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“Une Annee Entre Parentheses” French academic sojourners in Australia: The impact of social and cultural dimensions of acculturation and repatriation on perceptions of cultural identity

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“UNE ANNEE ENTRE PARENTHESES”

French Academic Sojourners in Australia:
The Impact of Social and Cultural Dimensions of
Acculturation and Repatriation on Perceptions of Cultural Identity

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the School of International Studies
Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education
University of South Australia

© February 24, 2006
In loving memory of my Grandmother

Lise Mc Intyre

For my Parents

Arlette and Clément Patron
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ABSTRACT

Intercultural exchanges in Australia for French academic sojourners constitute a recent phenomenon as French students were traditionally involved in primarily European exchange programmes under the auspices of associations such as ERASMUS and formerly SOCRATES. Numerous studies have been carried out on academic sojourners, however, much of the research to date has focused on the academic dimensions of their experience. By comparison, few studies have addressed issues relating to the social and cultural dimensions of the exchange process. These dimensions are however of central importance to understanding the nature and impact of the study abroad experience. This dissertation has investigated the impact of the acculturation and repatriation processes and the language experiences of French academic sojourners on their perceptions of cultural identity. When sojourners enter a new society with distinctive cultural norms and values, it stands to reason that identity changes may result from intercultural contact between visitors and host society members, as identity transformations occur in response to temporal, cultural and situational contexts. When sojourners are required to adapt to an unaccustomed socio-cultural milieu over an extended period of time, they need to learn new cultural repertoires and competencies. Adjustment to an unfamiliar culture necessitates changes in cognition, attitudes and behaviour, without which culture shock and acculturative stress may occur.

This thesis emerged from the close observation of a group of French students who were experiencing difficulties during their academic sojourn in Australia and were concerned about their re-entry. This was because once they had traversed the difficult stages of culture shock and reached the stage of full recovery (adjustment), they no longer wished to go home. For this reason, the cyclical journey of these sojourners was of great interest to this project. This dissertation was based on three substantive themes: culture shock, reverse culture shock and cultural identity issues. Of significance was the notion of perceived identity because the issues in this study revolved around the way the respondents think about themselves rather than developing an external view of others’ identities. Therefore the discourse of the respondents about their own culture has been respected and their views have been taken as evidence of what they wished to project rather than as information about their original culture. It will be shown that the French respondents in this study belonged to and traversed a complex multiplicity of cultures both within and across societies. They were largely ill-prepared for this journey. The end result was a dynamic
move away from stereotypical national cultural perceptions toward a newly created identity. However, cultural identity, seen in terms of national identity, remains important for these sojourners, even though they have rejected aspects of what this identity represents. Even having chosen to live outside France, they still understand themselves in terms of the ‘Frenchness’. Clearly, pre-departure preparation from participating institutions and the individuals themselves, both on a linguistic and psychological level can be seen to impact significantly on the adaptation experiences of academic sojourners.
I declare that:

- this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university.
- to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.
- all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not an easy task to acknowledge adequately the role Associate Professor Anthony Liddicoat has played in the supervision of this PhD thesis. I have benefited greatly from his experience and tutelage and I have learned so much from his expansive knowledge in the disciplines of Applied Linguistics, Cultures Education and International Studies. My sincere thanks go to Tony for his interest, patience and support for this project, and for his encouragement in times when I thought the task was too daunting. Never once did Tony waiver, (even faced with the incessant demands of a student impatient to complete the thesis). Never once did he fail to provide the guidelines and focus that I needed to follow until our next meeting. Tony’s professional guidance as well as his friendship on a personal level have played a major part in my completion of this work.

I wish also to thank my partner, Robert Ross for his love, support and encouragement during the last three years, especially for believing in me, coping with my thesis-writer’s stress and helping me through moments of self-doubt and despondency.

Finally, I owe special thanks to my beautiful daughters, Dominique and Danièle for their love and support during this time and their help in ensuring I remained grounded, and that I appreciated the most important things in life.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on research on French academic sojourners in Australia, investigating the recent phenomenon of their intercultural exchanges in this country. Numerous studies have been carried out on academic sojourners, however, much of the research to date has focused on the academic dimensions of their experience (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Liberman, 1994; Shade & New, 1993). By comparison, few studies have addressed issues relating to the social and cultural dimensions of the exchange process (e.g. Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Weaver, 1994). These dimensions are however of central importance to understanding the nature and impact of the study abroad experience. This dissertation investigates the impact of the acculturation and repatriation processes and the language experiences of French academic sojourners on their perceptions of cultural identity. When sojourners enter a new society with distinctive cultural norms and values, it stands to reason that identity changes may result from intercultural contact between visitors and host society members, as identity transformations occur in response to temporal, cultural and situational contexts (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). When sojourners are required to adapt to an unaccustomed socio-cultural milieu over an extended period of time, they need to learn new cultural repertoires and competencies. Adjustment to an unfamiliar culture necessitates changes in cognition, attitudes and behaviour, without which culture shock and acculturative stress may occur (Taft, 1988).

My interest in French academic sojourners in Australia began in January 2003 as a result of the sociolinguistic interactions of French sojourners with their host society on my university campus. Academic sojourns in Australia are a relatively new phenomenon for French speaking students although are beginning to increase rapidly. It is therefore timely to investigate the experiences of this group of sojourners. It is important firstly to establish how individual French academic sojourners perceive themselves in relation to French and Australian identities, how they deal with potential identity conflicts, if they succeed or fail in crossing cultural identity boundaries and finally how heterogeneous the group is given these parameters (cf. Kim, 2001). Important considerations in studying sojourners are:
1) Who do the respondents believe they are initially?
2) Who do they believe they have become at the end of their academic sojourn? In other words, how have their perceptions of their identity changed? and
3) How did they perceive their changing cultural identity or a sense of discontinuity during and after their acculturation and repatriation processes?

1.1 Definition of sojourner

The definition of a sojourner is not as simple as one might imagine, according to Furnham (1988). The broad descriptions of these international travellers as “temporary migrants with voluntary intercultural contact” (Valentine & Mosley, 2000 p.2) or “relatively short-term visitors to new cultures where permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn” (Church, 1982 p.540) leave a lot to be desired. This is due to the narrowness and limitations of their descriptions which fail to make the distinction between sojourners and other types of travellers, or to show how sojourners fit into more specialised role categories. Brein and David (1971) employ the term sojourner to refer to many types of travellers including students, trainees, technical assistants, tourists, businessmen, military personnel, missionaries, foreign-service officers and professors, among others. A more complex description classes sojourners as “a new category of people of a third culture” (Useem, Useem & Donoghue, 1963). This group is also referred to as “internationalists ...who share attitudes, interests, concerns and intra-psychic processes which may well be distinctive and enduring” (Werkman, 1982 p.178).

It is not within the scope of this thesis to include an in-depth discussion on the distinctions between sojourners and other groups of cultural travellers, however, in order to understand the term sojourner, one must briefly address the variables that are unique to the different types of sojourners and that distinguish them from other travellers such as migrants, refugees and tourists. Several criteria can be used for this exercise. Two critical features that define sojourners are motive and time frame, which Furnham (1988) has identified as being the most salient, giving an indication of the temporal extremes that set apart major groups of travellers from sojourners. Furnham (1988) argues that sojourners are voluntary travellers whose objectives are specific and goal oriented. Sojourners have a specific purpose for travel and have an express desire to fulfil the requirements of their sojourn, whether this be educational, business-oriented or voluntary work. Tourists, refugees and migrants are not sojourners because tourists’ motives are leisure-oriented; refugees’ travel
is involuntary, escape being an important consideration; and migrants’ motives imply economic and social improvement. International students or academic sojourners differ from their counterparts because they go abroad to gain further qualifications in foreign countries whether or not this is sanctioned and funded by their governments. Academic sojourners are categorised as temporary residents in a country other than their own in order to participate in international educational exchanges as students (cf. Paige, 1990). Their relocation abroad is voluntary and their return home is anticipated and planned. This group may be further differentiated from other sojourners by the nature of their motives – educational, culture-learning and personal development (Eide, 1970; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Through their explicit educational purpose, the students act as a channel of culture contact, the pursuit of their studies and their involvement pressing them to look for some sort of modus vivendi in the host culture. In addition, the society of their sojourn is culturally foreign making their experience a cross-cultural one (Brewster Smith, 1956 p. 4). Analysis of the psychology of their contact experiences, in terms of these and other variables such as timeframe and type of involvement help to define this group to a greater degree.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) argue however, that culture learning and achieving personal growth are not high on the list of priorities for this group as the majority of foreign students are instrumentally motivated, that is, their focus is on the acquisition of qualifications and experience or professional training which they believe will offer more lucrative opportunities when they return home. It also seems their objectives rarely match those of organisers of international exchanges, for instance because of changing criteria which are contingent on the perspectives of the sponsors, the recipient nation, the establishment and so forth. The tensions that arise from discrepancies in motives between organisers and international students are often paralleled with those affecting other sojourner groups, particularly volunteer workers.

The significant features distinguishing voluntary workers and students from their counterparts involve their young age, high level of education, adaptability, motivation, and expectations when residing in a foreign place. These variables assist these sojourners in shaping their reactions to their environment (Furnham, 1988; Torbiorn, 1982). The motives of business people have been influenced by the advent of globalisation and a more prosperous world which has witnessed the development of international commerce where multi-national corporations utilise brokers and negotiators to liaise between various
cultures. Greater mobility offers greater opportunities for transfers from position to position often with very lucrative postings overseas where business people are contracted from six months to five years for a variety of reasons (cf. Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

In summary, the motives for travel thus characterises tourists by their leisure-oriented activities; migrants by their belief that some long-term need will be satisfied in the host country which is not met in the homeland and their possible plans for a return home if they fail to realise their objectives; refugees by their involuntary displacement through forces outside their control; and sojourners by their express desire to fulfil the requirements of their sojourn, whether it be educational, business-oriented or voluntary work.

The perspective of time frame effectively distinguishes sojourners from migrants and refugees. This criterion is clearly salient as the status of sojourners is bounded and they are perceived as temporary residents although the term *temporary* may in fact cover several years. Sojourners voluntarily go abroad for a specific assignment or contract for a relatively short period of time, ranging between 6 months to 5 years, with the objective of returning home at the end of the sojourn (Berry, 1990). Migrants and refugees immigrate for much longer periods if not permanently to their country of choice, thus the time frame is non-finite or unbounded. Migrants may choose under very different circumstances to return to their homeland after a number of years, possibly repeating the process of emigrating once again due to problems experienced with their repatriation. The indeterminate length of stay of refugees sets them apart from sojourners as their time frame may be bounded or unbounded depending on developments in their home country (cf. Ward et al., 2001). Tourists travel for a short and finite period, their commonly brief visits affording them visitor status. The comparative brevity of time that the average tourist spends travelling, as well as their relative affluence, set them apart from other travellers such as migrants and refugees. The time perspective thus specifically distinguishes all sojourners from immigrants, as well as their fellow travellers through a broad definition of time.

A final criterion employed to distinguish between the different groups of travellers can be understood in terms of consequence of the sojourn experience rather than a definition. This involves an indeterminate degree of integration which clearly varies between groups as this criterion characterises what their travel experience will be like. The nature of the experience remains an external involvement for tourists whose motives are largely
recreational and travel oriented. Therefore negotiation of integration is not necessary. Migrants and refugees need to negotiate their integration into a new society and it is incumbent on both groups to make a concerted effort to adapt to the new milieu if they wish to function comfortably within that society. However, the degree with which they adjust is contingent on the mode of acculturation they select, i.e. assimilation, integration, marginalisation or separation (Berry, 1991). This choice is also dependent on the host society and its attitudes and receptiveness toward migrants and refugees. At some point, immigrants realise the need to adapt to their host society, which involves complex identity issues, greater socio-cultural integration or partial assimilation due to pressures which may be exerted on them to conform to host majority mores (Ward et al., 2001).

Sojourners must also negotiate their integration into the host society. They are more committed than tourists to their new location but less than immigrants and relocated refugees. Contrary to the patterns of adjustment pertinent to immigrants, the temporary status of sojourners does not imply the same process even if their socio-cultural adaptation is contingent on the degree of their willingness to adopt the values of host nationals and on their acceptance by the hosts (Eshel & Rosenthal-Sokolov, 2000; Sussman, 2002). As they acknowledge the transitory nature of their cultural experience, their motivations and expectations regarding cultural adjustment and adaptation may differ significantly from immigrants. The cyclical nature of the sojourner: moving to a new country and returning home; the process of adjustment and the outcome of adaptation; culture shock and reverse shock accentuate the complexity of the relationship between these phases. Essentially, the sojourner’s cultural identity, determined by the degree to which he or she identifies with the home country and the host country during the bounded sojourn will vary considerably with that of the immigrant (Sussman, 2002).

A particular factor relevant to the academic sojourner’s integration into the host community is the need to adapt to the academic demands of their host institutions. It is essential that they adjust to the different academic practices and expectations and particularly to language demands of the foreign country if they are to function effectively within that educational milieu. The students are immersed in an academic environment because they are expected to engage in culture-learning, especially the learning of academic culture as well as intellectual endeavours in order to succeed. The role of unofficial ambassador of their country of origin is likely to be thrust on academic sojourners as much as on other groups of travellers. However, given the young age of
academic sojourners in general this role may be espoused or rejected and depends largely on the type of welcome or acceptance they experience. Their self-esteem may be affected positively if their reception by host individuals demonstrates genuine interest in them. Conversely this can be negative as a result of prejudice from host nationals. Learning in this situation, whether of knowledge, skills, customs or attitudes, implies a process of personal goal-seeking, coping and defence which ultimately influences the outcome of their sojourn. The rupture in their established interpersonal network, the culture contrast and the concurrent difficulties in communication experienced by the foreign students generally culminates in problems of adjustment. Ultimately, the burden for successful adaptation to the new educational setting rests firmly on their shoulders (Brewster Smith, 1956; Eide, 1970; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward et al., 2001).

In summary, differentiation between the above groups of sojourners and their traveller counterparts has been provided through each criterion but their inter-relationship with one another is evident. International students differ from the others in the group primarily because they go abroad to gain further qualifications in foreign countries in exchange situations or independently from educational institutions. Their relocation abroad is voluntary and their return home is anticipated and planned (Ward et al., 2001).

Analysis of the psychology of the contact experiences of academic sojourners, in terms of motives and other variables such as timeframe and type of involvement help to define this group to a greater degree. Predicated on the examination above of the diverse groups of travellers, a working definition of academic sojourners can now be presented to suit the purposes of this dissertation. Brewster Smith’s (1956) definition of the phenomenon of cross-cultural education which characterises academic sojourners still holds true today and is relevant, as it eloquently sets them apart from analogous groups of sojourners. It is succinct and it encompasses the salient dimensions of time and motive:

Cross-cultural education is the reciprocal process of learning and adjustment that occurs when individuals sojourn for educational purposes in a society that is culturally foreign to them, normally returning to their own society after a limited period. At the societal level, it is a process of cultural diffusion and change, involving temporary “exchange of persons” for training and experience. (Brewster Smith, 1956 p. 3)
This definition essentially distinguishes study-abroad students from other analogous groups of sojourners because they are sojourners and not emigrants, with the explicit aim of engaging in academic pursuits (Eide, 1970), exchanging cultures and knowledge through academic instruction. Sojourning students are immersed in a foreign milieu for a finite period which inherently implies an element of marginality or alienation and of dual membership, different from the irregular allegiances to which the emigrant must adjust. The sojourner may choose to avoid this issue by leaving physically or psychologically, in the process rejecting one or the other membership. Immigrants generally cannot leave as easily. Sojourner involvement is not only contingent on adaptation at an individual level but also a societal one where cultural diffusion is epitomised through reciprocal processes of learning and adjustment that may have far-reaching implications if this quandary is not resolved (Brewster Smith, 1956).

1.2 Outline of thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of intercultural encounters in general, distinguishing academic sojourners from other analogous groups of travellers. Chapter 2 sets the scene for the comprehension of the intricacies of the themes adopted for this project, culture shock, reverse culture shock and cultural identity issues. Fundamental concepts are discussed in order to better understand why intercultural encounters may be problematic for sojourners. It also provides a mosaic for comprehending the data chapters. An elaboration of the framework utilised to structure the project also appears in this chapter. Chapter 3 outlines the eclectic methodology employed for the investigation of the research, substantiating the use of longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs. This chapter also justifies the use of a qualitative methodology for the project. Chapters 4 and 5 document the findings of the study and introduce the arguments arising from the data on culture shock and reverse culture shock respectively. Chapter 6, pivotal to the study, explores the overarching arguments growing from the descriptive chapters 4 and 5. It investigates the prominent themes emerging from the data, focusing on remodelling of cultural identity of the French sojourners as a result of their intercultural experience. Finally, chapter 7 evaluates the implications of cultural identity transformations on academic sojourners, recommending measures that can be adopted to minimise the impact this may have on academic sojourners worldwide and on the future of intercultural transitions in the twenty-first century. We can now proceed with other substantive areas of interest to this research project at both macro and micro levels.
CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand sojourners, one needs to examine what happens when they adapt to a foreign environment and when they return home. A critical review of literature from diverse disciplinary fields subsumed under the banner of cross-cultural encounters will be scrutinised in order to discover salient themes that are fundamental for the understanding of this group of travellers. This is because the processes of acculturation of academic sojourners to a foreign country and their subsequent repatriation has enormous impact on issues which relate to the transformation of their cultural identity, their interpersonal relationships abroad and upon their return home, their personalities and outlook on life and their future direction and career choices.

2.1 Cross-cultural encounters

The dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation imply a complex process with multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional and multi-societal approaches that contribute to our understanding of how individuals born and raised in one culture adjust their life patterns to a foreign one (Berry & Kim, 1988; Brein & David, 1971; Kim, 1988; Ward et al., 2001). Given the complexities of former and current conceptualisations across disciplines such as psychology, anthropology and social and behavioural sciences, this project will be oriented firstly towards an educational and sociocultural perspective, as academic sojourners are the focus of this dissertation. The following substantive themes emerging as salient will underpin my framework: the social psychological phenomena of Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock, and Cultural Identity Issues. Other areas of research subsumed under these three banners from inter-disciplinary fields of applied linguistics and psychology, pertinent to cross-cultural adaptation and sojourner adjustment will provide the theoretical background of this project. These involve culture learning (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), friendship networks (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977) and social identification theories (Tajfel, 1978, 1981). Emphasis will be placed on reverse culture shock and cultural identity issues, as they constitute a gap in research on cross-cultural encounters.
Although the adaptive experiences of long-term and short-term settlers are necessarily diverse, there are many points of commonality between the two processes. The commitment made to adjusting by immigrants is far greater than that of academic sojourner counterparts for instance. Conformity is expected from the first group but non-convergence to host society mores and norms are forgiven in sojourners whose stay is temporary, as long as they appear respectful of the host culture. However, in spite of obvious differences in the nature of the adaptive process, certain experiences in the unfamiliar milieu are homogenous. The challenges involved with culture learning are similar and modification of old cultural habits takes place regardless, albeit to different degrees (Kim, 2001).

It is appropriate at this point in time to consider a working definition of *acculturation* and *psychological acculturation*. It appears that the consensus on the most adequate definition for the first term focuses on Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits’ (1936 p. 149-152) classical designation:

> Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield et al., 1936 p. 149).

The essential focus of this definition concerns groups. It is about cultural contact leading to change: i.e. acculturation is the result of change in cultural behaviour as the result of contact between groups. My study is on academic sojourners, therefore this definition is not the most appropriate as academic sojourns are by nature individual experiences, not group ones. In the context of this study, sojourning university students do not participate in collective changes that may be occurring at a group level, as is the case for immigrants, as the cultural group (French students studying in an Australian university) is hardly significant in number and does not necessarily comprise a cohesive group. An adequate definition needs to feature how individuals interacting with host cultures during contact situations experience change in foreign milieux.

In light of this, it is from the domain of cross-cultural psychology that the study of the individual level and its relationships with the population level are derived (Berry, 1990). The variety of contributing factors leading to acculturation of cultural groups in plural societies is, it would seem, contingent upon three main predictors: *voluntariness, mobility* and *permanence*. The process may be voluntary as in the case of immigrants, involuntary
for refugees and temporary for sojourners such as the international students under study. Despite this disparity, it would appear that the basic process of adaptation is common to all groups, the variables being dependent on the level of difficulty, and to a certain extent the ultimate product of acculturation (Berry, 1997). As the present study focuses specifically on the individual academic sojourner, in an effort to further facilitate the understanding of this process, Graves’ (1967) concept of *psychological acculturation* is very useful:

… changes that an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures and as a result of participating in the process of acculturation that one’s cultural or ethnic group is undergoing (Graves, 1967 ct. in Berry, 1990 p.233).

Redfield et al.’s definition has many points of commonality with individuals acculturating. The prominent themes arising from Graves’ definition concern the process by which individuals change as a result of the influence of the contact experience with another culture as well as through participation in the general acculturative changes taking place in their own group, although academic sojourners are not a ‘group’ in this sense. As a consequence of this process, such changes may provoke distress which is commonly known as acculturative stress (Berry & Annis, 1974; Miranda & Matheny, 2000). Graves’ definition is useful because it identifies individuals as going through the process of acculturation as well as what occurs in ethnic groups. Therefore, it is relevant to the focus of this dissertation as the level of contact academic sojourners have with members of the host society and their own cultural group in foreign milieu is just as important as that of immigrants. In spite of the finite period of the sojourn for international students, they are not exempt from alterations to their cultural identity, their personalities, their world view, as they experience culture shock. The resultant remodelling of their identity may have serious implications for their future fit into their original societies upon their return.

Berry (1990) argues the phenomena of acculturation and psychological acculturation are different at two levels: the population level and the individual level. The intrinsic difference between the two is that for the collective or group-level phenomenon, acculturation is a change in the *culture* of the group. At the individual level, there is a change in the *psychology* of the individual. Further, the collective level implies changes in social structure, economic base and political organisation at a societal level and the individual entails changes in experiences related to identity, behaviour, cognition, values and attitudes at an individual level. Academic stress due to linguistic difficulties and contrastive academic practices during cultural exchanges are of fundamental significance.
for the acculturation of academic sojourners during their interactions in a foreign milieu. This is because, if sojourners do not devise defence mechanisms to minimise their stress during the difficult transitional process, this may impede successful adjustment and their emergence as intercultural individuals.

### 2.2 Structural models of cross-cultural adaptation

Structural models provide a structuring or organising framework for the synthesis of a large and diverse body of theory and research, interrelating key variables in the study of theoretical principles in order to facilitate explanation of complex approaches (Ward et al., 2001). A review of literature has revealed that the field of research in cross-cultural adaptation lacks cohesiveness among other researchers (see for example Brein & David, 1971; Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001), which contributes to a dichotomous difference between macro- and micro-level processes, between short- and long-term adaptation, between stress response and learning and between assimilation and ethnic plurality. Two frameworks of acculturation - Berry’s (1991; 1997) model of acculturation and Kim’s (2001) structural model of cross-cultural adaptation are important for the study of academic sojourners.

