a disability. It is hoped that the outcomes from this study will help lecturers, teachers and support staff by informing models for best practice and methodology, as well as support mechanisms.

### **Possible benefits**

There has been little research done into the area of international students with a disability. It is hoped that the research will be beneficial for lecturers, teachers, support staff and students.

### **What does the research involve and how much time will it take?**

The study involves audio recording of semi-structured interviews of up to one hour duration. I will also be conducting interviews with students, lecturers and support staff who would like to participate.

### **Inconvenience/discomfort**

All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place which is convenient to you and your students and sensitive to their needs. The interview is for the purpose of collecting data about what takes place in your class or lecture, and will not involve any judgement of your teaching or lecturing performance or ability.

### **Carers, guardians and support staff**

Students will be given the choice as to whether they wish carers, guardians or support staff to be present at any time during the interview.

It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, please feel free to contact the following counselling services. Staff counselling via PPC Worldwide: 1300 361 008 or counselling at your university.

### **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 having approved the interview transcript.

### **Confidentiality**

The names of all participants as well as the universities will be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in any publications.

### **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. Soft copy data will be stored on a computer to which only I have the password to access. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

## Participation

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please email me [REDACTED] au). You will not need to prepare anything prior to the data collection. Once you have indicated your interest in participating, I will send you a copy of the questions I plan to ask during the interview, the consent form, as well as any further information you may require.

## Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me via email at [REDACTED]. The findings are accessible for 6 months.

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 CF10/0745– 2010000352 is being conducted, please contact:
Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Campus [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee Building 3e Room 111 Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thank you.



Briony Supple



## Appendix C Consent Form Teaching Staff

### Consent Form – Lecturers/Teaching Staff

**Title: Inclusion for international students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

*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 understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that I will be able to choose whether the researcher records my voice as part of an interview, and that there is no obligation to be recorded.

I understand that if my voice is not recorded, the researcher will be taking notes about my answers.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

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 and audio-recordings and any notes 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 D Interview Questions Teaching Staff

## General background information

1. Please explain your teaching background
2. Which faculty/unit do you now teach in?
3. How long have you been in your current role?

## Knowledge – pedagogical

1. What is your experience in teaching a student with a disability?
2. What kind of accommodations have been required in teaching these students?
3. To what extent would you consider your students as having been successful?
4. In your experience, what contributes to the academic success of students with a disability?
5. How do you modify the learning environment and learning tasks for the students with a disability?

## Knowledge – inclusive practices and disability

1. How would you describe your knowledge of the disability of students whom you have taught?
2. Do you think students with a disability should be included in mainstream classes?
3. If so, what mechanisms do you think should be in place to meet the needs of this student while also meeting the needs of others in the class?
4. Would you regard the teaching of a student with a disability as a professional development opportunity or a challenge?

## Collaborative support practices

1. How do you collaborate with others (teaching colleagues, administration, disability liaison unit, management, library and I.T. staff, note-takers) in your teaching of a student with a disability?
2. How supportive were teaching colleagues, administration, disability liaison unit, management, library and I.T. staff, note-takers?
3. How would you describe the following in relation to your experience?
  - a. Workload, b. Rewards and challenges, c. New skills learnt, d. resources

## **Policy and legislation**

1. How familiar are you with current equity and diversity policies at your university?
2. Do you think the current policy is reflected in current practice?
3. To what extent do you think that universities can influence the wider community in policy implementation?

## **Cultural issues**

1. Have you become aware of any cultural differences regarding the nature of disability through teaching a student from overseas who has a disability, or through any other contexts?
2. What do you think is the current culture perpetuated by social norms of disability?
3. Have any of your views changed as a result of teaching a student with a disability?
4. How do you think the culture of a university differs from that of a school in promoting access to education for all students?
5. What do you think is the general attitude towards students with a disability at your university?

## **The future**

1. What do you think can improve the teaching of students with a disability in the future?
2. Can you give any suggestions regarding the following for the future?
  - a. Knowledge, professional development, training,
  - b. Policy,
  - c. Practice/methodology,
  - d. Social outcomes

Are there any other concerns or comments you would like to make which haven't been covered in this interview?