#### 2.2.1 Berry’s framework of acculturation

Berry’s (1997) conceptual analysis of acculturation attitudes is founded on the premise that two dimensions of acculturation are intrinsic: maintenance of original cultural identity and maintenance of relations with other groups (cf. Ward & Kennedy, 1994). During the process of acculturation, the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur are contingent on two major issues, the negotiation of *cultural maintenance* (the importance placed on cultural identity and characteristics and its maintenance) which increases in importance with more interaction, and the issue of *contact and participation* (the level of involvement with other groups and with the co-national group). If components of one’s culture are considered to be of core value, i.e. the degree of importance placed on aspects of one’s cultural identity, such as language and traditions for instance, the likelihood of cultural maintenance is increased. If however, aspects of the foreign culture are adopted at the expense of one’s own cultural values, a shift in cultural identity orientation is likely. The level of contact with co-national, host-national and international groups is also of great significance for academic sojourners as the degree of affiliation with either support group...
will ultimately affect their identity orientations. It is difficult to predict accurately the type of process that will emerge for these individuals as variation in adjustment is known to occur as a result of differences in host or dominant culture characteristics and the way this impacts on the interactions between the hosts and the visitors (Berry, 1997; Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). These underlying issues need to be investigated in order to determine in-group and out-group affiliations, in this situation association with the minority cultural group or with the dominant cultural group respectively, as they culminate in a choice of four acculturation strategies: Assimilation, Integration, Separation and Marginalisation which are derived from the core value placed on cultural maintenance and the degree of contact with the diverse groups in the foreign society.

The assimilationist attitude applies to non-dominant groups whose members generally espouse inter-group relations, or contact, with other than their co-national group. They tend to gravitate toward individuals of other cultures through convergence in their cultural values and behaviours with the host group, often at the expense of cultural maintenance. There is a greater tendency however, for migrants to accommodate to the dominant culture, as opposed to sojourners, because migrants are more likely to experience discrimination or exclusion, to assimilate in societies that are less tolerant of cultural differences. In addition, this issue relates to the permanence of the migration and the long term consequences of exclusion, for instance. Further, if their culture is perceived as less prestigious than the host culture, viewed in a negative light as a result of “social comparisons”, “permeable boundaries”(cf. Sacks, 1992; Tajfel, 1978), and pre-existing stereotypes, migrants may prefer to relinquish their cultural identity and try to blend into the larger society. If negative comparisons are shared by the in-group, the minority culture, and the out-group, the dominant culture, assimilation takes place but without hybridisation of cultures. In this way, the minority culture becomes absorbed into the mainstream. Assimilation may involve behavioural and linguistic accommodation to the majority culture and language.

For example, in a study on inter-generational language maintenance and shift in the Franco-Mauritian migrant diasporas in Melbourne, Patron (2002; 2005) demonstrates this acculturation paradigm for children migrating during the 1960s. The study revealed a high degree of convergence to the host-society norms as a result of the hegemony of English and negative attitudes toward multiculturalism and multilingualism. Other studies of migrant experiences have shown similar results (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996; Clyne, 1991; Finocchiaro, 1995). Sojourners may also follow this trend if pressure to conform to
host-society ways becomes too great, but this would appear less likely because of their temporary status.

Those who elect to maintain their own culture as well as interacting with other groups are classified as adopting an integrationist approach. In this instance, a degree of cultural integrity, or incorruptibility of one’s cultural attributes, is maintained without sacrificing daily interactions within the context of the larger social network. A system of cooperation or willingness to appreciate both cultures exists within this dimension. Where mutual acceptance engenders empathy for the visitors and interest in the foreign culture, sojourners or migrants are able to maintain their cultural identity, their behavioural norms and values whilst adopting many aspects of the host culture. The new group is essentially allowed to continue to evolve and positive relations exist between both groups. Closely linked with this acculturation mode is the notion of “third space” (Bhabha, 1990), where foreigners negotiate a comfortable place “culture’s in between”, free to interact without pressure of abandoning their cultural values and behaviours. This notion is not concerned with the creation of a third culture built from the original two, rather, it implies the claiming of a third space that enables other positions to emerge. Berry (1991) argues integration can only be “freely” chosen and successfully desired by non-dominant groups when the host-society is open to cultural diversity. In this instance, as in the assimilative mode of acculturation, integration becomes possible as a result of “permeable boundaries” (Sacks, 1992; Tajfel, 1981), where positive comparisons are shared by the in-group and the out-group, rendering hybridisation of cultures rather than assimilation possible.

Conversely, when individuals value their original culture to the exclusion of interaction with others, once again as a result of social comparisons (Tajfel, 1981), they can be identified as adopting a separation alternative. This represents a self-imposed withdrawal from the larger society. This strategy may be adopted by academic sojourners who may view the socialisation process of adaptation as too onerous for a temporary sojourn. For those who are instrumentally motivated, such as for example, sojourners on a short stay, the strength of their culture in juxtaposition with the host culture may trigger a perception that too much effort is required for them to integrate and that integration is not desirable. Research has revealed the overwhelming majority of foreign students are primarily interested in getting a degree or professional training in lieu of culture learning or the pursuit of personal growth, limiting their contacts in the host society to peripheral areas, primarily because of the instrumental motivation for their travels (Furnham, 1988; Kim,
2001). This motivation effectively requires less commitment to the foreign host milieu than is the case for immigrants where the need for negotiation during intercultural communication becomes more acute (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Kim, 2001). This stance has been observed by several researchers (cf. Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sewell & Davidsen, 1956). The characteristics of sojourners who select this pattern of adjustment can be described as detached observers (Sewell & Davidsen, 1956). This signifies they have little involvement or need to do so with the host culture. Foreigners adopting this acculturation strategy have clearly defined motives, or are instrumentally motivated and can be expected to receive the support they need from their cultural network of friends (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985).

Finally, the strategy of marginalisation applies to cases where there is evidence of little or no interest in cultural maintenance by non-dominant groups or individuals. Marginalised groups may show little interest in relating with others (sometimes for reasons of exclusion or discrimination). They view their own group as inferior to the dominant group and this perception is accompanied by feelings of alienation, marginality and loss of identity (Berry & Kim, 1988). Marginalisation is not really a choice; rather, people become marginalised under pressure to assimilate, termed “pressure cooker” by Berry (1997). In this context, there is evidence of “impermeable boundaries” (Tajfel, 1981) where negativity is perceived by the out-group, the dominant culture, and intergroup mobility may become unlikely as a result of discrimination. This option is apparently accompanied by both collective and individual confusion and anxiety because these individuals have lost essential features of their own culture but have not adopted the cultural characteristics of the wider society. These individuals lose cultural and psychological contact with both their traditional culture and that of the dominant society. They perceive their culture as disorganised and unsupportive of their individual needs. Marginalisation is also called subtractive acculturation - integration then is logically viewed as additive acculturation (Berry & Kim, 1988).

1 These terms are understood as either subtracting from or adding to the cultural repertoire of individuals. In this instance, subtractive acculturation infers the relinquishing of the original cultural identity without a move to the dominant society. Additive acculturation implies the retention of one’s original cultural identity with the addition of the new, where both have equal value.

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1 These notions are predicated on Lambert’s (1977) classification of bilingualism being designed as either adding to the linguistic repertoire or subtracting from it.
Marginalisation may be related to the notions of *third place*: it is in a sense the denial of *third place* identities. These notions will be elaborated later in this chapter. Individuals who choose this option could be classified as belonging to *culture’s in-between* (Bhabha, 1996). Together with other predictors of the acculturation process, such as acculturative stress, education, socioeconomic status, friendship patterns and language use, the acculturation strategies described above allow a better understanding of this complex process of culture contact and change (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Sojourn encounters with a new culture are associated with ascending phases of acculturative stress and when a level of crisis is reached, the individual selects one of four strategies or modes of acculturation formulated by Berry (Berry & Kim, 1988; Eshel & Rosenthal-Sokolov, 2000). National policies are largely responsible for encouraging either of the four acculturation modes proposed by Berry. Sojourns to Australia, Canada etc. (Berry, 1991; Berry et al., 1989) are within a multicultural environment which already has experiences and discourses of diversity. Therefore, acculturative options may be more open than in more explicitly monocultural countries.

2.2.2 Kim’s Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

In the previous section, Berry’s (1997) model of acculturation focused on distinctive modes of identity response. In contrast, Kim’s (1988; 1995; Kim et al., 1998) theory is centred on the communicative interaction between a minority individual and the dominant milieu during cross-cultural adaptation of the individual. Kim’s (2001) integrated approach to the theory of cross-cultural adaptation focuses on the psychological dynamic of sojourners, as well as immigrants and refugees, and their adaptation processes, the changes in their internal conditions over time, the role of their ethnic and personal backgrounds and the conditions of the host environment in the process. Kim’s theory of cross-cultural adaptation implies “the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim, 2001 p.31). This process is particularly worthy of investigating among academic sojourners as individuals, as opposed to groups, manifest different modes of acculturation, with distinctive attitudes and differing experiences of stress (cf. Berry et al., 1988). Individuals essentially go through a dynamic process that culminates in a qualitative transformation. They need to adapt and change if they are to take part in these experiences. Kim sums up the complex approaches of cross-cultural adaptation, the problem-oriented
and the learning/growth approach, by postulating that all individual experiences, both long- and short-term are growth-producing. She calls this “a double-edged process, one that is simultaneously troublesome and enriching” (2001 p. 21). Ultimately, individuals cannot remain static, they must evolve and change in order to function adequately in the new environment.

Kim et al. (1998) argue prolonged and extensive intercultural communication activities have the fundamental role of influencing change in the individual’s psyche. A stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is regarded as the driving force behind adaptive change. Kim et al. (1998 p.4) maintain this implies a continuous and cyclic movement of “draw-back-to-leap”, considered as both progressive and regressive. Stress is thus perceived as responsible for frustration, anxiety, and suffering as well as a necessary impetus for new learning and growth, which ultimately leads to the emergence of an intercultural identity. Kim’s (1995) theory implies an equally important process of adjustment for short-term as for long-term acculturation, for sojourners are also expected to build a healthy functional relationship with the host society, no matter how long their stay. The reward for this attitude is an increased self-awareness which is credited for facilitating the development of an identity that goes beyond the original cultural confines. The process involves meeting certain cultural challenges which Kim argues requires a socialisation process. Through this process, individuals become adapted to their fellow members of a cultural group which in turn provides them their status and assigns to them their role within that community. They must learn to negotiate the new culture based on their perceptions of their own.

In an effort to counter the “atomistic, reductionist strategies of explanation” frequently used in theoretical models in this field (Kim, 2001 p.38), Kim propounds a view of cross-cultural adaptation as a multidimensional, multifaceted structure, where social and individual facets of adaptation are seen as complex interactive layers. The boundaries marking these layers and the dynamics of the processes interacting between each other are argued to co-constitute the entirety of the cross-cultural adaptation phenomenon. Kim (2001) sees adaptation as an open-system, defined by notions and arguments that are transitory where closed-systems are described by their cyclic characteristics and are limited because they remain static. This open-system perspective constitutes three main areas: Deculturation and Acculturation; the Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic and Intercultural transformation. What is of importance ultimately is the realisation that the adaptation of
both immigrants and sojourners is contingent upon their willingness to accept at some level the values and behaviours of the host nationals (Eshel & Rosenthal-Sokolov, 2000).

Deculturation and acculturation are based on the socialisation processes of individuals beginning with their childhood experiences. Firstly, culture is described by Kim (1995 p.176) as “being imprinted in its members as a pattern of knowledge, attitudes, values, mind-sets, perceptions and behaviours that permeate all life activities.” Children become adapted to members of their cultural group which provides them with their status and gives them their role within their community. It therefore stands to reason that when foreigners enter an unfamiliar milieu, they must initiate a process of enculturation which is intrinsically different from their childhood experience of enculturation. This process is known as acculturation. Behavioural modes and cultural norms which have always been taken for granted are challenged by new codes of behaviour and values. Foreigners are then faced with the prospect of acquiring a new communication system if the language differs from their own, as well as a new set of symbols, habits, patterns and activities in order to function adequately. This involves unlearning or deculturation of some of the old habits and the learning of new ones. Kim argues this secondary socialisation or re-enculturation is not as easy to negotiate as childhood experiences because identities and communicative abilities are already established (Kim, 1995).

The theoretical approach of the Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic proposed by Kim implies an intercultural transformation process where “the adaptive journey follows a pattern that juxtaposes novelty and confirmation, attachment and detachment, progression and regression, integration and disintegration, construction and destruction” (Kim, 2001 p.57). She suggests that stress (especially in the initial stages of the sojourn) is intrinsic to the cyclical process that eventually results in positive adaptation. This theory is supported by multiple findings indicating that the inter-relatedness of stress, adaptation and growth is significant also where sojourners are concerned (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993; Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

Kim (1995) posits that through the processes of acculturation and deculturation explicated above, sojourners become unsettled and experience a state of disequilibrium, manifesting in emotional ‘lows’ of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety. This state is a factor in culture shock. The reason for this is that the stranger’s cultural identity and attributes are juxtaposed against the background of systemic forces of the host culture. As a consequence, the changes foreigners go through precipitate temporary personality
disintegration, sometimes culminating in emotional breakdown. These disruptive effects reflect stress. In order to minimise the degree of discomfort, sojourners, like immigrants, devise defence mechanisms as a way of protecting themselves. This often takes the form of “selective attention, self-deception, denial, avoidance and withdrawal as well as hostility, cynicism and compulsively altruistic behaviour” (Lazarus, 1966 p.262 ct. in Kim, 1995 p.177).

However, Kim (1995) argues that this disequilibrium is accompanied by an assimilative-accommodative response which allows foreigners to deal with the cross-cultural challenges facing them. Assimilation involves incorporating aspects of the environment as a result of action upon it and accommodation involves responding to the environment by conforming to external realities. These responses improve the functional relationship with their new environment and the end result is what Kim terms “a subtle internal transformation of growth” (Kim, 1995). As has been confirmed by many studies of sojourners (P. Adler, 1975; Bochner et al., 1977; Storti, 2001b; Weaver, 1994; Wiseman, 1997; Zapf, 1991), these difficult periods diminished in intensity when these individuals found various mechanisms to minimise the difficult transitional process. An integrative acculturation strategy with accompanying additive and/or intercultural identity responses results. It is the crisis that provides the opportunity for personal growth and can be perceived as the catalyst that transforms the cultural identity of these sojourners.

Kim (1995) argues sojourners, immigrants and their analogous counterparts generally experience significant internal changes culminating in identifiable transformations in their usual patterns of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses as they traverse the processes of deculturation and acculturation. This transitional adjustment to the foreign culture culminates in three key outcomes, interpreted as interrelated features of their intercultural transformation. That is, the sojourner experiences greater functional fitness, followed by increased psychological health and finally an emergent intercultural identity. The successfully adapted foreigner acquires increased proficiency in self-expression in the foreign language, and greater social competency.

The first evidence of transformation observed in sojourners and immigrants is described as functional fitness. Through observation of repeated patterns taking place during cultural learning and internal reorganising, foreigners learn to synchronise their internal responses with the external demands of the foreign society. This takes the form of efficient
communication and enhanced interaction with the hosts. As a result of this successful integration into the host society, both sojourners and immigrants register greater life satisfaction, positive feelings toward their lives in this foreign milieu, a sense of belonging and greater resemblance to the group (Kim, 2001). In addition to functional fitness, sojourners and immigrants alike appear to enjoy greater psychological health in relation to the host environment as a result of successful adaptation. This is perceived through greater ease in communication as well as the functional fitness acquired in the first instance. With this comes a reduced degree of disturbance in dealing with their foreign milieu. This has also been observed in a number of other studies of sojourners (P. Adler, 1975; Brein & David, 1971; Collier, 1997; Kim, 1995; Ward et al., 2001).

To complete the picture of functional fitness and psychological health, sojourners and immigrants emerge with an intercultural identity which allows them to integrate and function successfully within the host environment. Kim’s (1995) last construct can be interpreted as reflecting the boundary-crossing nature of this development of identity. She utilises Zaharna’s (1989) expressions “self-shock” and “shake-up” to explicate what happens through adversarial cross-cultural experiences. In other words, this is the experience of the foreigners’ sense of connection to their original culture group and an incorporation of psychological ties with a broader humanity. Through this process, the cultural identity of foreigners begins to lose its distinguishing characteristics and inflexibility, as an enhanced and more flexible definition of self emerges (Kim & Ruben, 1988). That is to say, this emergent intercultural identity is predicated “not on belongingness”, understood as owning or being owned by a single culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is perceived to be neither completely a part of nor totally apart from a given culture (P. Adler, 1976 p.391 ct. in Kim, 1995 p.180). This process appears to be ongoing along a developmental continuum as sojourners and immigrants negotiate challenging situations imposed on them by the host community. The flexibility of their identity increases with their communication competence and they change concurrently to meet the demands placed on them by the foreign setting. Their identity ultimately assumes greater interculturalness (Byram, 1997; Kim, 1995; Kim & Ruben, 1988). Kim’s (1995) theory ultimately describes cross-cultural adaptation as a collaborative effort, where the foreigner and the host environment enact important roles, the former to integrate and the latter to embrace and facilitate. Foreigners and the hosts work toward a common goal, that of building a healthy functional relationship within the foreign milieu. A heightened awareness and greater sense of ease is thus achieved by the sojourner or immigrant, which
in time facilitates the development of an identity exceeding the original cultural parameters. However, the ambivalence and internal conflict that accompanies this process cannot be underestimated because of innate loyalties to the original culture and growing affiliation to the new (Kim, 1995).

This fundamental notion of emergent intercultural identity is mirrored by Collier (1997) who argues that emergent identities evolve from communication contexts, largely the result of the cross-cultural academic experience. The arguments on intercultural transformation discussed in here are linked with the concept of third place (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Kramsch, 1993) which are discussed in detail later in this chapter. Liddicoat (2005) argues if a language learner has been given the opportunity to enact different ways of expressing a foreign language, he/she can analyse the impact diverse cultural rules have on his/her identity, in the process gauging the ensuing levels of comfort or discomfort. A third place is thus established as a comfort zone between the native language and culture and the second.

2.3 Culture Shock

2.3.1 Conceptualisations of culture shock

Any transitional phase of a person’s life, whether it pertains to educational transitions from secondary to tertiary institutions, life transitions from adolescence to adulthood, changes in marital status, or sojourns in a foreign country, is suggestive of varying degrees of difficulty which manifest in stressors during the different phases of the adjustment process (P. Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward et al., 2001). These transitions require coping strategies to be developed before a comfortable state is attained, if adaptation is indeed achieved. The element which remains unpredictable is the inter-play of variables which can affect each individual in a very personal way. In studies of cultural contact this transition is thought of as a state of Culture Shock (Oberg, 1960) or Sojourner Adjustment (Brein & David, 1971). The first recognised definition of this notion originates from the 1950s when anthropologist, Kalervo Oberg (1954) first coined the term. He understood culture shock to be a negative period encompassing a form of mental illness due to feelings of anxiety, hastened by difficulties in coping with new cultures and mourning for lost familiar signs and symbols (Church, 1982; Zapf, 1991). The cues may be construed as
customs, gestures, facial expressions or words which unconsciously form part of one’s culture, along with language (Brein & David, 1971).

There are several stages of culture shock as described by Oberg (1960):

(a) Phase 1 corresponds to a period of incubation which correlates with feelings of euphoria where initial reactions to the new culture are perceived in a very positive light.

(b) Phase 2 comprises a period of crisis resulting from genuine difficulties experienced by the sojourner during routine activities. It is during this time that pre-existing negative cultural stereotypes from both cultures can have nefarious effects on intercultural relations.

(c) Phase 3 is described as a stage of recovery where the sojourner is able to reconcile cultural differences to such an extent that he or she feels comfortable in the host environment.

(d) Phase 4 is generally understood to be a stage of complete or near complete recovery where acceptance of the host culture by the sojourner occurs. Although discrepancies may still exist between cultures and value conflicts are not totally eliminated, the sojourn experience is generally appreciated.

(e) Finally, phase 5 is the period of the homecoming, which can lead to reverse culture shock (Brein & David, 1971).

Analogous descriptions of the phenomenon of culture shock to Oberg’s (1960), albeit not entirely matching, can be found in the works of some of the researchers documented in Zapf’s (1991) typology of the stages of cultural adjustment (for example Arensberg & Niehoff, 1964; G. Foster, 1962; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lundstedt, 1963). There appears to be consensus on the fact that four stages typify the transitional process of culture shock, loosely beginning with an incubation or honeymoon phase; traversing through a difficult adjustment phase; reaching a stage of recovery; and finally a stage of complete or near complete recovery or adaptation. However, each stage is semantically characterised differently by each researcher who has brought his/her own conceptualisations arising from his/her academic discipline.

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2 Zapf’s (1991) typology has been included as an Appendix.
Following Oberg’s (1954) theory, literature in a variety of domains has since seen the introduction of a number of conceptual frameworks engendered to illustrate the different stages of adjustment, with modifications made to existing definitions. Brein and David (1971) criticise the diversity of the approaches to the adjustment of the sojourner, arguing the patterns, traits and typologies and so forth are as varied as the investigators themselves and “little common ground exists for making lucid or even intelligible comparisons or distinctions between them” (Brein & David, 1971 p.222). Church (1982) provides a succinct explanation of the term culture shock based on a consensus of views held by many respected researchers in the field of psychology. He suggests that this term encapsulates:

a normal process of adaptation to cultural stress involving such symptoms as anxiety, helplessness, irritability and a longing for a more predictable and gratifying environment (Church, 1982 p.540).

This anxiety may be discernible through diverse patterns of behaviour, compulsive fears, anger, withdrawal from members of the host society, and a gravitational pull towards compatriots. The definition of the term is clearly complex because researchers have sought to modify the existing concepts with their own predictor variables that serve to encompass a broader understanding of culture shock (Church, 1982). One can pre-suppose therefore that identity issues, value conflicts and interpersonal relationship problems may result as a direct consequence of the intercultural experience of sojourners. Factors such as cultural and linguistic similarity or divergence between countries are known to play a very important role in determining levels of culture shock. In addition, derogatory stereotypical images of the host culture juxtaposed with idealistic views of one’s own culture may result in intercultural conflicts. Social comparisons (Tajfel, 1978) between the two cultures can be used as an effective coping strategy by sojourners as a way of easing the transitional process from a state of confusion toward acceptance of the host culture. This tendency appears to assist the sojourner in rationalising the complexities of adjustment (Brein & David, 1971). Resultant personal growth, open-mindedness and an enhanced intercultural personality emerge if sojourners succeed in traversing the difficult stages of culture shock.

Adler’s (1975) definition of culture shock brings greater understanding of the dynamics, difficulties and implications of cross-cultural experiences. He argues culture shock represents a “set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli (sic) which have little or no meaning, and to misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences” (P. Adler, 1975 p.13). He maintains that culture shock is perceived as “a form of alienation” (1975 p.14).
Conversely, although this process can be associated with negative consequences, he argues that the benefits for culture learning, self-development and personal growth far outweigh the possible pessimistic outcome. This conclusion is supported by many other researchers (see for instance Brein & David, 1971; Church, 1982; Kim, 1995, 2001; Ward et al., 2001) who concur that the outcome of cross-cultural experiences are far more often positive and rewarding. Adler (1975) argues sojourners acquire understanding and coping skills appropriate to the host culture. They became autonomous in this new environment, “experientially capable of moving in and out of new situations” (p.17).

Foster (1965) posits that few first-time longer-term sojourners recover before a six month period of adaptation, with some taking as long as one year before reaching that stage. Conversely, he admits that a resilient sojourner may take three months. Further, Foster believes that one culture shock experience will not immunise the sojourner against future shocks, although these may be less severe, with relatively shorter adjustment periods.

Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) concept of culture shock focuses on two fundamental elements, the mourning related to the abandonment of a new culture, even if temporarily, and the vicissitudes of identity when confronted with the threat of a new culture. The term vicissitudes of identity signifies variations or changes in circumstance or fortune, where an individual’s identity undergoes transformation as a result of the intercultural contact situation. The concept also constitutes a threat to an individual’s identity. Garza-Guerrero’s view of this complex phenomenon is predicated on three essential elements (i) the stressful, anxiety-provoking nature of intercultural contact; (ii) the mourning phase that inevitably accompanies the process of adjustment; and (iii) the elements that constitute a threat to the identity of the newcomer. If the newcomer succeeds in transcending the crises implied in these phases, an emergent personality, accompanied by personal growth is highly rewarding. The mourning stage is significant as the loss of familiar cues, such as family, friends, cultural attachments such as music, food and so forth, is highlighted during the most difficult stages of culture shock. When these elements occur concurrently, that is, the cultural encounter coupled with the mourning of lost cultural cues, they constitute a threat to the visitor’s identity. Analogous arguments on the notions of mourning when moving to a new culture can be found in Levy-Warren’s (1987) research. However, Levy-Warren distinguishes culture loss from culture shock, the latter representing a more severe reaction in which the loss of culture and disorientation are experienced as an internal ego impoverishment. This refers to the depressive experiences of individuals based on their
internal capacity to mourn. She argues culture loss is similar to mourning while culture shock is analogous to Freud’s pathological process of melancholia.

Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) conceptualisation of culture shock is not dramatically dissimilar to other constructs proposed to explicate this phenomenon. However, the fundamental difference of this view focuses on the notions of mourning for the abandoned culture and the threat to the newcomer’s identity. Phase I, Cultural Encounter encapsulates culture shock, as this phase signifies “a sense of suddenness, acuteness and abruptness” (p.418) of the transition. If the discrepancy between the old culture and the new are too great, it precipitates feelings of disillusionment, with ensuing sentiments evocative of mourning after the death of a loved one. As a result of this, an increasing sense of discontinuity of identity emerges, rocking the foundations of ego identity. The individual feels that continuity, consistency and confirmation of his/her ego identity are under threat. Reactivation in fantasy of past images affording the self with support and security acts as an effective coping strategy during this confrontational stage, for example, indulgence in foods from the home country and association with co-nationals.

Phase II, Reorganisation implies a gradual acceptance of the new culture with a resolution of issues concerned with the mourning and what Garza-Guerrero (1974 p.424) terms the “subsequent intrapsychic reorganization … that is integration of new self-object images with other self-object images”. The individual oscillates between adhering to the new culture and aligning with the old. This phase is characterised by feelings of depression, discouragement and dejection. Concomitant with these sentiments however, feelings of encouragement and happiness begin to emerge. At this crucial stage, the original identity is reaffirmed and incorporated into the new culture. Successful feelings of mourning act as a catalyst for this outcome. Identification with past good object relations assists the foreigner in recovering what was lost, leading to re-affirmation of identity along with a more realistic interpretation of the past culture. The foreigner learns to be discerning in the selective process of cultural identification in the new culture, which takes place concurrently with the re-evaluation of the past culture, the end result being a “reshaped” identity, in tune with the new culture reflecting an enrichment of the self (1974 p.423).

Phase III, New Identity reflects a process where the identity is in continual flux. The remodelled identity is predicated on aspects of the new culture that were harmoniously integrated into the original identity. The gradual process of a threat to identity, mourning
and low self-esteem culminates in a re-affirmation of both ego identity and self-esteem, in accordance with Erickson (1959), who argues a new identity implies a continually re-edited process rather than a stable achievement. By this stage, the foreigner feels that he/she belongs to the new culture, experiencing increased feelings of fitness during interpersonal interactions. Further, the foreigner has reconciled negative feelings with the new self that has emerged, without losing totally nostalgic remembrances of the original culture. This ultimately signifies the end of the process of culture shock. Of great significance is the recurring concept of “a new identity as a transitional period in the constantly ongoing process of human growth” (Garza-Guerrero, 1974 p.426).

Garza-Guerrero maintains that where the sequential phases of the process of culture shock overlap, a new identity emerges as the end result of the process. He argues a new identity is in point of fact only a transitional period in the continual process of human growth through constant exposure to new experiences. Continuous internalising of object relations occurs which then follow the paradigms described in each phase. Garza-Guerrero (1974) argues both mourning and the vicissitudes of identity are the common denominator of all cases of culture shock, but as for other theories concerned with this phenomenon, he maintains the intensity, length, form, content, modalities and outcomes of culture shock are contingent on many variables. Some of these factors concern cultural similarity, language difficulties, the age factor and religious beliefs among others. He argues every foreigner will embody “his own highly personalised version of culture shock … in turn reflected in a gamut of peculiar psychodynamic manifestations” (1974 p.428).

As an adjunct to explicating the process of culture shock presented above through various constructs, the *U-Curve Hypothesis*, first engineered by Lysgaard (1955), is generally regarded by most researchers as an appropriate way of mapping the cross-cultural adjustment of long-term sojourners. The view advocated is that the sequence of adjustment over time can be fashioned into a curvilinear trend, a U-shaped curve of well-being, plotted on a temporal dimension. This concept essentially comprises a high point with initial feelings of optimism and challenge, born out of excitement and exhilaration, commonly known as the *honeymoon phase*. This stage gives way to frustration and confusion as individuals fail to interact in a meaningful way in the new culture, *culture shock*. When sojourners finally resolve these difficulties, their confidence is restored and they successfully integrate into the new culture, *recovery*.
Some findings have recorded excellent acculturation experiences abroad, those staying the longest finding it more difficult to go home, whilst others who have tested the U-curve have found incongruous results. Ward et al.’s (1998) study for example found neither psychological nor socio-cultural measurements of adaptation matched Lysgaard’s (1955) paradigm. It appears that just as the descriptions, typologies and theories of the process of culture shock have been criticised by many researchers, so too have the curves of adjustment. Even those studies in support of this hypothesis show marked discrepancies in the temporal parameters of the curve, rendering the U-curve too inflexible according to Church (1982) and other researchers who question its validity (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; 1956; Zapf, 1991). Church argues those who are in complete disaccord with the theory find it weak, inconclusive and over-generalised. It seems this hypothesis may be less useful in cross-sectional studies as there is insufficient time to plot cross-cultural adjustment on the graph.

In summary, research has shown that individuals who attempt to live and work in a foreign culture can expect varying degrees of culture shock although each subjective experience is contingent on different predictor variables. The symptoms may differ along with the intensity and duration (cf. P. Adler, 1975; G. Foster, 1962; Furnham, 1988; Kim, 1995; Ward et al., 2001; Zapf, 1991). Foreigners traverse various stages of culture shock before emerging as intercultural individuals, having reconciled discrepancies between cultures and value conflicts. If problematic issues are not resolved, they will register a negative acculturation experience.

2.3.2 The process of cultural adjustment

Three salient themes on cross-cultural contact emerged in the literature on culture shock. They are founded on the theoretical frameworks of culture learning; stress, coping and adjustment; and social identification theories (cf. Ward et al., 2001). These themes are fundamental to sojourner studies because of the enormous impact intercultural interactions have on the cultural identity of international students who embark on studies in foreign countries whose culture they know little about. Acculturation is essentially problematic and students must either overcome the difficulties in adjustment or withdraw from their study-abroad. The factors which affect this process are subsumed under the above three overarching themes. They comprise (i) interpersonal and inter-group interactions, with special focus on friendship networks; (ii) difficulties experienced by academic sojourners;
A review of literature has highlighted a gap in studies that do not encompass the interrelated nature of the themes noted above. The literature fails to link the considerable problems experienced by academic sojourners with the impact their experiences have on their self-esteem, their psychological health and more importantly their cultural identity. The gap in research is understandable, given the logistical and financial constraints involved with longitudinal projects for example. However, the lack of cyclical studies incorporating both transitional processes of adaptation and repatriation as well as cultural identity issues suggests interstices in research which need to be addressed. Studies employing cross-sectional and longitudinal methodologies are also conspicuous by their absence.

**2.3.2.1 Interpersonal and inter-group interactions**

The interactions between academic sojourners and their host society can have an immense impact on the transitional process of acculturation of sojourners in the foreign context as well as influence their repatriation outcome, with implications for their well-being and future directions. Bochner, McLeod and Lin’s (1977) work on friendship networks among foreign students is arguably a core phenomenon in the area of cultural adjustment because friendship networks are responsible for all the sojourner’s relations and attitudes. The importance of the network of friendships is attributed to the emphasis on a culture learning approach with original cultural maintenance of behaviours and values during intercultural exchanges. This approach is juxtaposed with the acquisition of new culture-specific knowledge which assists the academic sojourner abroad (Ward et al., 2001). Bochner et al. (1977) maintain there is a general lack of intimate personal contact between foreign students and host nationals, confirmed by other studies (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hull, 1978; Klineberg & Hull, 1979). They also argue it can be generally assumed that sojourners’ friends will be co-nationals, most notably of the same sex. This is not unexpected under the circumstances of cross-cultural education where international students are generally concentrated into their cultural groups.

Bochner et al. (1977) have identified three social networks from their extended investigations on friendship patterns of international students. In descending order, the
most significant according to these researchers is “(i) a co-national network, whose function is to affirm and express the culture of origin; (ii) a network with host nationals, whose function is the instrumental facilitation of academic and professional aspirations: and (iii) a multi-national network, whose main function is recreational” (1977 p. 277).

They argue the co-national network is the most favoured as it allows the academic sojourners to adhere to the values of their original culture whilst re-affirming that culture. The compatriot group facilitates adaptation in a new cultural milieu because of the companionship and emotional support it provides during the difficult stages of culture shock in particular. Contact with the host nationals is conceivably the most difficult to achieve because of the transient nature of international students as well as cultural distance, but is nonetheless instrumental in promoting success in academia. The host national group, composed of local students, academics, counsellors, university employees and so forth, essentially provides functional support for foreign students experiencing language and academic difficulties. Through contact with this group, they can improve their communicative functions and ultimately this contributes to a more successful adaptation. Contact with other international students provides recreational support largely because both groups experience analogous adjustment problems. The shared commonalities and understanding between international students from diverse countries contribute to social support.

Bochner et al.’s (1977) work on friendship networks highlights the importance of co-national relations principally because of the positive effect this has on self-esteem and cultural identity. This is significant because if sojourners possess strong self-esteem and a well-defined cultural identity, they are in a better position to resist overt or covert pressure to conform to host society mores. If they are able to establish their third place within the microcosm of their university society, they can be considered to have acculturated successfully whilst maintaining the integrity of their cultural identity and psychological well-being in the process. This view is supported by Ward and Kennedy (1993) and Ward and Searle (1991) in particular, whose studies on foreign students in Singapore and New Zealand showed greater involvement with both co-nationals and host nationals as fostering stronger cultural identity and greater psychological well-being. This implies the sojourners’ original cultural identity was reinforced through friendships with the above groups which are also considered as promoting well-being and enhancing the adjustment process through the benefits of culture learning.
The significance of home and host culture interactions during the adjustment process is undeniable according to Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000). Additional support for Bochner et al.’s work can be found in other studies (cf. Fontaine, 1986; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) which indicate the co-national support group is by far the most salient source of interaction and support. Fontaine (1986) argues sojourners who favour co-national support groups obtain the obvious benefits of these friendships during a short time, but they produce more difficulties in adjustment in the foreign milieu in the longer term. He claims that association with the host nationals is clearly more problematic but worthwhile and rewarding in the end. On the other hand, friendship orientations with the host nationals are known to complicate the process of readjustment on their return home. It is clear that temporal considerations are important for sojourners who draw from all three networks, the co-national, the host-national and the international, to ease their process of adjustment. That is, the networks chosen largely depend on the length of their sojourn. Each group offers support and benefits if the sojourner is able to access them.

It has been argued that although international students need and desire intercultural contact with host-society members, success in this quest is largely contingent on cultural distance between nationalities (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, & Bruschke, 1998). The reason for this is that, in spite of many commonalities in the experiences of academic sojourners in a foreign context, individuals tend to gravitate primarily toward others who share common cultural traits. Chinese students, for example, show evidence of more insular tendencies, seeking solutions to their problems from small social or familiar groups and participate less during international exchanges (Chataway & Berry, 1989). Gudykunst and Hammer’s (1988) research on cultural similarity reveals individuals are more inquisitive with those who are culturally dissimilar but tend to disclose more intimate information to those who have similar cultural traits. Further, they can more confidently predict the behaviour of culturally similar individuals, whilst inter-group contact with those who are least like themselves may induce more anxiety.

Redmond and Bunyi’s (1993) study examining the social integration of 644 international students in a mid-Western university found students from occidental civilisations, namely, Europeans, British and South Americans were the best integrated into their foreign milieu. This contrasted with students from Eastern Asia, Taiwan and Korea who were least integrated. These findings are not unexpected given the cultural similarity in many aspects
of the western societies with the United States. On the other hand, successful integration by the end of the sojourn indicates the salience of factors influencing culture learning, of which, foreign language acquisition, acceptance of cultural heterogeneity and dismantling of prejudicial stereotypes are the most crucial. Findings from wider sojourner studies in many international contexts reveal disenchantment with the lack of contact with host nationals, although some students admit this situation is mirrored at their home institutions (cf. Gareis, 2000; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Paige, 1990; Wiseman, 1997). Therefore it is not unreasonable in the eyes of foreign students that host society groups should make some effort to integrate international students. Given their transient nature, it is rare that academic sojourners succeed in penetrating host national groups completely.

There appear to be two sets of issues that motivate the typical foreign student sojourner according to Bochner et al (1977), instrumental motivation and pressure to maintain and rehearse one’s national and cultural identity (Bochner, 1973). There is disparity between the two goals where the establishment of interpersonal relations is concerned. There is evidence suggesting that a direct correlation exists between instrumental motivation, going abroad to obtain a degree or professional training, and integrative motivation, developing from friendships with host individuals. The professional and career needs of the academic sojourner provide the impetus for the establishment of the bonds between them and the host-national group who can assist them in their professional and academic aspirations. The second concern, pressure to maintain and rehearse their national and cultural identity (Bochner, 1973) as a result of insecurities triggered by the influence and behaviour of their co-nationals does not appear to pertain to all groups of individuals. Empirical studies show that feelings of nationalism are strongest among students from under-developed countries (Bochner et al., 1977; Terhune, 1964) in cultures diametrically opposed to each other. Bochner et al. (1977) maintain the bi-modal friendship pattern for foreign students, where there is a division of time between compatriots and host nationals, remains the most salient. However not all studies are consonant with the findings that students gravitate toward their own kind (see for instance Chu, 1968; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1986; Torbiorn, 1982) as the dynamics of sojourner relationships in these studies were focused on social support from the host culture.

In summary, friendship networks are an important element in the adjustment process. However, there is no clear and coherent framework which determines friendship patterns
of all student sojourners, as the predictor variables affecting each cultural group has different degrees of impact on the dynamics of socio-cultural exchanges.

### 2.3.2.2 Difficulties experienced by academic sojourners

From their research on sojourners, Furnham and Bochner (1986) identified four types of problems confronting overseas international students, although these were not necessarily different from those confronting other analogous groups of travellers. These were partly described in chapter 1 but to recapitulate, they may lack linguistic and cultural skills; they may face prejudice, accommodation difficulties, discrimination, homesickness and loneliness. Further, there are maturational problems which affect their transitional growth from adolescence to adulthood and academic stresses are purported to be more exacting in a foreign context where complexities in academic traditions vary. Last, their role as ambassador, thrust upon the sojourner or willingly assumed, creates pressures for cross-cultural travellers. Ward et al. (2001) argue that only two of these problems are exclusive to international students, the academic pressures and the role of foreign ambassador. In addition to these complications, academic sojourners experience difficulties similar to local students, including identity conflict experienced in personal development during the transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood; expected academic challenges; and the stressors common in transitions from school to university.

It can be argued that academic sojourners, particularly from heterogeneous cultural backgrounds face far greater problems than the local students on these issues, and indeed more acute problems than their counterparts at home. When sojourners are subjected to the difficulties enumerated above, they are faced with greater challenges than either local students or their compatriots at home. Their problems can be compounded by difficulties in comprehending the sometimes dramatically contrastive academic cultural practices of their host university and the accents and vernacular of their hosts. This is supported by Opper, Teichler et al.’s (1990) study, discussed below. Further, Chataway and Berry’s (1989) findings on Hong Kong Chinese, French and English students in Canada reported that uncertainty for the future, loneliness and academic difficulties contributed most to their levels of stress. However, the French-Canadians did not experience the same degree of difficulty with English language as the Chinese, probably due to considerably greater exposure to English in French Canada. The Chinese students experienced greater difficulties overall because they did not utilise available support groups to help attenuate
their acculturative stress. Their interactions were limited to other Chinese students. They experienced more prejudice, possessed lower English language competence and enjoyed less social support than the other two groups.

One of the few studies documenting the impact of a study abroad programme including French sojourners was carried out by Opper et al. (1990) in their study documenting the most common problems during acculturation. The nationalities selected were American, British, French, German and Swedish. Although these cultures can be considered relatively similar, there are intrinsic differences between those from continental Europe and the Anglo-Saxons, which must necessarily affect the outcome. For example, their cultural and personal educational backgrounds, their linguistic proficiencies in foreign languages, their knowledge and attitudes about the culture they will visit. A list of 10 most commonly reported problems associated with living overseas was proposed to the participants. Difficulties in adjusting to different pedagogical and learning methodologies, as well as problems with finding accommodation, were reported as the most common. The findings are interesting in that these researchers recorded only a minority of students as experiencing problems, whereas other studies note significant difficulties experienced by almost all respondents, albeit mostly during the early phases of the sojourn. Ward, Bochner et al. (2001) queried the spontaneity of the responses generated by Opper et al.’s (1990) study, questioning whether the problems experienced would be similar in extended studies. Opper et al. (1990) found pre-departure preparation from participating institutions and the individuals themselves, both on a linguistic and psychological level, as well as previous overseas experience impacted significantly on the adaptation experiences of the sojourners.

Additional support for the view that academic sojourners face greater challenges than the locals or their counterparts at home can be found in other studies (for example Crano & Crano, 1993; Henderson, Milhouse, & Cao, 1993 ct. in Ward et al., 2001; Lin & Yi, 1997; Zheng & Berry, 1991). Henderson, Millhouse et al.’s (1993) research on Asian students in the US revealed a high incidence of inadequate language skills, ninety-seven percent, which exacerbated their adjustment process. Lin and Yi’s (1997) study specifically noted adjustment to various accents and diverse teaching styles as particularly problematic for Asian students. Crano and Crano’s (1993) study of South American students in the US categorised an inventory of problems experienced during their acculturation in the US in order to gauge Student Adjustment Strain levels. These problems were grouped as education, host family, language, personal and social, with pertinent subscales subsumed
under each title. They found the greatest difficulties related to inadequate linguistic abilities and culture shock which were manifested in symptoms of stress and anxiety. The South American students also experienced greater problems with interpersonal relationships, as was the case in Chataway and Berry’s (1989) study.

More importantly, the cultural identity orientations most adolescents take for granted when at home, are brought to the forefront when challenged by foreigners and the ensuing identity conflict triggers re-modification of this important aspect of their self-concept, raising questions about who they are and where they belong. The vicissitudes of identity are all the more evident during cross-cultural encounters as Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) research suggests. The consequences of the remodelling of their cultural identity responses may thus have significant implications when they repatriate. This aspect of their return is even more heightened for younger sojourners, according to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963 p.40), as it is probable that they have not yet “found themselves” in their own culture. These authors argue that the resolution of their identity conflict overseas can imply that they have become “zealously converted” to new values, and this newfound security is something which they find difficult to relinquish.

In the Australian context, Barker et al.’s (1991) study of difficulties of overseas students in social and academic situations confirmed Furnham and Bochner’s (1986) earlier study, finding problems existed in adjusting to Australian attitudes and customs. In addition, they experienced difficulties during interactions with Australians and also found it difficult to respond during conversations and to challenge others. Their study, which focused on Asian students, provided further insights into the types of social and academic problems encountered. These included problems in close interpersonal relationships and the establishment of friendships in Australia. Asian students noted differences in behavioural norms between the host country and their home country. It appears once again inadequacy of linguistic skills exacerbated the problems. Further, using Hofstede’s (1980) theories on collectivist versus individualistic societies and notions of power distance, the Asian students belonging to the collectivist group readily conformed and accepted the power of superiors as an intrinsic characteristic of their relationship, often reluctant to engage in discussions with higher status figures (Barker et al., 1991). This behaviour may inhibit successful integration in the intercultural classroom.
Clearly, the range of problems faced by academic sojourners are contingent on many factors such as age, level of education, personality traits, choice of destinations, the degree of cultural heterogeneity between their cultural origins and so forth. Empirical findings show more social difficulty for academic sojourners as opposed to local students. More socio-cultural adaptation problems and problems in communication with host members of society and discrimination were also reported by academic sojourners compared to their domestic counterparts in their countries of origin (Chataway & Berry, 1989; Ward et al., 2001). Financial difficulties during the sojourn, added to predictable problems have also been reported in Klineberg and Hull’s (1979) large scale study of foreign students in a range of countries and Rohrlich and Martin’s (1991) study of American undergraduates in Europe. Other problems reported by these academic sojourners ranged from homesickness, food, academic studies and meeting people (locals).

In summary, this section has elaborated the general nature of problems experienced by academic sojourners. The literature review has revealed academic sojourners must confront a range of problems during cross-cultural transitions. Sojourners tend to lack the necessary linguistic and cultural skills, they may face prejudice, accommodation difficulties, discrimination, homesickness and loneliness. Further, they are not exempt from maturational problems which affect their transition from adolescence to adulthood, common to young people across the globe. More importantly, academic stresses appear exacerbated when sojourners are immersed in a foreign milieu as a result of different academic traditions. This will be discussed in the next section. Finally, they find themselves under pressure to rehearse their role of ambassador, irrespective of their desire to do so.

2.3.2.3 Academic issues in the intercultural classroom

Academic issues in the intercultural classroom rate as one of the most significant in studies on academic sojourners. Among the difficulties, linguistic proficiency in a foreign language in the international context is crucial for the development of culture learning for academic sojourners as well as permitting them to function effectively in the required tasks assigned to them. There is an important correlation between linguistic proficiency and academic performance. Smalley (1963 p.54) argues “language shock is one of the basic ingredients of culture shock”. This is plausible as language is the most crucial communication medium in human society, according to this researcher. Through
communication, members of society can obtain the cues to interpersonal relationships. In a foreign cultural milieu, if individuals are not adequately equipped with the language commonly used, they often find themselves reduced to childlike conversations with the hosts. Smalley (1963 p.54) describes the process of learners of foreign languages as precipitating a “vicious circle – unable to learn, unable to get along without learning. They cling to the crutch of translation”. This modus operandi fills them with anxiety because of the inconsistencies of the translations which leave much to be desired. Consequently, they become anxious, thinking that they are the source of mirth for the hosts and often give up trying to communicate until they are more conversant in the language. In order to minimise the painful symptoms of linguistic and cultural shock, sojourners squarely place the blame of their own failure to speak, for instance English, on the antiquated system of language education they were exposed to at home or are involved with in the host country. In the context of academic issues in the intercultural classroom, Smalley’s arguments increase in significance and it is difficult to deny the importance he attributes to language shock. This is because if sojourners are unable to interact freely with members of the host society, this may negatively affect their acculturation process. They may consequently fail to emerge as intercultural individuals, establishing their third place in the foreign society where culture learning and personal growth take place.