Thank you for your participation.

## **Appendix E Email to DLU**

To whom it may concern,

My name is Briony Supple and I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Masters in Education by research at Monash University.

The aim of this study is to conduct research into accessibility and support for international students with a disability. It is hoped that the outcomes from this study will help lecturers, teachers and support staff by informing models for best practice and methodology, as well as support mechanisms. and represent the international student voice. I am interested in gathering data from international students with a disability who have indicated via enrolment forms that they require extra assistance in achieving their academic goals. There has been little research done into the area of international students with a disability. It is hoped that the research will be beneficial for lecturers, teachers, support staff and students.

The study involves audio recording of semi-structured interviews which will last for approximately 1 hour. Participants can choose whether they would like their voice to be recorded during the interview or not.

This initial email is to make initial contact and gauge the viability of asking the DLU to help facilitate in the contacting of students who may be able to participate in the research. I would be interested in talking to someone further about this and about the various stages and processes which may be involved in the research.

I would appreciate if this email could be forwarded to someone who may be able to assist and further discuss these options, and if a name and phone number could be provided so that I may contact someone to talk more about my research.

Thank you for your consideration of this email.

Yours faithfully,

Briony Supple

# Appendix F Explanatory Statement Students



MONASH University

03/08/10

Explanation of research

**Title: Inclusion for International Students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

This information sheet is for you to keep.

## **Student research project**

My name is Briony Supple and I am doing a research project under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Masters in Education by research at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is approximately the same as a 300 page book.

Through contact with the disability liaison unit at your university, I am aware that you are an international student and have indicated yourself as requiring extra help at the university for your study.

## **The aim/purpose of the research**

The aim of this study is to do research into accessibility and support for international students with a disability, in order to help lecturers, teachers and support staff to develop their teaching.

## **Possible benefits**

There has not been very much research done about the needs of international students with a disability at universities. It will be helpful to you and your lecturers. My research aims to inform staff about what you as a student think is helpful and supportive, and the areas that you think perhaps need to be changed or improved.

### **What does the research involve and how much time will it take?**

The study involves audio recording of interviews which may last up to one hour. You will be given the choice of whether you would like your voice to be recorded during the interview or not. You will be provided with a copy of what you said (transcript) for your approval after the information has been collected, and you can make suggestions for changes if you do not agree that it is accurate.

I will also be conducting interviews with lecturers and support staff. Your lecturer or support staff may also be participating but there will be no information about other participants communicated to anyone else. This means that none of your lecturers will know you are participating unless you tell them.

### **Carers, guardians and support staff**

Carers, guardians or support staff are also welcome to attend any interviews with you if you require or want them to do so.

### **Inconvenience/discomfort**

All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place which is convenient to you and is sensitive to your needs. The interview is for the purpose of collecting information about what takes place in your class or lecture, and will not involve any judgement of your academic performance or ability. Your decision to participate or not participate in the research will in no way be related to any academic grades awarded by your lecturers.

It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, you can call upon the following counselling service and/or support staff at the liaison unit. Student counselling at your university: (03) 9XXX-XXXX

### **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 having approved the interview transcript.

### **Confidentiality**

The names of all participants as well as the universities will be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in any publications.

### Storage of data

The data collected will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. Soft copy data will be stored on a computer to which only I have the password to access. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

If there is any part of this information which you do not understand, please contact the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) who will assist you. Phone:(03) 9XXX XXX, TTY:(03) 9XXX XXX, E-Mail [REDACTED]

### Participation

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please contact me (bjsup1@student.monash.edu.au). I will send you a copy of the questions I plan to ask during the interview, consent form and any further information you require. If email is not convenient, please contact the DLU who will assist you in contacting me in a format which is accessible for you.

### Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact me via email at bjsup1@student.monash.edu.au. The findings are accessible for 6 months.