Analogous findings to Smalley’s (1963) can be found in the literature (cf. Jochems, Snipe, Smid, & Verweij, 1996; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Ward et al., 2001). Jochems et al. (1996) believe the measures used to determine language proficiency, such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) are questionable as a good predictor of academic success as this test does not evaluate the qualities necessary to complete a study in a foreign language adequately, covering only selected aspects of proficiency. Opper et al.’s (1990) study on the impact of study abroad programmes on academic sojourners has shown that there was evidence of a pronounced social selection among French students in particular, applying for exchange programmes, based on TOEFL scores. However, although many academic sojourners are highly proficient in their written skills in English, their self-reported poor oral skills are often reason for disappointment and distress upon arrival in Anglo-Saxon countries. This factor could then exacerbate their stress levels.

There are of course other significant factors that effect academic success and satisfaction for sojourners such as individual differences, which exert influence on learning styles and academic achievement (see for example Banks & Banks, 1995; Chen, 1994; Irvine &
York, 1995; Shade & New, 1993; Ward et al., 2001). Ward et al. (2001) suggest other factors include predictors which vary across cross-cultural borders, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, the level of field dependence and independence, favouring cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning styles, as well as perception of intelligence. The socialisation process of academic sojourners in the educational context is seen as an extension of the process for adaptation to the new culture, with its values, traditions and practices. How well they do this is contingent on the attitude of the sojourners themselves.

Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1990) have examined classroom communication and interactions based on individualistic and collectivistic principles (I-C) and power distance (PD). They argue that students react according to their cultural training and are either comfortable in engaging in class discussions, like American or Australian students, or very conservative in their demeanour in class, like the Japanese, Asians or the French. These students essentially do not desire to draw attention to themselves, especially if their linguistic skills in English are inadequate. Triandis (1990) argues individuals categorised in the collectivist cultural orientation are acutely aware of power distance, making them less likely to question and debate, as this would be construed as challenging the teacher, with a possible consequence of loss of face. He maintains individualists prioritise personal goals at the expense of the goals of collectives. The latter either do not differentiate between personal and collective goals, or if they do, these personal goals take a secondary position to the collective.

Similar themes have emerged from other studies of sojourners (for example Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Shade & New, 1993). Cortazzi and Jin (1997) maintain a key feature of academic intercultural interaction is that participants not only carry cultural behaviour and concepts into the classroom, but they use the specific structure of their cultures to interpret and evaluate utterances, actions and academic performance of their counterparts. They argue academic cultures represent systems of beliefs, expectations and cultural practices about the methods preferred for academic performance which are realised in daily interactions through conversation or writing, through what they term cultures of communication. The importance of this view is the possible misinterpretation of original intentions of foreigners in an intercultural classroom. The resultant judgements made by teachers and other students may lead to negative stereotypical views which can cause conflicts and adversely affect relationships. Consequently, aspects of cultures of communication such as non-
verbal cues or body language, pauses, eye contact may be overlooked (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997).

A further variable affecting cross-cultural classroom interactions concerns the significance of *tight* versus *loose* cultures (Triandis, 1990 p.510), such as Japan for instance and the US or Australia respectively. Homogenous cultures are seen to be rigid in enforcing that in-group members behave according to culturally and socially accepted norms of behaviour, at the risk of severe sanctions being imposed on them. Conversely, in loose cultures, individuals have a good deal of freedom to deviate from the norms of that society. This has great significance for the re-entry process of sojourners but can equally be seen to affect the dynamics of classroom interactions during intercultural transitions. The implications for a successful acculturation experience are evident. It appears success also depends on the level of interactions with members of the host society and other groups and nowhere is this more prominent than in the classroom. These essentialist studies view culture as a given for all members, not a choice or consideration.

In summary, this section has outlined critical academic issues pertinent to the intercultural classroom. Linguistic proficiency appears to be the most salient factor affecting psychological health of academic sojourners and the promotion of good international relations. Other factors, such as individual differences in learning styles, motivation, individualistic versus collectivistic principles, tight and loose cultures, power distance and cultural beliefs and values about pedagogical practices were also found to influence the types of interactions of sojourners in the classroom and the wider host society. These interrelated factors may ultimately lead to communicative competence which contributes to successful integration within the foreign milieu or provoke intercultural conflict in the classroom.

2.3.2.4 The impact of cultural stereotypes on cross-cultural encounters

Cultural stereotypes have a potentially negative impact on the acculturation process of sojourners in a foreign context (eg. Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Liberman, 1994; Stroebe, Lenkert, & Klaus, 1988). This impact may seriously prejudice good international relations during exchanges and therefore cannot be underestimated. If conflict situations arising during the initial stages of culture shock in a foreign context are not reconciled by the end of the sojourn, negotiations between educational institutions for future international student
exchange programmes for instance may be impaired. It is in the best interest of all concerned that different cultural attitudes, and behavioural and social mores lead to a complete recovery phase where sojourners and host-society members can resolve issues in a satisfactory manner (P. Adler, 1975; Klineberg & Hull, 1979).

Bond’s (1986) study of local undergraduate Chinese and American student exchange students in Hong Kong focused on constructive aspects of stereotyping and their effect on intercultural contact between visitors and host society members. The study examined auto-stereotypes (in-group perceptions) and hetero-stereotypes (out-group perceptions) and reflected stereotypes (how the in-group is perceived by the out-group). His study showed both cultural groups viewed the Americans as more open and extroverted and less emotionally restrained than the Chinese. This could cause potential problems as both groups perceived the other to over-stereotype them, the Americans as emotionally effusive and the Chinese as emotionally controlled. This can be problematic for intercultural relations because a dissonance in perceptions can generate communication barriers. Further, both groups believed they were misperceived as beneficent. Overall however, stereotypes of each group were perceived to be strong, comprehensive and in accordance with each other. Bond argues this mutually beneficial way of viewing each other resulted in harmonious inter-group relations between the two cultures in Hong Kong. There was clearly no overt conflict between the two cultural groups in the university context. Bond’s study provides evidence of the significance of this feature of cross-cultural adaptation which can have a positive influence on diverse population groups, but the role of initiating the relationship-building appears to lie firmly in the court of the foreigner. This implies the onus is on the visitor to initiate the breakdown of cultural barriers. Bond’s study clearly indicates the possibility of achieving inter-group harmony in spite of existing stereotypes about one’s in- and out-group. Motivation, such as perfection of the host language, it seems, on the part of the sojourner and culture learning on the part of the hosts, help to engender a contact situation that is voluntary, cooperative and equal status (Bond, 1986).

Cultural stereotypes do not always contribute to positive outcomes however, as perceived discrimination can result in cultural groups experiencing alienation from the majority group with conflict situations becoming a permanent feature. This may be more apparent in studies of immigrants than sojourner groups. The findings of Cortazzi and Jin (1997) on cultures of communication are also relevant to the impact stereotypes can have on intercultural relationships. If classroom discussions encourage expression of controversial
views on certain issues, this situation is likely to provoke stereotypical judgements made on diverse cultures that disagree with majority views. This in turn creates more difficulties in attempts to diffuse conflict situations which ultimately lead to acceptance of multicultural differences and the fostering of goodwill and healthy social interactions among students.

The argument that negative stereotypical views may have a serious impact on cross-cultural relations can be substantiated by Stroebe et al.’s (1988) study, quite aptly entitled “Familiarity may breed contempt”. They studied seventy American exchange students in France and Germany. Their research confirms the contention that stereotypes and attitudes play a causal role in the creation, maintenance and aggravation of inter-group conflict. They report the majority of studies on the impact of student exchanges on stereotypes, at least until 1988, appear to challenge the expectation that the encounter will engender favourable inter-group perceptions. Further, they disagree that attitudinal changes are the general outcome of the sojourn experience. Their study revealed no evidence of improvement in student attitudes or stereotypes toward the host society groups. The opposite was in fact true, particularly with the contingent studying in France, where the sojourners’ negative sentiments had strengthened. Stroebe et al. argue the deterioration in attitudes of Americans toward the French could not be attributed to maturational factors as this would not have been limited to attitudes and stereotypes toward the host society. They suggest the decline was largely related to difficulties in establishing contact with locals and overt hostility from the French toward the visitors. The former was probably linked to the accommodation arrangements which afforded the sojourners less opportunity to meet host nationals. Similar findings were recorded in Byram et al.’s (1991) study on young peoples’ perception of the other culture. This study highlights how attitudinal problems based on negative beliefs about a nationality can be exacerbated during the exchange situation.

Other studies have also recorded stereotypes as an issue which creates a struggle during sojourner adaptation in a foreign culture (Irvine & York, 1995; Liberman, 1994; Lin & Yi, 1997). For example, Lin and Yi’s (1997) study of Asian international students in the US note this variable as problematic among the more common difficulties such as prejudice, performance anxiety, loneliness, pressures from academic demands and so forth. Asian students are commonly stereotyped as reserved and non-assertive, which reflects their cultural adherence to qualities suggestive of harmony, deference, patience and respect for authorities. They do not volunteer their opinions or share their emotions on subjects
discussed in class. Lin and Yi argue this is where the collective versus individualistic
tendencies emerge, as Asians are generally uncomfortable with the individualism and
competitiveness of American culture. This situation results in stress for these sojourners as
they struggle to establish a balance between acculturation and participation in the host
culture and the maintenance of their cultural identities. Along these lines, Irvine and York
(1995) argue generalisations based on stereotypes are dangerous as incorrect interpretation
of a foreign student’s learning style for instance can lead to negative teacher expectations.

By and large empirical research shows once stereotypical judgements are abandoned,
diverse cultures can co-exist in harmony. This argument is substantiated by Klineberg and
Hull’s (1979) research on the large contingents of students studying at participating
universities around the world. Their study also serves to highlight the significance of the
impact of negative stereotypical views on student exchanges. Their samples were
considered representative of the non-immigrant foreign student populations studying in
countries targeted. They report foreign students generally end their year abroad with more
favourable attitudes toward their hosts than when they arrived, but a minority remain
immutable in their opinions. They warn implications of a negative outcome are cause for
concern for institutions who organise these programmes as negative attitudes can have
lasting effects.

Klineberg and Hull’s (1979 p.114) study also revealed a paradox in the responses of the
students whose caustic remarks from the interviews of the respondents are eloquently
expressed. They report a substantial majority of their sample (nineteen out of twenty-
eight), “end up disliking the French and loving France. They find the country beautiful and
interesting and cities like Paris or Nice rich in culture and in academic opportunities … For
the French people, on the other hand, they use terms such as cold, rigid, selfish, self-
centred, unsociable, convinced of their own superiority, failing in their obligations as hosts,
xenophobic, and even racist”. Conversely, there was consensus on the part of the
sojourning scholars (twenty cases) who took their sabbatical in France as they found the
experience very positive. The retrospective interviews however, were not devoid of
criticism. They suggested that “French scholars should travel abroad in order to become
more tolerant and receptive to new intellectual ideas, more open to human contacts, and
less prejudiced” (p.117).
In summary, studies have shown that the implications of unfavourable attitudes between diverse cultures during exchanges can cause conflict and have lasting effects on international relations which can ultimately affect further student exchange programmes. They have revealed that negative stereotypes represent a problem for sojourners during the process of adaptation in a foreign milieu. Where positive evaluations of intercultural groups are evident, a successful adaptation takes place.

To conclude this section on culture shock, there are a number of themes that have emerged as salient for the study of academic sojourners. Subsumed under the frameworks of culture learning; stress, coping and adjustment; and social identification theories the themes which are pivotal to the understanding of acculturation and culture shock have focused on interpersonal and inter-group interactions, with special reference to friendship networks; difficulties experienced by academic sojourners; academic issues in the intercultural classroom; and the impact of cultural stereotypes on cross-cultural contact. The literature has revealed that acculturation is problematic and students can either overcome problems or withdraw from their studies and return home. Key factors which have been found to affect this process are: cultural distance; inadequate linguistic and cultural skills; an inability to dismantle negative cultural stereotypical views; prejudice; academic stresses and challenges; different academic practices and identity conflicts.

2.4 Repatriation of sojourners

This section will examine the literature on the repatriation of sojourners, which researchers claim has received little attention (e.g. N. Adler, 1981; Austin, 1986; Gaw, 2000; Kim, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2001; Weaver, 1994; Werkman, 1982). This is in spite of the fact that the process of re-adaptation upon returning home is widely accepted as being a most difficult aspect of cross-cultural transitions (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Sussman, 1986; Weaver, 1994). Martin (1984 p.116) defines re-acculturation or re-entry as “the readjustment of the sojourner into the home culture” whilst Adler (1981) incorporates the concept of transition into her definition: the movement from one culture and back to the original. However, Sussman (2001 p.2) warns against the assumption that “repatriation is simply the closure of the transition cycle, psychologically similar to cultural adjustment”, basing her claim on empirical research (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Sussman, 1986) which has shown that the unexpectedness of the problems, together with the
misattributions of their causes, can provoke traumatic experiences once home. Reverse culture shock is the phenomenon which describes the difficult re-entry process back home.

A workable definition for the concept of reverse culture shock concerns “psychosocial difficulties (sometimes associated with physical problems) that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time” (Uehara, 1986 p.416). Conversely, Adler’s (1975) definition adds a positive dimension to the term and reverse culture shock is construed as a process which engenders possible growth experience, through which the individual learns new coping skills, values and perspectives, incorporated into cognitive, behavioural and affective domains (cf. Raschio, 1987). Martin (1984) argues there is a need to understand how the phenomenon of re-entry paradigms correlates with the process of adjustment in a foreign country, in other words, within the larger context of cultural adjustment. Acculturation and re-acculturation both fit under the wider umbrella of cultural adjustment because of the interrelatedness of both processes.

Martin (1984) suggests the conceptual framework proposed by Church (1982) for the investigation of sojourner adjustment may be used to examine sojourner readjustment. They comprise (i) stage theories; (ii) curves of adjustment; (iii) coping styles; (iv) culture learning; with an additional dimension (v) intercultural communication. In brief, stage theories are conceptualisations of the stages or phases that the sojourner experiences, analogous to those depicted in culture shock research but applied to reverse culture shock in this instance. Curves of adjustment depict the adjustment process over time, mapped out on a temporal dimension. Coping styles focus on typical sets of patterns of adjustment, with varying degrees of difficulty. An example of this is derived from Sewell and Davidson’s (1956) conceptualisation of sojourners, characterised as “detached observers”, “promoters”, “enthusiastic participants” and “settlers”. A recent approach visualises sojourner adjustment in terms of culture learning approach, devised by several researchers such as Bochner (1972), where sojourner adjustment is understood in terms of the removal of positive reinforcements (e.g. customary food, usual friends) and the presentation of aversive stimuli (e.g. language difficulties, unfamiliar social encounters) (Church, 1982; Martin, 1984). Finally, the intercultural communication approach to cultural adjustment was initially developed by Church (1982) and Brein and David (1971). The focus is essentially on effective intercultural communication between sojourners and host nationals, where mutual understanding is the outcome.
In the context of re-entry research, Martin (1984) explores Koester’s (1983) paper on intercultural re-entry which interprets the communication perspective as an integrative framework where change and awareness of change in communication is understood as a result of the intercultural experience, at the individual and societal levels. Since the nineties however, pedagogical and theoretical advances in second language acquisition incorporating cultural identity have been elaborated by applied linguists (Byram, 1999; Kramsch, 1993, 1999; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003) which have many points of commonality with the intercultural communication approach described above. These researchers’ theories will be described later in this chapter.

The similarities between the descriptive approaches of adjustment to the host culture and readjustment upon returning home are linked by a sense of loss of familiar cues and through the process of integrating into a different cultural system. Both paradigms can be depicted in terms of stages or phases of adjustment. Individual styles of coping may also be ascribed to both processes to facilitate the understanding of individual variations in adjustment. The last similarity involves features of culture learning and relearning common to both processes (Martin, 1984). Conversely, the essential distinctions that can be made between the two paradigms of adjustment can be categorised as (i) expectations where both the returnees and the home society members expect little or no difficulties for the sojourner during the re-entry experience; (ii) change, in the form of physical and social changes which have occurred in the sojourner, as well as, changes to the physical and social surroundings at home, during the absence of the sojourner; and (iii) awareness of change regarding the level of cognizance or understanding by the sojourner and home society members of these changes (Martin, 1984).

2.4.1 Theoretical models

2.4.1.1 The W-Curve Hypothesis

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) are recognised for their curvilinear adjustment pattern encompassing both the acculturation and re-acculturation experiences of sojourners. Their W-curve results from the U-curve experienced abroad modified to a double U-curve, when repatriation is considered. The W-Curve Hypothesis is essentially based on the precept that sojourners experience a re-acculturation process in their home environment, analogous to the process of acculturation during cultural transitions. Findings suggest sojourners
experience initial euphoria when they first re-enter, followed by a subsequent trough in the level of adjustment during the most difficult stage, commonly known as reverse culture shock, with an eventual but gradual improvement of adjustment levels until they reach a stage of full recovery. This second part of the adjustment curve thus represents the re-adaptation of the sojourner along temporal dimensions (Church, 1982). The timeframe is however contingent on various variables, such as personalities, cultural similarity between the foreign and home cultures, length of time abroad, the attitudes of society members to culture learning, the nature of interpersonal relationships and so on (cf. Lysgaard, 1955).

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) applied their construct to a study of five thousand three hundred returning United States scholars based on interview and survey data which produced analogous results to Lysgaard’s (1955) U-Curve Hypothesis. With the extension of the U-curve to incorporate the return experience, Gullahorn and Gullahorn sought to explain the characteristics of reverse culture shock, graphically mapped out along a temporal dimension. They explained the cognitive dissonance experienced by the returnees as the main catalyst of reverse culture shock as producing an imbalance. The underlying distinction between the two paradigms of adjustment and readjustment was attributed to the erroneous expectations of sojourners about their re-entry process, which made no allowances for changes to themselves and to their home culture environment. The difference between the two processes is explained through the cognitive preparation for cultural differences and difficulties in the host culture but not in their home culture. Finally, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) reported sojourners with more firmly established cultural identities, such as older returnees, suffered less than their younger student counterparts whose identity formations were incomplete prior to departure (see also Gaw, 2000).

Factors such as cultural similarity, the nature of interpersonal relationships, duration of sojourn, attitudes of society members to culture learning for instance have been found to correlate with a difficult process of re-acculturation in many studies but not all studies match Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) W-Curve Hypothesis. Weaver’s (1994) argument offers an alternative version where the honeymoon period is vastly shorter than its counterpart phase of cross-cultural adaptation. For Weaver, the readjustment to a familiar environment is more difficult than expected as a result of difficulties caused by discrepancies in expectations. When sojourners experience reverse culture shock, the problems quickly negate the happy reunion with loved ones. With increased mobility
between diverse cultures, sojourners venture farther from home and are bound to encounter vastly different cultural trends in the host country. This in turn logically has an effect on their re-entry process as they attempt to integrate their culture learning upon returning home. It has already been said that tight or loose societies play an important role in determining the successful re-adaptation of sojourners. Sewell and Davidsen (1956) attributed important variables to predict the journey of returnees through the stages of the W-curve, such as language facility, social interactions with host society members, previous contact with other cultures, and personality traits.

2.4.1.2 Sussman’s Cultural Identity Model (CIM)

Sussman’s (2000; 2002) model revolves around the concept of cultural identity which she defines as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the home country and the host country” (2002 p.2). This model is fundamental to sojourner research as the cyclical process she describes underpins the need to focus on more than one aspect of cultural transitions. Based on her research, Sussman argues the theory that a cyclical process characterises the sojourn – moving to a new country and moving home; the adjustment period and the outcome of adaptation; culture shock and reverse shock. The framework of Sussman’s (2002) Cultural Identity Model (CIM) is based on several tenets. She maintains that (i) cultural identity is a critical but latent aspect of self-concept; (ii) salience of cultural identity is a consequence of the beginning of a cultural transition; (iii) cultural identity is dynamic and can shift as a result of the overseas transition and self-concept disturbances; and (iv) shifts in cultural identity act as a mediator between the cultural adjustment and repatriation paradigms.

The first construct, self-concept is based on the notion that individuals hold multiple beliefs about themselves, also known as “self-schemas” (Sussman, 2000 p.4). These comprise personal attributes about the self (e.g. traits, characteristics, dispositions) and thoughts about social group membership, formed around gender, social class, religion and culture. Tajfel’s (1981) Social Identity Theory is pertinent to Sussman’s (2000) model because identification with a social group adds to one’s positive self-concept. Sussman argues the content of our self-perceptions mirror not only our personal traits and characteristics but also meaningful social groups to which we belong. She argues one element of the collective self-concept originates from membership in a cultural group which is described as one’s cultural identity, and which differs from other collective
identities. The link between cultural identity and self-construct thus takes on greater significance.

The second construct concerns the importance of cultural identity during cross-cultural transitions. Sussman (2000) considers cultural identity to mean more than one’s national identity. She argues it can be considered as the psychological counterpoint to national identity – the identity defining the cultural self in content, evaluation and structure. Further, an individual’s self-defined cultural identity may differ from the perception of others, as well as being linked to evaluation of goals and behaviours. Given the importance of these definitions, the beginning of cultural contact appears to highlight the salience of one’s cultural identity as this important aspect of the self is placed in relief with other cultures. Immersed in a new cultural context where behaviour and thinking differ between the two cultures, awareness of the profound influence of one’s culture on behaviour begins to grow according to Sussman. As a result of the dynamics between cultures, a new social identity status emerges – that of out-group member, or expatriate in a new cultural milieu, which ultimately strengthens one’s identification with the home culture.

The third construct, the dynamic nature of cultural identity is explained by the shift which occurs as a result of the overseas transition and self-concept disturbances. Transformation occurs as sojourners interact with host society members and develop a variety of possible identity responses. Self-concept disturbances may be heightened during this period of accommodation where the sojourner makes a person – environment fit and begins the pursuit of self-knowledge. Subsequent to this re-affirmation phase, Sussman’s (2000) model suggests sojourners become aware of the discrepancy between their cultural selves and the new cultural context, posing challenges with decisions of accommodation to the new cultural behavioural norms or maintenance of original culture. If sojourners consider themselves as socio-culturally well-adapted, they experience reduced stress, less ambiguity and more psychological comfort.

Sussman (2000) argues self-concept disturbances and resultant shifts in cultural identity throughout the cross-cultural transition cycle are the crucial mediating factors which explicate and predict psychological responses to these transitions. This may be described as psychological adjustment, cultural anxiety, sociocultural competence or personal growth. This is linked to the last construct of her model which helps explain and predict how shifts in cultural identity may act as mediator between the cultural adjustment and
repatriation paradigms. As the sojourn experience is by definition finite, when sojourners return home, as a result of accommodation and adaptation to the foreign culture, they experience self-concept disturbances and it is at this point, upon re-entry, that modification of their cultural identity becomes salient. Juxtaposition between the two cultures then takes place, often resulting in a negative outcome for repatriation, as returnees find they can no longer fit in and cannot reconcile the discrepancy between their remodelled cultural identity and that of their home culture. Their new status in society often results in a new out-group, that of repatriate (Sussman, 2000). In practice, this may have serious implications for the psychological well-being of returned sojourners as they face important decisions for their future, deciding where their loyalties lie and whether they can ultimately settle back comfortably in their home country. If the situation becomes untenable, they may choose to leave.

Sussman’s (2000; 2002) cultural identity model proposes four types of post-adaptation identity responses which emerge as salient for sojourners: affirmative, subtractive, additive and global, each with a repatriation outcome.

For sojourners registering an affirmative identity response, their foreign experience affirms their home country identity. They perceive themselves as possessing a strong common bond with their co-nationals and their homeland and they believe their compatriots perceive them as typical of other members of their group. The CIM predicts the affirmative response as engendering a low adjustment to the host country and a positive re-entry experience. It predicts little reverse culture shock in this group because their affiliations to the home country have not changed and they are happy to go home (Sussman, 2002).

Subtractive identity implies sojourners feel alienated or estranged from the home country. Sojourners are less positive about their native country and believe they have less in common with their compatriots. The CIM model predicts that a subtractive identity response is characteristic of high adaptation to the host country with equally high repatriation distress upon repatriation. This situation is mutual from the perspective of their co-nationals who perceive them as being less typical of their nationality. Therefore, this identity response engenders a negative repatriation experience in the returnees as their allegiances tend to lie in the foreign culture and they do not want to come home (Sussman, 2002).
Sojourners characterised as possessing additive identity responses have acquired elements of the host cultural identity whilst retaining components of their original identity. They are also predicted to experience high repatriation distress synonymous with a negative repatriation, not as the result of identity loss per se but as a result of embracing many aspects of the host culture, such as their values, customs, social rituals, emotion and thought. This additive shift can be construed as an identity gain as cultural identities have been heightened but sufficiently remodelled to engender a negative outcome upon re-entry (Sussman, 2002). The negative repatriation may be directly linked to the degree of acceptance by compatriots, of the remodelled identity of returnees and their cultural learning and foreign language acquisition.

Sojourners who have had multiple international experiences may have a global identity response and tend to embrace a global identity. They have moved in and out of multiple cultures and essentially feel they belong to a global community. This response emerges following exposure to many diverse cultures and various transitional experiences with relevant ease where the experience is seen as enhancing their sense of belonging to a global village. Their adjustment to the host country is perceived as instrumentally motivated and their subsequent repatriation is predicted to be moderate or positive in nature (Sussman, 2002).

Problems tend to emerge when cultural identity remodelling occurs because many societies do not value the multiculturalism or multilingualism which results from the intercultural experience. They may have a xenophobic attitude toward other cultures and members of the home society may be intolerant toward compatriots who adopt components of different cultures as part of their cultural repertoire. How intense this is, is necessarily contingent on the allegiances sojourners have to their own cultural identity, their age, with the presumption that the younger the sojourner the greater the likelihood of cultural identity assimilation to the host environment. The reception reserved for sojourners by the original community can be expected to dramatically influence the cultural identity of the returnees because this contributes to identity disturbances during the re-entry process. This is essentially because of what Sussman (2001 p.5) calls “the home culture’s perspective on cultural heterogeneity and multiple cultural identities”. One can assume that the more distant the cultural heterogeneity of the two cultures, the less likelihood identity remodelling will occur. This is because research has shown cultural distance to be an
important factor in successful acculturation in a foreign context (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985).

2.4.1.3 Storti’s Cultural Environment Model to Repatriation

Storti’s (1997) paradigm distinguishes between the cultural transitions of the various groups of sojourners but argues the processes of cross-cultural adjustment and readjustment back home are similar. To recapitulate earlier descriptions of similarities of the processes, the sojourner experiences a decline in adjustment shortly after entering a new culture, followed by a recovery stage. This process is repeated in the home culture upon returning. The severity and duration of the decline is however contingent on many variables previously elaborated (Brein & David, 1971).

Storti argues that there is much diversity in the populations that make up expatriates and returnees and that no two exchange students leave from or return to the same milieu or go through the same experiences. Re-entry is perceived as a deeply personal experience as well as a cultural one. However, the experience of re-entry appears to follow a predictable pattern which is generally delineated by four stages, each exemplified by distinctive emotions and behaviours. Storti maintains that the gravity and duration of each stage is markedly different for each returnee, but the sequence of the phases is apparently consistent. They are as follows:

1. Leave-taking and departure
2. The honeymoon
3. Reverse culture shock
4. Readjustment (Storti, 2001b p.46).

There are familiar features between the transitional processes of both acculturation and repatriation. The first phase entails an ending, separation or disengagement; the second, a provisional, unstable period; the third, a commencement, re-integration phase. Storti (2001b) has divided the interim stage into two phases: the initial honeymoon stage and the phase of reverse culture shock described here. The cognitive dissonance experienced by the returnees was seen as provoking an imbalance, resulting in reverse culture shock. The underlying distinction between the two paradigms of adjustment and readjustment was attributed to the erroneous expectations of sojourners about their re-entry process. No
allowances were made for changes to themselves and to their home culture environment. Further, during acculturation, there is a certain amount of anticipatory excitement for the pending adventure, mixed with fear but tinged with expectations that one must anticipate cultural differences, thus deserving of a certain amount of preparation. In the re-entry phenomenon, the honeymoon phase is presumed to be far more euphoric in the new culture because of the newness of the adventure in comparison with re-settling back home and the thought of seeing family and friends once again. The third phase of reverse culture shock is dramatically heightened because the difficulties in re-adjusting experienced by returnees are largely unexpected. Finally, readjustment eventually takes place but not without varying degrees of undue hardships effecting the process, contingent on many factors, such as individual and personality traits, preparation for the return, a desire to resume life back home, employment prospects, friendships and so on.

Storti explores why it is so difficult to come home and examines the true meanings of “home”, reducing the essence of home from broader definitions to a more salient meaning for sojourners “the place where you were born and raised, where people speak your native language and behave more or less the way you do … your homeland and your home culture” (p.3). In this context, as language is intrinsically linked to one’s cultural identity, the language issue becomes more critical if the home society is seen to reject the second language and culture learning that the returned sojourner has acquired. How can the sojourner feel at home if he/she no longer behaves the way his/her society behaves? The repercussions of a negative reaction to culture learning may ultimately cause more imbalance for the cultural identity of returnees. If the above definition is the interpretation of “home” one adopts, Storti suggests there will be little disappointment upon re-entry. Storti argues however, that most people use the word “home” in a more profound sense, comprising sentiments and routines as much as to a particular place. He summarises the essence of home, as it is commonly used, as having three key elements – familiar places; familiar people; and routines and predictable patterns of interaction.

When the sojourner returns home, these identifiable cues may no longer be the same, and the loss of familiar cues is at the root of the problems of readjustment. The socialisation process has to begin again as a result of identity transformations, changes in values and behaviours and communication systems. Storti (2001b p.12) argues “home is certainly a place you should not have to get used to”, which is what generally occurs after a significant absence from this familiar milieu. It is precisely this process of getting used to
“home” once again which is problematic because returnees do not expect it to be so. Storti’s (2001b) view concurs with Martin’s (1984 p.123) who argues the magnitude of changes occurring during the processes of acculturation provokes the severity of re-entry shock.

In summary, re-entry is potentially difficult but parallels culture shock to a certain extent. It is affected by a lack of expectation that the process will be difficult because no allowances are made for physical and social changes to sojourners and their home culture environment during their absence. This can provoke traumatic experiences for returnees unless there is an awareness of the changes that have occurred by both the returnee and society members, especially where remodelled cultural identity is concerned with returnees. Nonetheless, the readjustment process is understood to promote a growth experience where the sojourner learns new coping skills, values and perspectives, integrated into cognitive, behavioural and affective domains.

2.4.2 Re-entry research

This section will address issues which are salient in the investigation of the readjustment of sojourners, the phenomenon of reverse culture shock; re-entry expectations; and readjustment difficulties experienced by returnees.

2.4.2.1 The Phenomenon of Reverse Culture Shock

Weaver (1994) argues the process of reverse culture shock is dramatically more difficult than the acculturation transition because sojourners are allowed to make mistakes and act differently in a foreign context. They are expected to experience stress when adapting to new cultural and social milieux and it is normal for them to feel homesick. Conversely, when they arrive home, family and friends in particular are much less tolerant of mistakes made by the returnees. Returned sojourners are expected to fit back in and resume their lives without undue fuss and generally home society members show little empathy for the difficulties these individuals experience. In brief, the honeymoon is over in a very short time, hours in some situations.

Weaver (1994) claims the processes of culture shock and reverse culture shock are analogous because of an important point of commonality between the two, that is, the
breakdown of interpersonal communication, of which he argues returned sojourners are largely unaware. In other words, they lose the ability to interact with social harmony and there is a breakdown of communication which leads to frustration and pain, and sometimes also to physical and psychological reactions associated with stress. Weaver argues it is the distress that in fact provokes the symptoms of reverse culture shock. The returnees find everyone in their circle is intruding on their personal space, and they are apparently unaware that they may be emitting nonverbal messages that depict them as standoffish, rude or snobbish because they have changed so dramatically. He argues the parochialism of the home society becomes unbearable to the returnees especially as they contrast the global perspectives they have gained with their home cultural mores. Unaware of their own lack of tolerance and the open-mindedness they showed overseas, the returnees tend to criticise their compatriots at home, an attitude which is not tolerated by society members. A vicious circle then effects a difficult process of readjustment. In response, many returnees deny the impact of their experience abroad and refuse to enter into discussion about it, whilst others tend to exaggerate the opposite extreme, only socialising with those who have had similar experiences, or for some, refusing to come home at all (Weaver, 1994).

The symptoms of reverse culture shock may manifest in “flight” behaviour. This is defined by their desire for withdrawal, fantasy about further travels, and a need to sleep, a reaction many find unsustainable because their escape is largely temporary. They cannot escape permanently, return overseas, or sleep all day. They also often feel out of control and their “flight” behaviour translates into a “fight” behaviour or aggression, according to Weaver (1994, p.5) and other researchers (see for instance Gaw, 2000; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2002; Uehara, 1986; Zapf, 1991). The third phase of their difficulties equating with reverse culture shock, is compounded by feelings of guilt for their irrational behaviour, which ultimately force them to internalise their frustrations, exacerbating their sentiments of hopelessness, helplessness and lack of control.

There are several coping strategies available to help minimise the negative effects of reverse culture shock but some measures appear to be reliant on the attitudes of the home society. These strategies comprise anticipation and what Weaver (1994) calls **decompression; communication outlets, and stress management techniques.**

*Decompression* is where the sojourner is allowed time to deliberate on what will transpire on arrival back home. This involves anticipation where an awareness of the patterns of
cross-cultural adjustment and readjustment takes place. Cognizance of these processes assists the sojourner in preparing for the difficult transitions by recognising the symptoms and developing appropriate strategies to minimise their effects. This can be achieved by applying the technique to that undergone during the process of culture shock overseas. Communication outlets offer another effective method of easing the burdens of readjustment. This strategy may see returnees seek out groups of people who empathise with their experience. This represents a successful mechanism for coping with re-entry difficulties as members of the home society involved can be perceived as mentors who can assure the returnee that their experience is a perfectly normal reaction and only transitional. Further coping strategies involve maintaining contact via electronic mail, letter or telephone with friends left behind in the country of the sojourn, a technique which is claimed to be just as effective during the acculturation process overseas as during re-entry. Finally, stress management techniques are highly beneficial for the returnee. These comprise exercising, adopting a healthy diet and developing daily routines that serve as escape from the pressures and demands placed on the returned sojourner (Weaver, 1994). A logical assumption is that if the sojourner can anticipate re-entry difficulties, the process will predictably be easier. However, one could argue that while recognising the symptoms certainly assists in a quicker recovery, it does not always assuage the pain as one has to go through a mourning phase before the pain can be processed (cf. Garza-Guerrero, 1974).

Adler (1981) proposed four coping models found among returnees, the rebellious, re-socialised, alienated and proactive returnee. One can understand these constructs by analysing Adler’s research on Americans and Canadians returning home, in a matrix she devised, defined by two dimensions: optimism or pessimism and passivity or activity. The typology she offers is suggestive of groups of returnees. The rebellious paradigm, considered as pessimistic and active, reacts to the home environment by trying to control it and change it in unrealistic ways. The re-socialized sojourner, viewed as optimistic and passive, chooses to assimilate the current social norms without integrating any part of the foreign culture. The alienated type reacts negatively, rejects the home environment and in the process stops the personal growth begun overseas. This paradigm is seen as ‘pessimistic and passive’. Returnees tend to dissociate themselves from the home culture and home organisation. Finally, the proactive individual, described as ‘optimistic and active’, prolongs the growth experience acquired abroad even after returning home, thus maximising the learning curve. They are seen as more effective and satisfied with their jobs. Proactive re-enterers recognise and use their cross-culturally acquired skills to
enhance their position. This scenario implies understanding the changes that have transpired in both themselves and their home environment and an attempt to adjust accordingly (N. Adler, 1981; Denney & Eckert, 1993; Raschio, 1987). The significance of the proactive paradigm is clear. If sojourners succeed in evaluating and integrating new coping skills, values and perspectives into cognitive, behavioural and affective domains (Raschio, 1987), they can expect a positive re-entry adjustment where they enjoy a sense of belonging once again into their original culture and function as members of their society.

Raschio (1987), like other researchers (Festinger, 1957; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1986; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2002; Weaver, 1994; Werkman, 1982), claims the re-entry process can also be positive, but this too is contingent on the returnees’ willingness to deal with the cognitive dissonance which occurs upon re-confrontation with the home culture. Further, it appears imperative that the returnee learn to be patient, trusting, analytical and willing to assemble a cognitive map of experiences and cultural learning.

Research on reverse culture shock demonstrates that, although the transitional periods are similar for each individual, they vary in intensity and duration. More importantly, the symptoms of culture shock and reverse culture shock are not terminal but there is no “cure” and each individual needs to find coping strategies to minimise the effects of these phenomena. The most effectual strategies proposed by Weaver (1994) to counter the effects of reverse culture shock comprised decompression, communication outlets and stress management techniques, while Adler’s (1981) coping strategies included four models under which returnees could be described. They include the proactive, rebellious, re-socialised and alienated re-enterer, which were further categorised under pessimistic and passive or optimistic and active strategies which assist the returnee to cope with difficulties.

2.4.2.2 Re-entry expectations

Inaccurate re-entry expectations imply sojourners often expect to return home to find their environment unchanged and to have remained unchanged themselves, only to discover the opposite is true (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Re-entry expectations, as described by Martin (1984) and other researchers (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Werkman, 1982), were found to be salient in the difficult repatriation paradigms of
sojourners in many studies. Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) study revealed that deep identification with the host culture, construed as positive integration in the foreign society, creates a situation where the returned sojourners are “out of phase” with their home culture (p.39). Werkman (1982) argues people uniformly report that the re-entry is far more stressful as a result of the “unexpected jolt of coming back home”. Weaver (1994) argues that if one anticipates a stressful event, it is much easier to cope with it because the analytical process brings solutions that help moderate the difficult moments. Storti (2001b) advances a further argument that not only is re-entry shock unexpected, as the sojourner is unprepared for the experience but he/she is in fact expecting the opposite, that returning home will be wonderful.

Research shows feeling ‘out of phase’ with the home culture occurs irrespective of age groups or categories of sojourner populations, applying equally to academic sojourners, corporate employees, and voluntary workers etc. Compounding this problem, the support network of family and friends is equally unprepared for transitional difficulties experienced by returnees (Martin, 1984; Sussman, 2001), a situation which was found to exacerbate the distress experienced by the respondents in various studies. Rogers and Ward’s (1993) study of American Field Service students interviewed overseas, prior to and post re-entry back in New Zealand, is perhaps more pertinent to academic sojourner studies as the results show significant discrepancies between expectations and reality, emerging from expectations which were more positive than the actual experiences. Rogers and Ward noted that large differences were linked with psychological distress only where experiences were more arduous than first expected. This outcome is also consonant with Adler’s (1981) argument contrasting cross-cultural transition and re-entry, that due to inaccurate expectations, the re-entry experience is exacerbated because her respondents had expected external validation of their overseas experience which they were denied. The returnees were distressed and discouraged as a result of their pre-departure hopes of greater job responsibilities upon their return, which compared negatively with the reality of their situations. The xenophobic response they noted among their colleagues was construed as rejection of culture learning and lack of recognition of newly acquired skills.

In summary, this section has highlighted the consequences of inaccurate expectations of sojourners before they return home. The research on this issue has shown a substantial discrepancy between sojourner expectations on re-entry and the reality of the situation when they arrive home, irrespective of age. Another crucial point is that the support
network of family and friends is equally unprepared for difficulties experienced by the returnees, which serves to exacerbate the problem. Should sojourners anticipate problems upon re-entry this will evidently help ease the transitional process upon returning home.

2.4.2.3  Readjustment difficulties experienced by returnees

A critical dimension in re-acculturation literature concerns the types of readjustment difficulties experienced by sojourners. Studies reveal that international students of European or similar cultural origins, mainly Scandinavians, Brazilians or Germans for instance who ventured far from home experienced various degrees of difficulty post-sojourn (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Opubor 1974, ct. in Uehara, 1986 p.418; Wilson, 1993). Wilson’s (1993) cross-national study of two hundred and seventy-two students sojourning in the US from four nationalities, Australia, Ecuador, Norway and Sweden, revealed only a minority of returned students found the re-entry process easy. The remainder found this adjustment period difficult essentially because of the ambivalence they felt about coming home. Identity issues and the changing dynamics of interpersonal relationships, among other challenges they needed to confront as a result of value changes, also contributed to distressful periods. Issues of salience to each group differed in this study. The Norwegians were most concerned about questions of identity on re-entry whilst Ecuadorians focused on coming home to help their country. The Australians and Norwegians found multiculturalism to be an important issue. The Swedes and Norwegians were also interested in more purposeful travel. Gama and Pederson’s (1977) study of Brazilian graduate scholars returning from the United States identified difficulties with family relationships and professional problems such as value conflicts and availability of privacy in the home context. In the professional field, difficulties adjusting to the system as a whole and to their role as professors were the result of high expectations which were not realised.

A range of difficulties experienced by academic returnees has been exposed in re-entry studies ranging from academic problems, loneliness, interpersonal relationship issues, coping with stereotypes, significant cultural identity issues, and social withdrawal, as well as psychological problems (Ward et al., 2001). Gaw’s (2000) study of American college students sought to establish a correlation between reverse culture shock and personal problems experienced at college and their willingness to see a counsellor. He found that the American student with cross-cultural experience is likely to encounter reverse culture
shock, manifesting in symptomatic problems ranging from depression, alienation, loneliness and general anxiety to academic problems. Gaw found students with a higher level of reverse culture shock experienced more personal adjustment problems and shyness concerns than those showing lower levels. Further, as reverse culture shock increased, dependence on student support services decreased because of the challenge this process represented. Gaw’s concern was that students who experienced greater distress were least likely to seek counselling, which puts the student at risk academically and developmentally. In some cases, returnees perceived college professionals to be interculturally-inexperienced, that is, unable to empathise or validate their experience of reverse culture shock and understand the problems they face.

Werkman’s (1982) research is particularly relevant to sojourner investigations as questions of identity transformation emanate from intercultural exchange situations. The different American populations utilised in his study included adolescents and adults during consultation trips to international schools; university students; and patients from his clinical practice with problems linked to the overseas sojourn. Werkman’s research revealed many returnees report feelings of discomfort, long-lasting sentiments of restlessness and rootlessness and vague dissatisfaction with their lives but are often incapable of identifying the basis of the difficulty. A comparative study carried out on teenagers raised overseas and those residing in the US showed sojourners ended up with a double concept of themselves (p.187) as a result of the overseas experience. They appeared to be less secure and optimistic than their counterparts in the US but more psychologically sensitive. Werkman argues the overseas experience has a significant effect on the values and attitudes of sojourners. He explains sojourners have difficulty in reconciling the extra talent - knowledge of another language and culture - because these aspects have no value in the home society. Further, a polyglot background only compounds the problems of developing a coherent sense of self in a monolingual society. Werkman’s study also serves to explain the gravitational pull of returnees to individuals with similar experiences, as this group represents the only members of society they believe understand their situation.

A significant problem concerning cross-cultural exchanges relates to the migration of talent and skills through expatriation subsequent to a sojourn, which is closely linked to social support systems when sojourners return home. This issue is also referred to as brain drain (Adams, 1968). Chu’s (1968) research focused on sociological viewpoints in relation to this problem, examining the factors that contributed to expatriation in a theoretical
framework of social support. He defines expatriation as “rejection of one’s own cultural membership and seeking a new cultural membership” (1968 p.174). His study of one hundred and six graduate students from Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa revealed potential expatriates likely to be among those who had received little support from the home culture, resulting in rejection of their culture and expatriation. The data revealed social support from the home culture plays a crucial role in the student’s decision to expatriate or not. Chu argues if support is lacking, such as, for instance, sponsorship for studies, assistance with job search and readjustment difficulties and recognition of culture learning, the returnee may seek to move overseas. Other studies such as Werkman’s (1982), Martin’s (1986) and Storti’s (2001b) have also shown that a less than warm reception upon re-entry, exemplified by the above features, exacerbated the reverse culture shock for returnees.

Bochner, Lin and McLeod’s (1980) study of fifteen Asian graduate students studying in Hawaii investigated elements that related to their happiness post re-entry. Eighty-nine percent of responses related to interpersonal events and jobs, peer group and family relations. The study revealed the most salient aspect of re-entry was the difficult process of re-assuming interaction with three major social networks, professional, peer and family groups. The report suggested sojourners had difficulty in coping with the contradictory social exigencies arising from these three domains which involved the resolution of role conflicts to a large extent. Bochner et al.’s (1980) study confirmed that anticipated role conflict, mostly related to peer group and professional relations was a major concern for returnees. They further showed ambivalence in attitude toward anticipated job and peer relations, a positive attitude toward rejoining their families and a negative attitude toward the physical and political environment of their countries. They found the results to be at odds with the strict interpretation of the W-Curve Hypothesis. This was partly due to inaccurate descriptions and also to the fact that the data was more suggestive of a flattened W-Curve. The middle section of the progression (re-entry) apparently did not correspond to the same heights of personal well-being as the levels reached during the initial pre-departure, the honeymoon phase and that of the final phase, recovery.

Uehara’s (1986) comparative study of fifty-eight American students following their extended sojourn abroad and seventy-eight students who travelled internally in the US investigated reverse culture shock, the kinds of variables that affected the re-entry adjustment problems and the possibility of positive dimensions within the re-entry process.
His study highlighted the significance of the individual’s value structure in correlation with the readjustment paradigm as well as providing empirical data supporting the notion that the initial phase of the re-entry adjustment process encompasses potential psychosocial and physiological difficulties (1986 p.433). The data from his project revealed age was a relevant factor in adjustment of younger returnees more than the older contingent, similarly to Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) study. Finally, there was support for positive and growthful elements included in the re-entry transitional period of adjustment.