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 CF10/0745– 2010000352 is being conducted, please contact:
Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Campus [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee Building 3e Room 111 Monash University VIC 3800 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thank you.



Briony Supple



# Appendix G Consent Form Students

Consent Form – Students

**Title: Inclusion for international students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

*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 understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that I will be able to choose whether the researcher records my voice as part of an interview, and that there is no obligation to be recorded.

I understand that if my voice is not recorded, the researcher will be taking notes about my answers.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the 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, audio-recordings and any notes 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

Student Signature/ Signature of guardian/carer on behalf of student

Date

# Appendix H Interview Questions students

## General background information

1. Please explain your educational background
2. Why did you come to Australia to study?

## Knowledge - pedagogical

1. What accommodations have you found useful in your experience in this university?
2. Can you give an example of how a teacher/lecturer has been successful in addressing your particular needs? (please do not mention names)
3. Are there any examples of how a teacher/lecturer has failed to meet your needs or accommodate you? (please do not mention names)

## Knowledge – inclusive practices and disability

1. Do you like learning in a class with other students or do you prefer individual /small group sessions?
2. How much do you think lecturers/teachers have been aware of the nature of your particular needs?
3. What do you think could improve your experience at this university? (these might be academic, social, physical, financial, political etc)

## Collaborative support practices

1. To what extent have you been involved with administration, the disability liaison unit, managers, the library and I.T. staff, and classroom helpers such as note-takers?
2. How supportive have you found these people at your university?
3. Is there any way you think your experiences in these areas could be improved?

## **Policy and legislation**

1. How familiar are you with equity and diversity policies:
  - a. at your university in Australia?
  - b. in your country?
  - c. in regards to immigrating to Australia?
2. What do you think of the policy of self-disclosure of a disability at universities in Australia?

## **Cultural issues**

1. Are there any cultural differences between attitudes to disability in your country compared to Australia?
2. What do you think is the general attitude towards students with a disability at your university in Australia? Can you compare this to your country?
3. Did you or your family have any concerns about you coming to Australia to study?
4. Do you think you receive adequate support here in Australia (for example financially, academically) compared to your country?

## **The future**

1. What do you think can improve the experience of international students with a disability at universities in Australia in the future?

Are there any other comments you would like to make which haven't been covered in this interview? What is your major concerns with regard to learning in an Australian university?

Thank you for your participation.

# **Appendix I Explanatory Statement Learning Support Staff/Disability Liaison Officers**



MONASH University

03/08/10

**Explanatory Statement** – Learning support staff/disability liaison officers

**Title: Inclusion for international students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

This information sheet is for you to keep.

### **Student research project**

My name is Briony Supple and I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Masters in Education by research at Monash University.

### **The aim/purpose of the research**

The aim of this study is to conduct research into accessibility and support for international students with a disability. It is hoped that the outcomes from this study will help lecturers, teachers and support staff by informing models for best practice and methodology, as well as support mechanisms. I am interested in gathering data from international students with a disability who have indicated via enrolment forms that they require extra assistance in achieving their academic roles, and lecturing, teaching and support staff (such as disability liaison unit officers, note-takers, amanuenses).

**Possible benefits**

There has been little research done into the area of international students with a disability. It is hoped that the research will be beneficial for lecturers, teachers, support staff and students.

**What does the research involve and how much time will it take?**

The study involves audio recording of semi-structured interviews of up to one hour duration. I will be conducting interviews with students, lecturers and support staff who would like to participate.

**Inconvenience/discomfort**

All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place which is convenient to you and your students and sensitive to their needs. The interview is for the purpose of collecting data about what takes place in classes or lectures or within the DLU, and will not involve any judgement of your teaching performance or ability to provide support.

**Carers, guardians and support staff**

Student will be given the choice as to whether they wish carers, guardians or support staff to be present at any time during the interview.

It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, please feel free to contact the following counselling services. Staff counselling via PPC Worldwide: 1300 361 008 or counselling at your university.

**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 having approved the interview transcript.

### Confidentiality

The names of all participants as well as the universities will be kept confidential and not mentioned by name in any publications.

### Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to university regulations and kept on university premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. Soft copy data will stored on a computer to which only I have the password to access. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

### Participation

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please email me (bjsup1@student.monash.edu.au). You will not need to prepare anything as prior to the data collection. Once you have indicated your interest in participating, I will send you a copy of the questions I plan to ask during the interview, the consent form, as well as any further information you may require.

### Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me via email at bjsup1@student.monash.edu.au. The findings are accessible for 6 months.

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 CF10/0745– 2010000352 is being conducted, please contact:
Dr Joseph Seyram Agbenyega Monash University Lecturer /(MEd) Course Pathway Advisor Early Childhood Education/Inclusion Building A, Peninsula, Campus [Redacted] [Redacted]	Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee Building 3e Room 111 Monash University VIC 3800 [Redacted] [Redacted]

Thank you.



Briony Supple

# Appendix J Consent form Learning Support Staff/Disability Liaison Officers

**Consent Form** – Learning support staff/disability liaison officers

**Title: Inclusion for international students: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at one Melbourne University**

*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 understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that I will be able to choose whether the researcher records my voice as part of an interview, and that there is no obligation to be recorded.

I understand that if my voice is not recorded, the researcher will be taking notes about my answers.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.



I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

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, audio-recordings and any notes 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 K Interview Questions Learning Support Staff/Disability Liaison Officers**

## **General background information**

1. Please explain your background
2. How long have you been in your current role?

## **Knowledge - pedagogical**

1. What is your experience in supporting students with a disability?
2. What kind of accommodations have been required in supporting these students?
3. To what extent would you consider these students as having been successful?
4. In your experience, what contributes to the academic success of students with a disability?

## **Knowledge – inclusive practices and disability**

1. How extensive would you consider your knowledge of the disability of students whom you have taught?
2. Do you think students with a disability should be included in mainstream classes?
3. If so, what mechanisms do you think should be in place to meet the needs of this student while also meeting the needs of others in the class?

## **Collaborative support practices**

1. To what extent do you collaborate with others (teaching colleagues, administration, management, library and I.T. staff, note-takers) in your support work?
2. How supportive are colleagues, administration, management, library and I.T. staff, note-takers?
3. How would you describe the following in relation to your experience?
  - a. Workload,
  - b. Rewards and challenges,
  - c. New skills learnt,
  - d. resources

## **Policy and legislation**

1. How familiar are you with current equity and diversity policies at your university?
2. Do you think the current policy is reflected in current practice?
3. To what extent do you think that universities can influence the wider community in policy implementation?

## **Cultural issues**

1. Have you become aware of any cultural differences regarding the nature of disability through teaching a student from overseas who has a disability, or through any other contexts?
2. What do you think is the current culture perpetuated by social norms of disability?
3. Have any of your views changed as a result of supporting a student with a disability?
4. How do you think the culture of a university differs from that of a school in promoting access to education for all students?
5. What do you think is the general attitude towards students with a disability at your university?

## **The future**

3. What do you think can improve the teaching of students with a disability in the future?
4. Can you give any suggestions regarding the following for the future?
  - b. Knowledge, professional development, training, b. Policy,
  - c. Practice/methodology, d. Social outcomes

Are there any other comments you would like to make which haven't been covered in this interview?

Thank you for your participation

# Appendix L Ethics approval



MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Research Office

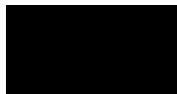
## Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

**Date:** 26 May 2010  
**Project Number:** CF10/0745– 2010000352  
**Project Title:** Inclusion in ELICOS: An analysis of good practice, attitudes and policy at three Melbourne Universities  
**Chief Investigator:** Dr Joseph Agbenyega  
**Approved:** From: 26 May 2010 To: 26 May 2015

---

### Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Ben Canny  
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mrs Briony Supple

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia  
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton  
Telephone [REDACTED] Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831  
Email [REDACTED] [www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html](http://www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html)  
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C