Brabant, Palmer et al. (1990) studied ninety-six non-US foreign students to investigate the types of problems experienced with family and friends and daily life in general after their sojourn at an American campus. Their study revealed culture shock to be less universal than expected from the literature and that visits home could alleviate the problems experienced. These researchers report international students are not a homogeneous category with similar potential difficulties as these vary by both region and religion. They found neither age nor social class to be significant factors. Conversely, gender was an important variable which correlated with several problems for re-entry, females registering the greatest difficulties in readjusting, notably with family, friends and daily life. Brabant et al. reported that, based on statistical relationships, adapting to life in the US was positively related to problems in readapting to friends on re-entry, findings consonant with wider research in the area.

Difficulties linked to fundamental questions of identity transformation of sojourners have emerged from Kidder’s (1992) report of Japanese student returnees. Her study on the effects of cultural factors on the readjustment process of sojourners highlights the importance of home culture societal attitudes toward returnees’ culture learning and foreign language acquisition as these effects are likely to contribute to higher sources of distress for returnees. Her account of the changes that some of her respondents had been through whilst abroad has many points of commonality with other studies. Their return from a multicultural society to a “relatively homogenous and tight society” (p.384) such as Japan was found to exacerbate their readjustment process. However, expectations for re-entry conformity lead many returnees to hide some of the physical, behavioural and paralinguistic alterations acquired overseas, developing what Kidder calls “chameleonlike techniques” (p.390) to blend in with the occasion and the sociolinguistic context. Several respondents succeeded in re-modifying themselves to fit into society once again, whereas some declared themselves irrevocably transformed, deciding to leave. Kidder argues they
will probably “continue to move back and forth physically and psychically” (p.392). The remainder of the participants succeeded in re-transforming themselves back to Japanese society to avoid being treated like outsiders.

The similarities between Kidder’s (1992) study and Enloe and Lewin’s (1987) study of re-integration issues of families returning to Japan after their sojourns are important. The latter study revealed better readjustment paradigms for older members of the family than their younger counterparts, whilst the children had been more successful in integrating abroad. Enloe and Lewin found Japanese attitudes toward the foreign experience a complex one, claiming that many returnees were penalised for their English competence and foreign experience. They argue the Japanese possess an island mentality and believe their culture to be uniquely homogenous and advanced, and only completely understood by in-group members. In essence they judge members who have been exposed to other cultures for too long as having largely lost their purity as Japanese. Further, these researchers use Miller’s (1982) argument that, if language is a repository of the national identity, the acquisition of a second language (L2) brings it into competition with the first language (L1), therefore, identity is endangered. This concept is mirrored in the applied linguistics literature where language is considered to be more than a communicative tool. It is judged to be a marker of identity and the use of language is perceived as an act of social identity because it determines the way interlocutors present themselves in social interactions (Edwards, 1985; Hill, 2002; Liddicoat, 2005).

In summary, the difficulties experienced by returnees to their original cultures range from cultural identity issues, academic problems, loneliness, interpersonal relationship problems, coping with stereotypes and financial problems among them. Returnees may somatise their problems in ways ranging from depression, alienation, loneliness and general anxiety. It is clear that social support is not always available to assist returnees in their readjustment upon returning home. More importantly, research has shown that when counselling is offered it not always accepted because returnees doubt the ability of counsellors to empathise with their problems. Support has been found in the literature on repatriation (Brabant et al., 1990; Gaw, 2000; Kidder, 1992; Martin, Bradford, & Rohrlich, 1995; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Sussman, 2001; Wilson, 1993) that indicates a need for empirical studies on the repatriation experience and repatriate distress of sojourners.
2.5 Language, culture and identity

While the contact experience of sojourners may precipitate changes in attitudes, behaviours and values, another important feature concerns modifications in cultural identity. Ward et al. (2001) argue that on a rudimentary level, ethnic or cultural identification implies the recognition, classification or self-identification of oneself as a member of an ethno-cultural group. Cultural identity issues arising from cross-cultural encounters thus increase in significance as the psychological well-being of sojourners may be impaired if not resolved adequately. Redfield et al. (1936) argue acculturation implies a process of change resulting from continuous contact during intercultural encounters. A significant aspect of these changes concerns cultural identity. This section will entail a multi-dimensional focus on the issues of language, culture and identity. Two main themes emerge as salient in the study of cultural identity of sojourners, group identity and individual identity, the latter being more significant for academic sojourners because it concerns changes that may occur at an individual level during interactions with host cultures during contact situations and not collective changes (cf. Berry, 1990).

2.5.1 Conceptualisations of identity

This section will investigate the different theoretical principles involved with the complex notion of identity. Identity is affected by a myriad of factors including individual characteristics and group characteristics. Further, there appears to be evidence suggesting that acculturation and identity changes have consequences for cross-cultural adaptation in aspects such as self-esteem, psychological well-being and social skills acquisition, although this is more acute for immigrants than sojourners.

Weaver (1994) argues sojourners generally experience an identity crisis when they adapt to a new culture, culminating with a new world view and a different perception of the self. The modus operandi they are accustomed to for perceiving reality and their approaches to problem solving become obsolete and a new identity emerges from the intercultural experience. The adjustment sojourners go through, manifesting in periods of self-doubt, disorientation and personal examination of their values and beliefs lead to greater flexibility and self-confidence in their new role. In short, Weaver relates this to a death-rebirth cycle, analogous with other types of identity crises. It is the personal growth and expanded awareness of the returnees which inevitably clash with the intolerant and
parochial attitudes of those who remained home when they return, thus precipitating another death-rebirth cycle where they must abandon the newly formed cultural identity to accommodate to a new one back home. This often ends in denial if they cannot integrate the new identity with that of their co-nationals. Therefore, the growing pains begin again (Weaver, 1994).

2.5.2 Social Identity

Social Identity Theory underscores the importance of group membership for individual identity and explores the role of social categorisation and social comparison in relation to self-esteem. Approaches to social identity are concerned with the way in which individuals view themselves and their perceptions of in-group and out-group members. Intergroup contact motivates groups to strive for better status and increases the need for positive group differences (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Ward et al., 2001). In other words, our sense of who we are is largely derived from our membership of and affiliation to various social groups (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). In this section, theories of how group identification is developed will be introduced in light of the processes involved. This will set the scene for the distinction between ‘group identity’ and ‘individual identity’ in the context of academic sojourners.

Tajfel’s (1978; Tajfel, 1981) Social Identity Theory is a conceptual framework for the examination of identity and inter-group relations which can be applied to sojourners and other groups (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Phinney, 1990; Ward et al., 2001). Tajfel’s (1981 p.255) definition of social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [sic] knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. This theory is founded on four main constructs concerned with social identity in an in-group context: (i) social categorisation; (ii) social identity (iii) social comparison and (iv) psychological group distinctiveness (Tajfel, 1981 p.254). Social categorisation implies a process which gathers social objects or events in equal groups with regard to an individual’s actions, intentions and system of beliefs. Each human being attempts to establish relevant social categories as a way of dividing up his/her experience of the social world. Social comparison is where one’s social identity is clarified through social comparison between in-groups and out-groups with an aim of establishing a positive perception of the group to which one belongs. Through this process, psychological group distinctiveness is likely to
be greater on dimensions of general social value, or of particular importance to the in-group, particularly in relation to positive stereotypical views (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Tajfel (1981) argues the acquisition of value differentials between one’s own group (or groups) and other groups is an important part of the processes of socialisation.

Tajfel’s (1981) theory is significant in the context of sojourner research. If according to Tajfel, the identity of individuals is derived from the in-group, they may choose to retain or reject group membership if discrepancies exist between their perception of certain elements as positive or negative. This is contingent on reactions to changed cultural identity orientations. Tajfel argues the important distinction between judgements relating to the physical and social stimuli is that in the latter case, categorisations can be correlated with differences in values; for instance, the classification of people into social categories of significance to the individual carries positive or negative evaluations of these categories. Consequently, these evaluations can further influence the subjective distinctions in certain aspects between the categories and the subjective likenesses within categories. The notions of “us” and “them” are thus highlighted during these interactions between the individual’s in-group and the out-group through which the social comparisons occur (Tajfel, 1978, 1981). Such distinctions between in-group and out-group membership are encoded and transmitted through Membership Categorisation Devices: acts of language which serve to locate and reproduce group boundaries (Sacks, 1992).

The existence of various in-groups and out-groups which can be compared favourably or unfavourably implies consequences for self-esteem. Social groups explain their own cultural behaviour in terms of personality characteristics (kindness, honesty and so forth) and ascribe the behaviour of the out-group as circumstantial (Ward et al., 2001), that is, behaviour based on inference and presumption rather than fact. What is of particular interest to sojourner research is the argument that out-group derogation increases with cultures of strong social identities, particularly when a perceived threat to their identity exists, such as for example during cross-cultural encounters. Tajfel (1981 p.256) claims “the positive aspects of social identity and the reinterpretation of attributes and engagement in social action only acquire meaning in relation to, or in comparisons with, other groups” as individuals live within groups and all groups live among other groups. During intercultural encounters, the identity of sojourners is placed in relief with others. It is through this process that existing strong identities can negotiate new identities which do
not undermine or conflict with the original. This is because the two identities are not mutually exclusive as their status is represented on different societal levels (Byram, 1999).

Certain strategies exist for changing identity which assist in removing barriers to intergroup harmony (Ward et al., 2001). One technique involves awareness of the processes of social categorisation, social comparison and the existence of in-group favouritism and out-group disparagement. Another strategy involves an increase in inclusivity of the basis on which social categorisations are made, by focusing on inter-group similarities in lieu of distinctions (e.g. by acting like the locals whilst thinking globally). A third technique involves empathising with another person which increases understanding of the position of that individual. This is seen to mitigate the negative consequences of group distinctiveness.

Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) definition of the belief system of social mobility posits that the society in which individuals live is flexible and permeable, in order to allow mobility for persons dissatisfied with the conditions imposed upon them through membership in the social group or social category in which they belong. This notion of social mobility can arguably be linked to the experiences of sojourners as comparative mechanisms are heightened during intercultural encounters (Levy-Warren, 1987). These comparative measures can be employed in order to minimise the effects of culture shock. As a result of cross-cultural transitions, the possible repercussions on the continued evolution or renegotiation of one’s cultural identity during and subsequent to the sojourn cannot be underestimated. Levy-Warren (1987) argues that the initial elaborated symbols of culture itself can only take place during adolescence, increasing in significance in an individual’s life in various ways at this time. One can extrapolate from this that, issues of one’s cultural identity become even more prominent during the vulnerable stages of the transition from adolescence toward adulthood, although the maturational process is a significant factor in the equation where the degree of impact on one’s cultural identity is concerned. Levy-Warren (1987) maintains that culture is integrated in individuals both intra-psychically and in the formation of identity. In the context of sojourner studies, this suggests that cultural relocation for a finite period during the academic sojourn may have an important influence on an individual’s identity. Further it may create instances in which fundamental aspects of identity are challenged, although this depends on the timing and circumstances of the move. Cultural relocation involves a complex process that may impact profoundly on the individual, the transition from one culture to another being perceived in terms of a
mourning process where mental representations of people, places and various kinds of symbols linked with the culture of origin have bearing on the sojourn (Freud, 1917/1957 ct. in Levy-Warren, 1987).

The idea of the social “mechanics” of categorisation is somewhat paralleled in Giles and Johnson’s (1987) theory of ethnolinguistic identity which has language as a significant issue. They also suggest individuals compare their own social group to other out-groups with the ultimate aim of favourably distinguishing theirs. They are thus able to reach a positive social identity. If this is not achieved, the individuals may opt for assimilative identity orientations toward the out-group where they perceive a more positive view of social identity. This has other implications for bilingualism on the other hand, contingent on the individual’s degree of accommodation to that group’s language. The outcome may be subtractive bilingualism or language erosion (Giles & Johnson, 1987; Giles, Rosenthal, & Young, 1985; Hansen & Liu, 1997).

As with Tajfel’s (1981) Social Identity Theory, the work of Phinney (1991) centres on awareness of one’s ethnic identity arising from contact with other ethnic groups, the salience of group membership being dependent on heterogeneous contact situations. Ethnic identity is an important factor in relation to self-esteem. Phinney’s (1991) review of literature on this issue reveals salience is chosen by some individuals because the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem is only significant among those who identify themselves as ethnic group members. She argues that for others it is thrust upon them by a society which discriminates against those who do not conform to the dictates of that society, for instance in appearance, language or customs. Studies of acculturation paradigms (Berry, 1997) implying a choice of four acculturation modes, assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation, show that those who identify with both their own group and the mainstream, i.e. the integrative mode, exemplify the best psychological outcome.

Phinney (1992) argues that each group has its unique history, traditions and values and the concept of identity which implies a sense of identification with or belonging to the group applies to all groups. The points of commonality in the ethnic identity of all ethnic group members are self-identification within that group, a sense of belonging and attitudes toward one’s group. In addition, affirmation, pride and a positive evaluation of one’s group, as well as an involvement dimension, pertaining to ethno-cultural behaviours,
values and traditions are important constructs of this theory (Phinney, 1992; Ward et al., 2001). It appears however, that individuals who employ a given ethnic label may vary significantly in their sense of belonging to the group, in their attitudes toward the group, their behaviour and how they perceive and understand their ethnicity. Variables used in measures of ethnic identity have traditionally focused on ethnic behaviours and practices pertaining to particular groups but two aspects of ethnic practices are commonly included. These concern involvement in social activities with members of one’s group and participation in cultural traditions.

Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts is subject to societal power relations with gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality subsumed under this construct (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). Blackledge & Pavlenko see the continuous aspects of this negotiation and re-negotiation of identities in multilingual settings in terms of beliefs about and practices of language use. If the dominant group in a society perceives the ideal model of society to be monolingual, monoethnic, monoreligious for instance, they argue that the dominant ideology of homogeneity challenges questions of social justice as this ideology precludes membership for those unable or unwilling to accommodate to majority norms. They argue individuals experience identity, security and symbolic safety in culturally familiar milieux but in the context of an unfamiliar one, they experience identity vulnerability or insecurity because of perceived threat or fear. They argue in multilingual settings “groups and individuals (re)negotiate their identities in response to hegemonic language ideologies which demand homogeneity” (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001 p.248) by converging to the linguistic practices of the dominant group. They argue that negotiation of satisfactory outcomes in conversational interaction is contingent on being understood, valued, supported and respected in spite of intercultural distinctions that may surface in this process.

Hill (2002) argues that language is a quintessential marker of national identity. Hill quotes Buck (1916, p.48 ct. in Hill, 2002) as claiming “language is the one [marker] of which a people is most conscious and to which it is most fanatically attached. It is the one conspicuous banner of nationality, to be defended against encroachment as it is the first object of attack on the part of a power aiming to crush out a distinction of nationality among its subject peoples”. The simple formula ‘one language equals one identity’ is no longer viable given its oversimplification, especially in the age of global communication and migration (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Kramsch, 1999). Blackledge and Pavlenko
(2001) note that in a multicultural ambience multiple identities are negotiated by young people through their subtly differing language attitudes and behaviours across and within a number of discourse settings. Their intercultural contact situations may consequently affect the re-negotiation of their cultural identity. They suggest language ideologies have a significant impact on individuals and groups in different ways which may result in marginalisation or general exclusion. Blackledge and Pavlenko’s (2001) views are clearly relevant in the context of sojourner research as international students also need to negotiate their identity by establishing a comfortable place for themselves in a foreign milieu. Acceptance of their ethnic practices, language use, and traditions are just as important for a successful acculturative experience. In support of the views expressed above, Collier (1997) argues cultural identities have both subjective and recognised connotations which represent the interdependence of subjective and ascribed meanings in relationships. She claims salience and variations in intensities exemplify identity in new or unfamiliar settings, implying that an individual who stands out in an otherwise homogeneous group may become aware of the intensity with which he/she associates identity and may decide to modify it in some way.

In summary, perceptions of group identity are a significant factor for academic sojourners. Awareness of one’s ethnic group identity arises from contact with other ethnic groups, the salience of group membership being dependent on heterogeneous contact situations. The sense of belonging to one group is reinforced by the contrast with other groups. During intercultural encounters, the identity of sojourners is placed in relief with others. It is through this process that existing firm identities can be negotiated into new identities which do not undermine or conflict with the original. Blackledge and Pavlenko’s (2001) notion of negotiation and re-negotiation of identities in foreign contexts is a pivotal factor in the transformation of cultural identity of sojourners because in unfamiliar milieux individuals are subject to societal power relations and they experience identity vulnerability or insecurity as a result of perceived threat or fear. In multilingual settings, groups and individuals (re)negotiate their identities in reaction to hegemonic language ideologies which insist on homogeneity through convergence to linguistic practices of the dominant group (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).
2.5.3 Cultural identity

In order to arrive at a working definition of cultural identity, it is important to consider the nature of culture. From the myriad definitions of culture, Collier (1997) offers an explanation in terms of intercultural communication which suits the purposes of this project. She posits that all cultures are influenced by many social, psychological, and environmental factors as well as institutions and contexts such as for instance socioeconomic conditions. Groups have a common culture. More importantly they are predisposed by other cultures. Collier (1997) maintains diverse social groups can conceive a cultural system of symbols utilised, meanings assigned to the symbols and conceptions of what is regarded as appropriate and inappropriate. In addition to this, through the common history of the group through which these symbols and norms are transferred to new members, the groups then assume a cultural identity. She construes this term as “the particular character of the group communication system that emerges in the particular situation”. From social psychological perspectives, identity is perceived as a characteristic of the person and personality and self as a focal point in social roles and social practices. Conversely, from a communication perspective, identity is understood as something that emerges when exchanges of messages take place between individuals, defining identity as “an enactment of cultural communication” in the process (Collier, 1997 p.40).

Seelye & Wasilewski (1996) claim culture is an important form of identification within society or within the world. Utilising the analogy of an onion, they argue once it is peeled there is nothing at the core. Identifying with a particular culture is conditional on the good graces of those around the individual, on their social system in order to have their needs met. Stultz (2002) suggests both internal and external factors affect and shape a person’s identity. Whilst external factors comprise cultural tradition, custom, environment, atmosphere, location and climate, she argues the internal factors are less tangible. These can include degrees of comfort with distinctions or ambiguity, extroversion or introversion, cultural mediation skills and adaptation skills (2002 p.1).
Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) conceptualisation of *culture* emphasises the complexity of culture as a construct.

Culture is a complex phenomenon. It includes the behaviours, practices, concepts, attitudes, values, conventions, rituals, lifestyle, and beliefs of the people who make up the cultural group as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create (Liddicoat et al., 2003 p.51).

These researchers argue that when one learns a foreign language, some of these aspects, such as behaviours, concepts, attitudes, practices and beliefs are more important than others because of their vital connection with language. Clearly, the focus is on the constructed nature of culture, encompassing a cyclical process of cultural adjustment involving “noticings [which] become the target of further reflection, which again becomes realised in the output of the learner, and so on in a (potentially) continuous cycle of learning” (Liddicoat, 2002 p.11). The key to the conceptualisation of this term is that culture is dynamic and not static. It is personified in the modus operandi of individuals and is not inherent in knowledge itself. Ultimately through this process, individuals develop their intercultural competence by creating their ‘third place’ which is in at least some ways dissimilar to the target culture.

Within the parameters of a dynamic view of culture where competence is interpreted as intercultural behaviour, Kramsch (1999) argues that the ability to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries involves establishing one’s own identity through the use of a foreign language. She maintains culture learning is a complex process involving multiple levels of perception which arise primarily from stereotypes about one’s culture but which are generally quite distinct from reality. These perceptions feature significantly during the process of exposure to a foreign language as comparisons are made. She argues culture learning implies participating in the complexity of identity and the development of an understanding of the situated nature of identity (cf. also Liddicoat et al., 2003). Liddicoat et al. argue comparative techniques constitute an effective method of learning about one’s own culture, achieved through new pedagogies in second language acquisition where integration, comparison and valuing of both cultures take place (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Liddicoat, 2002; Liddicoat et al., 2003).

Kim et al. (1998) argue the nature of cultural identity must be recognised as flexible and varied. The consensus view from social scientists, at least, appears to identify this precept as “an a priori condition that profoundly affects human existence” (1998 p.1). This
definition is succinct but appropriate if one understands the reasoning attributed to the effect of cultural identity on individuals. This term is understood to be interchangeable with other related terms such as ethnic identity, racial identity, ethnolinguistic identity and national identity. What is clear from the literature on the subject is the significance of one’s cultural identity as dynamic and not static, particularly when exposed to other cultures during cross-cultural encounters (Liddicoat, 2002). The notion of nationality and cultural identity are perceived as mutable in some societies, such as the US and Australia as opposed to Japan for instance, according to Mcleod (1981) because of their multicultural ethnic makeup and their melting pot philosophy, where one can change one’s cultural identity consciously with greater ease than elsewhere. In Japan, where immigration is historically much less significant, it would be more difficult for an immigrant to become Japanese than Australian or American.

In summary, the complexity of the concept “Who am I?” is understated in literature on cultural identity issues. This is evident through the myriad nuances in definitions extended by researchers in the academic disciplines on the subject of cultural identity. The significance of one’s cultural identity as dynamic and not static is clear, particularly when exposed to other cultures during cross-cultural encounters. Further, all cultures are predisposed by other cultures and they are influenced by many social, psychological, and environmental factors as well as institutions and contexts such as for instance socioeconomic conditions. Finally, the connection between culture and identity is highlighted when viewed as “an enactment of cultural communication” (Collier, 1997 p.40). The implications of this view for sojourner research are intensified as Collier suggests cultural identity emerges when exchanges of messages take place between individuals.

2.5.4 Individual identity

This section investigates identification theories that focus on individuals and their perceptions of what their cultural identity signifies for them. When social identity is salient, an individual acts as a group member. On the other hand, when personal identity is salient, he/she may not (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This implies that the way in which individuals enact that cultural identity may be distinct from the others of their in-group. The literature review in this section highlights individual identity theories which are of fundamental importance to this research project as academic sojourners are the focus.
Collier (1997) argues identities have individual, relational and communal properties. She refers to this as the scope of the identity, one of the characteristics of cultural identity. She argues each person has individual interpretations of the meaning of belonging to a particular nationality and each individual enacts his or her cultural identity in different ways over the course of a lifetime in interpersonal contexts through what is known as *avowal* and *ascription*. Avowal implies the individual says “This is who I am” and ascription is the way others characterise an individual. Collier argues stereotypes are an example of this because identities are co-created in relationship with others. Who we are and how we are differs and how we emerge is reliant on our interactions and the cultural identities that are significant to us. The essential point is that identity is shaped by the definition others communicate about the individual.

### 2.5.4.1 Theories of hybridity and notions of third place

Bhabha’s (1990; 1996) notions of hybridity are important as the end result of identity remodelling during intercultural encounters implies life changing options for the individual, in this case the academic sojourner. This concept is derived from two intrinsic ideas, the genealogy of difference and the idea of translation because Bhabha (1990 p.211) argues “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” which represents the *third space*, a catalyst allowing a new entity to emerge. This third space dislodges the histories from which it is comprised and establishes new structures of authority and new political enterprises. Bhabha describes hybridity as a process of identification with and through an object of otherness. Through the process of cultural hybridity, a new concept emerges, which is new and unrecognisable, providing a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. Hybridity, he argues, means that “when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them” (1990 p.216). In other words, new situations should be examined without reference to pre-existing models. One can understand from this that hybridity is a process of translation from original ideas contingent upon either of its unique constitutive forms. His definition is not concerned with the addition of two cultures to engender a third, but the claiming of a third space that enables other positions to emerge. Further, he sees the process of cultural hybridity as engendering a new, unidentifiable entity, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.
A conceptualisation of an analogous term *the third place* which explores the salience of the concept of individual identity through negotiation of a third place has been elaborated by other researchers (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat, Crozet, & Lo Bianco, 1999). This position between two cultures represents a place where learners can interact comfortably with individuals from the host culture without compromising their own identity. This place lies between what these researchers call “the native linguaculture and the target linguaculture, between self and other” (Liddicoat et al., 1999 p.181). The premise underlying this theory is linked to the outcome where the learner involved in second language acquisition does not aspire to emulate the native speaker of a foreign language, through a process of assimilation. Rather, the objective is to espouse a process of exploration where the desired goal is a bilingual speaker. Bilinguals need to negotiate their way between the languages and cultures they know and in so doing they create identities that suit the different contexts (Liddicoat, 2002). This paradigm entails the learner using his/her growing competency in the target language in resourceful ways to facilitate communication within cultural boundaries. The third place is thus dynamic and negotiable, not fixed, representing an intersection of the cultural standpoints of self and other with each new interactive situation that presents itself. The ultimate aim is for the learner to reach a hybrid third place for him/herself, achieved through a valuation of the evolving cultural identity in relation to the target culture (Liddicoat et al., 1999). Liddicoat et al. (1999) maintain issues of identity are heightened when an individual participates in a new set of practices as some aspects will be liberating and others will create insecurities, with even small cultural differences provoking strong emotional reactions. The exteriorising of experiences is thus perceived as a logical first step to understanding and modifying behaviour.

Hermans and Kempen’s (1998) notions of *cultural hybridisation* are clearly relevant to this discussion. They argue this outcome results from the significant upsurge in interest in cultural connections and reconstitutions of cultural practices and forms which lead to the development of new modes of cultural identities. They see the interweaving and hybridisation of cultures as offering new foundations for cultural practices.

Although academic sojourners do not entirely fit into the profile of Third Culture Kids (TCKs), there are many parallels that make this field important in the assessment of identity issues for this group. The notion of *third culture* was originally conceptualised by Useem & Useem (1963; 1993) to define groups of expatriates of diverse origins in India,
with their own peculiarities, stratification systems and distinctive styles but all closely interlocked and sharing a common setting (cf. Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Although the term ‘culture’ implies commonalities within the lifestyle of a group, this notion is related to fundamental concepts discussed in this thesis, proposed by other researchers (see for example Bhabha, 1990; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978; Liddicoat et al., 1999). Generically speaking, global nomads refer to individuals who have spent part of their formative years living abroad, mostly because of career choices of their parents. In spite of the name, Third Culture Kids, on the other hand, may include adults who have experienced life between home and host cultures, hence who acquire the ability to relate to many cultures (Stultz, 2002). According to Pollock & Van Reeken (2001), the relationship the TCK builds to all other cultures, whilst not having full ownership in any, is what enables the TCK to integrate parts of the different host cultures into his or her own unique value system and lifestyle. Their claim that “although elements of each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background” (2001p.19) defines the powerful bond that unites the TCKs in spite of the diversity of their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Cultural practices are integrated from the unique aspects of both the host and home cultures. The parallel theme linking the nomenclatures of *third place* and *third space* can be based on the fact that the third culture is more than the sum total of the parts of home and host cultures, but rather creates a *third culture*. The contact with individuals from multiple cultures for whom mobility is normal creates instant recognition of each other’s experiences and feelings. This translates into a paradoxical notion of a “sense of being profoundly connected yet simultaneously disconnected with people and places around the world”(Pollock & Van Reken, 2001 p.38). In a sense, in the foreign milieu, the transitory status of global nomads also affords them the ability to utilise chameleon-like techniques to blend into the various societies (cf. Kidder, 1992; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Stultz, 2002). Academic sojourners may perhaps be referred to as “highly mobile, transcultural young persons” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001 p.xxi) as a result of their sojourn experience because when these individuals repatriate, their expectations and definitions of “home” can assume problematic moments, as characterised by Storti’s (2001b) research. Due to difficult re-entry adjustment paradigms, many sojourners find it untenable to stay at home. This is where another parallel exists between TCKs and sojourners, as returnees have a tendency to gravitate toward individuals with similar experiences or those who offer some connection to the host culture they have left. It is largely the negative reception reserved
for the returned academic sojourners that triggers the desire for them to become intercultural or global nomads, hence its relevance to sojourner studies.

Similarly to Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) discussion about mourning and the vicissitudes of identity, Pollock & Van Reeken (2001) argue that until TCKs are able to acknowledge that mourning for the inevitable losses in their lives represents an affirmation of the wealth of their past experiences in lieu of a negation of the present, they will continue to deny any grief they have felt. Garza-Guerrero perceives the vicissitudes of identity to imply threats to the individual’s identity which he argues together with mourning, constitute two inseparable phenomena in culture shock. This is because both features are linked to the huge loss of loved objects which an individual experiences when leaving their culture of origin. This further signifies ‘its implicit violent removal from an average expectable environment” (1974 p.417). Pollock and Van Reeken’s view is synonymous with a process of introjection and identification (cf. Garza-Guerrero, 1974). Introjection and identification are internalising operations but the former implies a technique where the latter represents the outcome. If the lost object (abandoned culture) has been correctly “assimilated”, meaning identified, a normal mourning occurs. Without this, a pathological mourning takes place. This implies severe forms of prolonged mourning for example or an unresolved identity crisis, depressive illness or paranoid reactions (Garza-Guerrero, 1974).

Pollock and Van Reeken’s (2001) argument applies equally well to academic sojourners who have spent a significant length of time abroad. Failure to deal with mourning for the loss of the host culture can be potentially distressing for returnees in particular. Although sojourners have more time to grieve than their TCK counterparts who have to focus on a new destination in which to begin a new life, the intangible losses are no less severe. From examples of these losses suggested by Pollock & Van Reeken, the relevance of the following types of losses is clearly relevant for academic sojourners also: loss of status (established in the foreign milieu); loss of lifestyle; loss of possessions (due to weight constraints during air travel); loss of relationships; loss of role models; and loss of system identity (i.e. the educational organisation they have left). These researchers argue these hidden, intangible losses correspond to the major human needs of belonging, of understanding one’s significance to others but other factors also play an important role in preventing the resolution of their grief. A lack of permission to grieve, as well as, a lack of time to process the grief, are crucial factors that act as common denominators between the TCKs and the academic sojourners. For sojourners, given the urgent need to re-establish
their lives back home following their sojourn, many returnees delay the mourning process until later, unknowingly exacerbating the symptoms of reverse culture shock. The parallels between research on TCKs and academic sojourners become evident if one analyses how reverse culture shock manifests in returnees. Expressions of unresolved grief may translate into symptoms of denial, anger, depression, withdrawal, rebellion and vicarious grief and delayed grief (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001), matching closely those elaborated in research on reverse culture shock.

2.5.4.2 Language as a marker of identity

The relationship between language and identity is necessarily complex according to Edwards (1985), as all varieties, prestigious or not, carry identity. Edwards argues identity is an evolving concept, its essence derived from a sense of groupness, which is crucial because it survives radical change. He argues groupness resides finally in individual identity which is intrinsically linked to personal security and well-being. The notion of language as a marker of identity has been acknowledged in the literature (Edwards, 1985; Hill, 2002; Liddicoat, 2005). That language represents more than a means of communication is clear if one understands that the use of language is an act of social identity because the way an individual presents him/herself is encoded through language use during social interactions. It is the interpretation through the involvement of self that is important in lieu of simple expression of ideas and intentions (Liddicoat, 2005). This is why learning a new language implies assuming a new identity, which is expressed through a new code of communication (Byram, 1999). Liddicoat argues this in fact represents potential problems of identity management for language learners as they develop new understandings of self and other and new ways for expressing these. This implies examining second language acquisition as more than a cognitive process. This process is seen as an engagement with new modes of (self) expression instead of simply acquiring a code because learners relay their meanings through the newly constructed identity, irrespective of proficiency levels. The need to understand that culture is essential for framing communication and interpretation is accordingly accentuated.

The claim that language is a crucial marker of identity is of great significance to sojourner research if one analyses to what extent academic sojourners remodel their identity through culture learning and the addition of another language to their linguistic repertoire. As language has been considered a part of humans’ unique cognitive endowment (Erard,
2005), it stands to reason that it is an intrinsic component of one’s cultural identity. Liddicoat et al. (2003) argue that language shapes perceptions of reality by providing classifications and labels utilised by individuals in order for them to understand and communicate about their world. Different lexicons and grammars mean language is encoded in different ways. With the variability of language, the individual is able to discard, modify, replace signs according to their meaning and appropriateness, encoding not only their own linguistic meaning but also social meanings and identities during the process (Liddicoat, 2005). The key to understanding the modifications of identity in sojourners and the subsequent reaction by members of their society back home can be explained through the following quote “One manifests one’s identity through one’s language and a change of language represents a change of the identity the speaker is presenting to the world” (Liddicoat et al., 2003 p.50). This interpretation of language implies not only a system of symbols but a system for symbolising, used to claim and reject identities, to signal relationships and to display memberships.

Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) notion that language is not simply a system for encoding and decoding linguistic meanings is equally compelling. They argue an individual manifests his/her identity through his or her language and it is through a change of language that a new identity is presented to the world. This implies language is not just a system of symbols but a system for symbolising which can then be employed to “claim and reject identities, to signal relationships and to display memberships” (2003 p.50). This view of language renders the process of language learning complex according to these researchers as learners have to negotiate the new identities involved through the use of new linguistic system and position and reconcile the two perspectives on identities to arrive at the identity they wish to ultimately adopt.

Liddicoat (2005) maintains that the perception of culture as a dynamic set of practices rather than as a body of shared information places greater importance on the concept of individual identity. This is because culture determines how the individual structures his/her identity through the use of a cultural group’s comprehension of choices made by members for representations of the self. In the context of language learning, a challenge for identity is presented to the learner in two ways, firstly analysing who the individual represents when speaking the language and secondly, how this is achieved. Thus the complexity of culture and the individual’s relationships with culture become evident when other languages and cultures are added to the repertoire of a person. The need for mediation
between languages and cultures and the identities they frame consequently increases in importance.

Liddicoat (2005) argues the development of intercultural competence can facilitate such mediation because of the constructs implied therein. These include acknowledging one’s own and other’s behaviour as culturally determined; accepting that our way is not the only way of doing things; valuing all cultures; employing language to explore culture; or finding an intercultural style and identity. Intercultural competence involves an awareness of the relativity of cultures that ways of acting and behaving vary widely. It includes the acquisition of knowledge of some cultural conventions which are crucial for communication, as the task of acquiring all possible cultural conventions is impossible. Finally, Liddicoat (2005) argues the focus in language acquisition centres on questions of identity, culture and communication, which are key constructs of the act of learning.

Byram (1999) argues the concepts of intercultural competence and mediation afford learners an enhanced perspective on what they have learned and integrated into their world of meanings, values and behaviours acquired through primary and secondary socialisation processes. He suggests that “where existing identities are firm, the development of further social identities need not undermine or be in conflict with them … the two are in principle not mutually exclusive since they are at different social levels” (1999 p.99). The ensuing sense of belonging which is derived from this method increases in significance when contrasted with other groups. Byram claims language acquisition is politically motivated. When language choices and political aims concern the development of the individual learner’s competence, this presumes a new kind of socialisation provoking the outcome of new social identities.

Given the preceding discussions on the role of language as intrinsically linked to identity, the effect miscommunication can have on individuals during cross-cultural transitions is emphasised in Béal’s (1992) work. The interstices that exist during communicative interactions between French and Australian interlocutors were outlined in her study. The conversational strategies utilised by speakers of each language are based on different underlying cultural values which preside over the rules of interaction for each language. Conflicts ensue when the sociolinguistic and interactional rules contrast dramatically. Béal argues relations between the French and those of Anglo-Saxon background have always been tenuous and rivalry has existed for quite some time. The British and the French have
demeaned each other and a love-hate relationship with North America is a good way of describing relations between these two nations. Research has shown that the French and the Australians also share these characteristic sentiments toward each other, the latter espousing the stereotypical definitions portrayed in Béal’s study, that is, that the French are blunt, arrogant and self-centred. The Australians on the other hand, were perceived by the French as indifferent and as lacking in sincerity. Béal’s research revealed different cultural assumptions in the context of intercultural communication led to tensions and misunderstandings, as general underlying rules of interaction are by and large culture specific. This kind of reaction was found to result from even slight communication breakdowns, such as for example misconstruing an innocent question such as “Did you have a good weekend?” (1992). Learning to read between the lines, according to Béal is essential for effective intercultural communication, as there may exist a hiatus in utterances between what is said and what is understood.

In summary, clearly, one can surmise that clarification of the multifarious notions of identity largely depends on the interpretation put forward by the various researchers whose stance is predicated on the academic discipline or philosophical viewpoint they represent. The various conceptualisations of identity were examined from psychological, communication, and applied linguistics perspectives. The salient issues emerging from the literature review on individual identification theories are firstly mourning and the vicissitudes of identity; secondly notions of hybridity - third place, or third space; and Third Culture Kids - and finally, language as a marker of identity.

2.6 Conclusion

The main themes which have emerged from a review of literature from the multi-disciplinary fields of cross-cultural encounters, psychology and applied linguistics concern conflict arising during intercultural exchange situations. Special focus was placed on the phenomena of culture shock and reverse culture shock in relation to adjustment in a foreign milieu and readjustment upon returning home. Arising from these difficult processes, issues of acceptance and rejection of culture were examined and found to be critical for successful adaptation and readjustment. Finally, literature on identity transformation and intercultural identity is particularly salient for research on academic sojourners because these issues underscore the importance of adequate preparation prior to departure to a foreign milieu as well as prior to the return home if the sojourner is to emerge with a clear
cultural identity and continue the personal growth begun abroad. The literature on
acculturation and repatriation of academic sojourners reveals the importance of the two
processes as a cyclical paradigm where intercultural adaptation is of equal significance to
readjustment upon re-entry. The logical outcomes of the process of re-adaptation appear to
be contingent on the adjustment pattern in the foreign milieu. Further, the kind of reception
reserved for returnees in their home societies is critical for the psychological well-being of
sojourners who attempt to re-integrate a transformed cultural identity into the accepted
norms of their society. Research has shown that a negative readjustment process occurs if
sojourners cannot reconcile their remodelled cultural identity with that expected in their
homeland. Thus they must re-negotiate their identity through accommodation or ultimately
leave if this is untenable. This option may have serious implications for both returnees and
their native countries.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology selected for this project will be detailed. The research questions are presented in section 3.1 followed by the research design in section 3.2. This is placed in context through a justification of the research design in section 3.3 where the use of a combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs is discussed. Finally, a critical analysis of qualitative as opposed to quantitative research traditions is provided and issues of ethics, reliability and viability are addressed. Section 3.4 concludes the chapter.

3.1 The Research Questions

Two research questions were devised to investigate the intricacies of the processes of acculturation and repatriation of the French sojourners in this project. A further question was included to identify the impact linguistic changes experienced by the group had on these processes. A final question was posed to investigate the changing perceptions of their cultural identity following the cultural exchange in Australia.

1. What is the acculturation process which French academic sojourners undergo in Australia?
2. What happens when they repatriate?
3. What are the language experiences of the French students in Australia and upon re-entry in their homeland?
4. How did they perceive their changing cultural identity or a sense of discontinuity during and after their acculturation and repatriation processes?

The research questions sought to identify the intercultural and acculturation experiences of this discrete group of academic sojourners, both during their sojourn in Australia and after their return home. This research project has been oriented towards an eclectic and holistic approach to the study of the acculturation and repatriation of French academic sojourners in an Australian context, through the use of a cyclical process in the methodology of data
collection and ensuing analysis, primarily because adaptation processes are rarely one-dimensional.

3.2 The research design

A qualitative-holistic research design of gathering and analysing evidence using a multi-linear longitudinal and cross-sectional approach (Kim, 2001) was adopted for this project. Three tables will provide a summary of demographic information about the subjects from both components of the study.

3.2.1 Subjects

The research design had two components: longitudinal and cross-sectional. A total of 34 interviews formed the basis of this project, with 28 students participating in the studies, six of whom were interviewed twice.

The longitudinal group - The acculturation and repatriation studies

The longitudinal study comprised of a core group of six French-speaking subjects from Europe, five originating from France and one from French Switzerland. The decision to focus on only Europeans was made because this contingent of Francophone students from Europe studying in Australia was larger than that from the Pacific region. Further, this selection provides a more homogeneous perspective and cohesive approach to the study and avoids problems arising from complex cultural variations between Francophone nations. For example, certain Francophones are monolingual whilst others are polyglot; and their hybrid cultural traditions or educational systems may vary dramatically. Details of the subjects are given in Table 1 below. The five French subjects were selected primarily because they met the criteria for the longitudinal component of the study, which were based on age, from 18 to 30 years, and period of sojourn in Australia in 2003, not fewer than six months and their return to Europe planned in 2004. The Franco-Swiss respondent was selected because he was the only Swiss student on campus and had Brazilian parentage also and initial discussions revealed his inclusion would provide a better sense of contrast and generalisability for the study. The age on arrival in Australia in the longitudinal group ranged from 20 to 28 years. The longitudinal subjects were interviewed twice, in 2003 in Australia and then again in 2004 in France and Switzerland.
Table 1 THE LONGITUDINAL GROUP
The acculturation and repatriation studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Course (in Australia)</th>
<th>Time in Australia</th>
<th>Previous sojourns</th>
<th>Other reported identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brigitte</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>LLM</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>LLM</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pau, Strasbourg</td>
<td>BBus (exchange)</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kati</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris, Strasbourg</td>
<td>BBus/IT (exchange)</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Vietnamese, Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>BIntr</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross-sectional group - The acculturation study

For the first stage of the research project in Australia, a further nine subjects participated in the cross-sectional study on acculturation, five males and four females. Their ages on arrival ranged from 18 to 24, the average age being 22. All respondents had come to Australia through a Paris agency. Six subjects were Parisians and the remaining three from other French cities. See Table 2 below for details.
### Table 2  THE CROSS-SECTIONAL GROUP – The acculturation study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Course (in Australia)</th>
<th>Time in Australia</th>
<th>Previous sojourns</th>
<th>Other reported identities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adrienne</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>MIB</td>
<td>13 months</td>
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<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alain</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>LLB</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Basque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>LLM</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christiane</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>MIB</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bordeaux; Grenoble</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>17 months</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Paris; Morocco</td>
<td>MIB</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Brittany, Nice</td>
<td>BBus/IT</td>
<td>17 months</td>
<td>Canada, Australia</td>
<td>Celtic, Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiane</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>St. Etienne</td>
<td>BA/MA</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Australian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thierry</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The cross-sectional group – The repatriation study

Thirteen subjects participated in the second cross-sectional study carried out in France in 2004, nine female and four male. Their ages on arrival in Australia ranged from 22 to 27. Of the 13, eight were exchange students from Strasbourg and one from Paris, completing one year of undergraduate study abroad programmes in various universities in Australia, although their original cities in France varied. The International Office of their university facilitated the interviews in this instance. The remaining four students originated from Paris. See Table 3 for details.
Table 3  THE CROSS-SECTIONAL GROUP – The repatriation study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Course (in Australia)</th>
<th>Time in Australia</th>
<th>Previous sojourns</th>
<th>Other reported identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angélica</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Nantes</td>
<td>BBus (exchange)</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arlette</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clément</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>LLM</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eveline</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>1 year</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lyon</td>
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<td>1 year</td>
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Bond University on the Gold Coast was selected for the data collection of the first part of this project. The first 15 respondents were randomly selected with the assistance of the International Office initially and then via a snow-balling effect. A random selection was made from the list of French students according to availability for the interviewing process.
A dramatic surge in numbers of French speaking students on campus was fortuitous for this project because they had previously been fewer than ten in any given year. Bond University’s exchange partner in Strasbourg, France, was chosen for the re-entry data collection because it made logistical sense to do so but also because the French university is one of the few tertiary institutions that participate in foreign exchanges with Australia. Other respondents for the re-entry study originated from Paris. Seven students studied at two universities in New South Wales and three at the Gold Coast campus. The remaining three French sojourners studied in universities in Victoria.

3.2.2 Data collection

The approach to the data collection for this project consisted of semi-structured, tape recorded interviews, transcriptions and textual analysis. The interviews contained open-ended, referential questions in order to determine the experiences of the sojourners during their stay in Australia. The aim of the interview approach was to elicit information from the respondents with little prompting. Prompt questions however were reserved should the interviews stall, in order to re-establish the flow of conversation. Further, this technique was employed in order to facilitate flexibility. The interviews were conducted in French and English to gauge the proficiency levels in English and also to make the respondents feel at ease. Common features of both the longitudinal and cross-sectional groups included the background survey questionnaire, containing demographic information (age, gender, previous academic sojourns, languages spoken, among others), which was completed by all respondents; as was the required protocol for the university ethics committee, which comprised an information sheet outlining the nature of the investigation, questions of anonymity and confidentiality, and right to withdraw. The study was described to the participants and the reaction noted was a positive one.

The longitudinal group

The first round of interviews, carried out from May to December of 2003 with longitudinal subjects, centred on their acculturation experiences and the follow-up sessions were based on their re-entry processes in March and April, 2004 in France and Switzerland. All interviews were semi-structured in order to allow data to be compared between interviews and also to allow issues arising in interviews to be fully explored. The salient themes of the first set of interviews focused on culture shock, incorporating cultural identity perceptions;
behavioural differences; nature of difficulties experienced; and language experiences. The second set of interviews centred on reverse culture shock; interpersonal relationship issues; cultural identity issues; language experiences upon their return; and behavioural differences. Cultural identity perceptions and changes represented critical features of both sets of interviews. The interviews ranged from one to two hours in duration, were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The order of the prompt questions denoted in the sample of questions was not strictly adhered to. At times the interviewees appeared to engage in a monologue but more frequently, a spontaneous dialogue was established between the researcher and the participant. There was consensus from participants from both the cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, particularly in France, that this research design had been therapeutic because most respondents had not been able to share their experiences with members of their home society.

The cross-sectional group

The methodology utilised above with the longitudinal group was administered to the subjects of the first cross-sectional study in Australia, without the repatriation component. However, all respondents were asked about their future plans after their studies and particularly to speculate on the type of re-entry process they anticipated. This issue posed a problem for the majority because firstly, it had not occurred to them that the repatriation may be problematic and secondly, only one subject planned to return home.

The methodology used for the subjects in the repatriation stage of the study differed somewhat from the group that had also been interviewed in Australia in that they were asked to elaborate on their acculturation processes in Australia prior to proceeding with the re-entry investigation. This was crucial for the project because it provided the background for understanding their re-entry experiences. The re-entry interviews were fundamental as a cyclical methodological paradigm was selected in order to investigate how the complex processes of adaptation and readjustment were interrelated and how this influenced the emergent cultural identity orientations of the sojourners. It was thus possible to gauge whether a positive or negative acculturation experience in Australia correlated with a positive or negative re-entry process and how this affected the subjects’ cultural identity and interpersonal relationships.
3.2.3 Data analysis

Whilst the interviews were being conducted during the first few months, the audio-tapes were transcribed with the aim of facilitating the analytic process. This assisted in the preliminary stages of the thematic analysis of the data. Transcribing the interviews concurrently with the interviewing process was also instrumental in gauging the efficacy of the research questions as it allowed for an assessment of the types of responses generated in the first set of data in order to make any necessary changes. This methodology expedited the textual analytic process because the information remains accessible for longer periods. All 15 interviews were transcribed during this first year. Upon my return from Europe in 2004, the transcription of all outstanding interviews was completed. The next stage focused on the systematic analysis of the interviews of the six candidates who formed part of the longitudinal study, which was followed by the remaining interviews. The core interviews provided crucial data gathered over time which allows for a better insight into changes in the same individuals. The cross-sectional data was analysed to support and expand on the themes emerging from the first interviews.

After multiple readings of the data, a colour-coded, thematic analytical approach was employed to identify the main indices of interest to this study. Note books were utilised during the entire process of interviews in order to record field notes, personal thoughts that may prove pertinent in the writing of the thesis with headings for each category. The analytic techniques utilised focused on biographical narratives, which were derived from semi-structured interviews, iterative readings, interpretational analysis of data which enabled the formulation of themes and code patterns to explicate the phenomena in question. The rich data of the project produced thick and descriptive material providing for grounded theories according to the principles expounded by many researchers (eg. Gal, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nunan, 1992; Silverman, 1993) who advocate the use of qualitative research methodologies. Strict adherence was paid to ethical concerns as well as issues of validity and reliability, guarding against the researcher’s ‘ethnocentrism and perceptual biases’ in accordance with LeCompte and Goetz’ (1982) warnings.

3.3 Justification of the research design

The cyclical methodology used to carry out the research in both Australia and France, tracing and documenting the developments of the six subjects of the longitudinal study
during the intercultural experience, was selected to add to the literature on an area of research little investigated thus far. This cyclical process was selected because longitudinal studies provide evidence of significant changes occurring over time in the individuals’ cultural identity and personality. Kim (1995) argues that the use of personal testimonials, monologues, anecdotes and biographies derived from non-academic sources, although informal, can be invaluable for generating more systematic research. The research was multi-linear because in addition to the longitudinal design, the cross-sectional component allowed for corroboration of findings emerging from the core group. Further, the cross-sectional design provided a more in-depth analysis and evaluation of changes occurring in the lives of the individuals involved. The combination of both designs is effective because one can rarely arrive at conclusions in research based on a small contingent of subjects by using only cross-sectional research designs.

3.3.1 Combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs

Literature shows that longitudinal research is an essential strategy for the understanding of patterns or phenomena in cross-cultural studies; for studying changes or continuity in a sample’s characteristics; it allows the researcher to examine individual variations in characteristics or traits; and to produce individual growth curves (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Longitudinal research concerns the collection and analysis of data over time, a feature that is critical if one needs to measure and understand social change, the trajectories of individual life histories and the dynamic processes that underpin social and economic life (ISER, 2005). However, although longitudinal research can provide fuller information about individual behaviour, it poses methodological and theoretical problems, especially for ensuring internal validity (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Gall et al., 2003; Warner Schaie, 1997). Further, longitudinal research is more difficult to implement and is time consuming and expensive because of the need to wait for growth data to accumulate. There is also greater risk of attrition of subjects which reduces validity and reliability.

In spite of these limitations, longitudinal studies are a critical way of exploring problems in human development, hence the term developmental, also employed in connection with a variety of studies conducted over time (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Gall et al., 2003; Ruspini, 2000). In addition to allowing the measurement of changes in variables over time, Ruspini (2000) posits longitudinal research allows the analysis of durations; can be used to explain
social phenomena; and to explicate correlations between events that are widely separated by time. She argues longitudinal research helps build a bridge between quantitative and qualitative research traditions. There are four main research designs in longitudinal research according to literature, trend, cohort, panel and cross-sectional (Gall et al., 2003). Trend studies describe change through a selection of a different sample at each data-collection point from a population that is not constant. Cohort studies also describe change by selecting a different sample at each data-collection point, but in this case, from a population remaining constant. Panel studies involve the selection of a sample at the beginning of the study and subsequently at each data-collection point thereafter, whilst examining the same individuals. In cross-sectional research, data are collected at one point in time with groups of different ages or at different stages of development (Gall et al., 2003).

The longitudinal component of my study can be classified as a panel study as an initial sample (the core group of 6 French subjects) was selected at the outset of the study in Australia and then at the subsequent data collection point, the same sample was surveyed in Europe. As I followed the same individuals in the core sample over one year, I was able to note the changes in these subjects and develop explanations for the changes. Gall et al. (2003) argue however, individual changes cannot be explored in trend or cohort studies because different individuals make up the sample at each data collection point.

The cross-sectional studies, employed as an adjunct to my research methodology, compared groups of individuals at a single point and during a relatively brief period of time. The advantages of cross-sectional designs are: subjects are generally selected without regard to the outcome of interest; the studies are more cost effective and they require less time than longitudinal research; a greater number of subjects can be included; and they produce findings more quickly. However, cross-sectional designs tend to provide weaker evidence of causality than longitudinal studies (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Gall et al., 2003; Mann, 2003). Gall et al. (2003) suggest in order to overcome the difficulties in longitudinal research designs, for example, researchers can simulate longitudinal research by utilising a cross-sectional paradigm where data are collected at one point in time, but from groups of different ages or at different phases of development. They argue a major problem with this kind of study is the effect of changes in the population occurring over time. Further, sampling becomes complicated because different subjects are involved at each stage of data collection and may not be comparable (Cohen & Manion, 1989). The solution to this
problem was to use a panel study in this project. Both cross-sectional French groups were homogeneous in nature as they had all sojourned in Australia for their studies, hence comparable. Further, an analogous interview approach was used for both the longitudinal and cross-sectional components of the study, to avoid large discrepancies in findings. This combined approach however, was just as time-consuming as the longitudinal design, but also had advantages – more subjects.

In the context of this study, a combined longitudinal and cross-sectional study was employed in order to collect data at different stages of individuals’ lives which provided the most adequate way of examining experiences of French academic sojourners. The strength of the research design was that by combining both research designs, I was able to observe critical changes over time in the core group whilst the second method allowed me to examine more individuals with similar experiences, in the process providing support and enrichment for the findings. Further, this choice of design allowed me to examine the dynamics of sojourner relationships, to gauge how experiences and behaviour are influenced by the wider social and economic contexts of Australia and France and Switzerland (cf. ISER, 2005).

3.3.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research

Discussions on the value of quantitative versus qualitative research approaches, also known as ‘scientific’ and ‘naturalistic’ abound in the literature, with opinions on the most appropriate perspectives differing from discipline to discipline. The merits of both research traditions will be examined in this section. Nunan (1992), among other advocates of qualitative research in applied linguistics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Chaudron, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) argues that qualitative research or naturalistic inquiry is a valid tradition in its own right, and should not be relegated to the status of a hypothesis-generating device for experimental research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) argue the diversity among qualitative researchers in the field of education reflects the maturing and increasing sophistication of qualitative approaches, and in spite of the differences there are many strains of commonality between them. They maintain those who equate measurement as synonymous with science, with anything not conforming to this as suspect, have not recognised that qualitative research “meets rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry predicated on data” (1992 p.43). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have contrasted quantitative and qualitative approaches and found the naturalist paradigm to reflect multiple realities which
are constructed and holistic. They see the knower and the known as interactive and inseparable. The investigator avoids generalisation and believes the inquiry to be value-bound, in other words, it is influenced by inquirer values expressed through the choice of problems; by the selection of the paradigm used for the study; by the choice of the substantive theory; and by the values implied in the context.

Researchers from various disciplines including the field of applied linguistics have a preference for either quantitative or qualitative research approaches or a combination of both to make different epistemological assumptions about scientific knowledge and its methods of acquisition (Gall et al., 2003). The decision is based on the constructs of positivist research and postpositivist research (Gall et al., 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Positivist research is founded on the notion that features of the social environment make up an independent reality and remain constant along temporal dimensions and settings. In this type of research, numerical data is collected on observable behaviours of samples which are subsequently analysed. Conversely, postpositivist research is based on the theory that features of the social environment are constructed as interpretations by individuals, which are largely transient and situational. In postpositivist research, verbal data is collected through intensive case studies followed by inductive analysis. Analogous to the views described above, Silverman (1993; 2004), along with other researchers (eg. Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), views quantitative and qualitative research traditions as two ‘schools’ of social science, the first identical to that described above, positivist, and the second, interpretive social science. The first is grounded on correlations between predictor variables whilst the second is centred on observation and description which may or may not generate hypotheses, as opposed to attempting to prove or disprove them.

Morse and Richards (2002) argue qualitative methods are as challenging and exigent as quantitative methods because they can be rigorous and can lead to claims for conclusions that are justifiable and practical. Some researches have argued that thinking qualitatively requires working inductively, sometimes referred to as inductivism (Flick, 2002; Morse & Richards, 2002; Nunan, 1992). They see qualitative inquiry as constantly challenging assumptions and projecting them in a new light. Nunan (1992) argues although the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is largely simplistic, it represents a real, not an alleged, distinction, which is philosophical. This implies a distinction not always reflected through empirical investigations. On the other hand, the notions underlying qualitative research concern a questioning of an objective reality. Further,
Nunan argues quantitative research has been labelled obtrusive, controlled and
generaliseable, with the tendency to make assumptions about the outcome. Conversely, he
argues the features of qualitative research generally include the assumption that all
knowledge is relative, with a subjective element involved in all knowledge and research. It
is holistic, naturalistic and inductive and uses descriptive data. Qualitative research is also
process-oriented, exploratory, discovery-oriented, expansionist, and descriptive. Nunan
argues that qualitative research is grounded, employing the term grounded theory, which is
“theory based in and derived from data, and arrived at through a systematic process of
induction” (Nunan, 1992 p.57). This theory involves ‘thick’ explanations that go beyond
description to analysis and interpretation rather than simple description. Thick explanations
place a focus on important factors effecting the phenomena under investigation.

Some of the most important issues for the qualitative research paradigm concern questions
of proof of validity and reliability. Silverman (1993) argues the issue of validity of
qualitative research, implying generalisability to larger populations and possible anecdotal
quality of its claims, is real and cannot be disregarded. He maintains authenticity, in lieu of
reliability, is often the issue in this type of research where the aim is to gather ‘authentic’
understanding of the experiences of individuals. Silverman argues that interviews share an
involvement in moral realities, offering a rich source of data from which interpretations
may be made about people’s troubles and good fortune. More importantly, particularly for
the context of this project, Silverman argues linguistic phenomena are critical as even for
those who elect to carry out non-linguistic research in search of social ‘realities’ embedded
in the data, such as social class, gender or power, the raw material is unavoidably derived
from spoken or written words, documents or recordings of interviews.

Carrying out a qualitative research project naturally raises issues of reliability. In this
project, the potential problems which can be created by a position of power between the
respondents and their interviewer were averted largely because respondents felt
comfortable that I also shared a common denominator with them, we were all
Francophones in a milieu that was not native to us. The subjects were in fact eager to be
included in this project because they felt this type of study had never been done on the
French before. For this reason, I believed the interviews to be candid accounts of very
personal experiences where there was no need to lie. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) refer to
this feature of investigation as the recognition of researcher status position. My social role,
not as lecturer but as a Francophone individual and foreigner who had experienced
acculturation and repatriation in several countries, essentially facilitated a situation of trust between interviewer and interviewee, as the power differential of lecturer and student was no longer an issue. Intimate issues were openly discussed as a result of confidentiality and trust and also because of appropriate social contexts used to conduct the interviews, my office in Australia and a campus classroom and hotel in France and Switzerland. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) refer to this feature of reliability of ethnographic data as social situations and conditions. This criterion represents an important element which influences the content of qualitative data, the social context in which data are gathered. The appropriateness of data revealed in some contexts and circumstances may not be regarded as appropriate under other conditions. What subjects reveal essentially varies according to individuals present at the time. The delineation of the physical, social and interpersonal contexts governing data collections are seen to enhance the replicability of ethnographic studies.

In accordance with Bernard’s (2000) arguments, I maintained a constant validity check by (i) searching for consistencies and inconsistencies emerging from the data and questioning them; (ii) verifying reports to seek out objectivity; (iii) remaining open to negativity without allowing these incidences to destabilise the analytic inquiry; and (iv) looking for alternative explanations from informants to cross-check certain reports. As judgements are unavoidably linked to the researcher’s own politics, I employed comparative evaluations as a way of ensuring the reliability of my data. This notion of comparability is mirrored in Flick’s (2002) and Babbie’s (2001) arguments on producing procedurally reliable data, where data can be tested concretely against other passages in the same text or against other texts, or in this case, interviews. This provided evidence of the genesis of a statement of the subject. Flick argues the reliability of the complete process is augmented by its documentation. In this way the criterion of reliability is reformulated via verification of dependability of data and procedures which are grounded within various qualitative research designs (Flick, 2002).

Audio-recordings, again one of the major foci of the current investigation, are increasingly important for qualitative research designs because the transcripts obtained from them, based on standardised conventions, provide an excellent record of ‘naturally occurring’ interaction. Recordings and transcripts ultimately afforded a highly reliable record which can be re-examined for the development of additional hypotheses or new findings, as
recommended by Silverman (1993 p.10). He suggests lateral thinking and rigour are essential points to consider, which were adhered to.

Nunan (1992) argues interest lies mostly on general trends and statistical leanings rather than universal statements and there are ways of justifying and protecting theories and their claims of truth from attack. There is consensus on the view that at least for quantitative methodologies, reliability implies consistency in the results derived from research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest instead of the use of the conventional term reliability, qualitative researchers are more concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data. They view reliability as a fit between their recorded data and the reality in the setting in question, rather than the literal consistency across different observations. Conversely, validity concerns the extent to which research actually investigates what the researcher set out to explore (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Morse & Richards, 2002; Nunan, 1992; Silverman, 1993).

As the above constructs have been considered as more appropriate for quantitative research designs where the process is more straightforward (Gall et al., 2003), some researchers have proposed other means for guarding against criticisms of qualitative research. I have also employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985 p.327) theories in approaching the analysis of my data, where reliability and validity are substituted by notions of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness implies truth value which offers credibility; transferability of results to other studies through the use of rich, descriptive data; dependability of the research which provides consistency so that independent investigators can obtain similar results in similar contexts; and confirmability which is achieved through a rigorous approach to data collection and documentation. In the context of my naturalistic inquiry, these terms can be used to justify issues with analogous meaning as concepts of validity and reliability. My Francophone cultural background, prolonged engagement in French culture, long-term experience and association with French students in their cultural settings, and English immersion settings, together with my capacity as language instructor all contribute to the credibility of the research. Transferability is possible through the utilisation of purposeful sampling and the provision of thick descriptions transcribed from a rich data base from the interviews, whereby an independent investigator, upon reanalysis of the data may come to the same conclusions. The application of rigour and accurate documentation of steps taken to adhere to the underlying principles of validity and reliability offer dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Qualitative methodologies have been criticised however for not meeting the rigorous standards demanded from their counterparts because, as Morse and Richards (2002) argue, it is not always feasible to replicate a qualitative study because the data is deeply embedded within the particular context. On the contrary, contextualisation is considered as a strength as human life is lived in context. Therefore, a richer picture emerges rather than de-contextualised images.

Analogous to the views postulated by LeCompte and Goetz (1982), and Morse and Richards (2002), Charles and Mertler (2002) suggest the validity of qualitative data can be determined through external criticism, where the authenticity of the source is established and internal criticism, where the accuracy of the information is confirmed. Logical interpretation is an important part of this process, and I did this by posing myself pertinent questions, similar to those proposed by Morse and Richards (2002) which evaluate the information and verify its source. The process remains necessarily subjective however. Where external criticism is not always possible, I believe my interpretation of the data can be considered both valid and reliable as the result of a comparative technique where statements were corroborated by similar accounts of other respondents on a variety of viewpoints. The consistency of many statements reported by the subjects rendered the accounts reliable, as a result of their similarity. This factor also contributed to the validity of the statements because the recurrence of many aspects of the phenomena investigated appeared to be credible and authentic. The trustworthiness of the respondents was established by their willingness to participate in the research project. They were not coerced to discuss anything they felt was too intrusive and they volunteered any information to be released with their identification revealed if necessary, a feature I chose to reject due to the sensitivity of some interview material.

In defence of questions that may arise on subjective opinions, prejudices and other biases and the possible effects this may have had on the findings, many researchers have provided suggestions of how to avoid criticism in this fundamental area of research. In order to circumvent investigator bias, great care was taken to ensure prejudices and preconceived notions did not infiltrate the interpretations offered upon analysis, in accordance with Charles and Mertler’s (2002) suggestions. Interpretation was carefully examined and alternatives sought before adopting a final viewpoint. This was done through a process they refer to as “logico-inductive analysis” ... which applies verbal data to research
questions and examines the data’s persuasiveness in answering related questions” (Charles & Mertler, 2002 p.199).

Bogdan and Bilken’s (1992) arguments also provide support for my methodology. Adhering to their principles, I endeavoured to study the subjective states of my respondents objectively. The considerable time invested in the empirical world, in data collection, transcription and analysis of the voluminous material emerging from interviews for instance, implies a constant confrontation of one’s opinions and prejudices with the data. Bogdan and Bilken (1992 p.46) argue the data amassed provides a significantly more detailed portrait of events than “even the most creatively prejudiced mind might have imagined prior to the study”. My primary objective was not to pass judgement on a setting, but rather to contribute to knowledge in the fields of study. The worth of the study, these researchers claim, is the degree to which it generates theory, description or understanding. By recording detailed field notes, including my reflections on my subjectivity throughout the data collection, I attempted to guard against personal biases.

Questions as to whether one approach is better than the other are inevitable. Some researchers argue while many people dismiss claims traditional distinctions between the two methodologies are simplistic and naïve, especially in the analysis of research publications, distinctions between the two remain imprecise and most researchers ultimately subscribe to one or the other or use a combination of both (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Silverman, 1993, 2004). Gall et al. (2003) suggest some researchers advocate qualitative research methodologies are best to discover themes and relationships at the case level, whilst others choose quantitative means to validate those themes and relationships in samples and populations, thus the understanding is, the first plays a discovery role and the second a confirmatory role. Issues of incompatibility of the two as to which has a greater claim to truth apparently lie on faulty epistemological assumptions according to Gal et al.(2003). It appears each tradition has its merits and its disadvantages.

Chaudron (1988) argues both research traditions have much to contribute to applied linguistics research. He claims that ethnographic research is a rigorous tradition in its own right, one which entails ”considerable training, continuous record keeping, extensive participatory involvement of the researcher … and careful interpretation” (1988 p.46). Chaudron (1986) argues both research approaches are relevant to determining important variables for investigation as well as relationships of those variables to second learning
outcomes. Further, he maintains applied linguistics research has a long tradition of qualitative approaches to description and analysis. Due to the many unrecognised or inadequately described variables and phenomena in applied linguistics, the qualitative approach continues to play an important role in the design of projects.

### 3.4 Conclusion

What is clear from the literature on research paradigms is that researchers from different disciplinary fields have developed various ways of studying human behaviour, their methods, theories and findings used to formulate the different traditions within both quantitative and qualitative educational research. Silverman (1993) claims that as qualitative interpretive studies have earned respect in the field of applied linguistics, the need to justify or defend the use of qualitative research designs is no longer as urgent as findings indicate they have been useful in cumulating substantial amounts of knowledge. Somekh (2005) like other researchers (Babbie, 2001; Nunan, 1992), maintains while it is recognised that some methodological frameworks in the social sciences contrast dramatically, researchers ultimately choose research methods which are appropriate to their area of inquiry and synchronise with their view of the world. These researchers see both quantitative and qualitative research traditions as reciprocal ways of researching human behaviour and social interaction, both necessitating sensitivity in their treatment of respondents. They argue however, ethical issues must play a central part in the underlying principles of both. The interpretive methodology used in this project corresponds to a biography narrative in language education and applied linguistics but has many points of commonality with ethnographic and descriptive research traditions. This method appeared consistent with the opinion that an interpretive methodology in the qualitative tradition was the most appropriate instrument for investigating the research questions.
CHAPTER 4

ACCULTURATION IN AUSTRALIA - CULTURE SHOCK

En tous cas, sur la Gold Coast ce qui m’a choquée c’est qu’il y a rien! Vraiment rien! C’est un peu pauvre en culture. Bon on peut parler de l’art aborigène.3 (And after 15 months) I don’t know what is the traditional Australian. It’s a new country also. But it’s something very American or English ... [There is] not much culture. The Australian personality is just like the American (Diane).

Whether one approaches the concept of culture shock from a psychological perspective, from whence the term originates, from an academic, socio-cultural or anthropological standpoint, or from a more comprehensive approach such as this current research project, there is consensus on the notion that a period of adjustment is experienced by all involved in immersion experiences in a new culture. Chapter 4 presents the findings relating to the incidence of culture shock experienced by French academic sojourners in Australia. The data demonstrates that although this discrete group of international students adapted successfully in this country, a certain degree of culture shock was registered by the majority of subjects who may not always have perceived this state using the traditional term. Various nomenclatures relating to culture shock, employed by the students to describe their own versions of the types of shock registered will be illustrated through selected excerpts in the context of this chapter. These included acclimatisation shock, climatic shock, and linguistic shock.

A distinction must be made between situations causing curiosity at discovery of elements the French may surmise are quaint or odd and the more serious emotional reactions described above. When interacting with new cultures, clashes may become apparent if there are deviations in cultural practices or behavioural modes and values which do not correspond to the accepted codes of that individual’s country. Consequently, their cultural practices become the yard stick by which they judge other cultures, giving little thought to the impact this may have on the host societies during border crossing (Brislin, 1990). Judgemental or condescending attitudes cannot fail to aggravate cultural exchange situations if conflict ensues.

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3 Anyway, on the Gold Coast, what shocked me was that there was nothing! Really nothing! It’s a little poor in culture. Well, one can speak of Aboriginal art (Diane).
Section 4.1 examines reports that respondents did not experience culture shock to investigate whether these reports were accurate representations of their experience. In section 4.2, the most significant elements of Australian culture the French sojourners responded to with culture shock will be thematically presented in order of importance. The effects of negative stereotypical images on intercultural relations are an important feature of this section as well as academic issues. Section 4.3 presents successful adjustment by the French. Their emerging perceptions of Australian culture will also be examined in order to substantiate how they succeeded in integrating into their host society. Section 4.4 presents the coping strategies utilised by the French sojourners to minimise the effects of culture shock. Finally, section 4.5 will conclude the arguments of the chapter.

4.1 Respondents who claimed not to have experienced culture shock

The data revealed that only three respondents who claimed not to have experienced culture shock in any shape or form were consistent on that point. Martine confessed to being a seasoned traveller since the age of 10 or 11 especially in English speaking countries and used to speaking English. She is quite clearly not representative of this group of academic sojourners. Alain also considers that former experiences in Anglo-Saxon countries, including Australia at a younger age specifically assisted him in an easier process of adjustment in Australia at university. An excerpt from Martine’s interview explains why this is possible.

... En arrivant j’ai pas eu du tout de choc culturel. Ya eu beaucoup de changements mais j’ai pas eu de difficultés à m’adapter, pas de difficultés au niveau de la langue, pas de difficultés au niveau d’adaptation ... 4 I’ve been travelling a lot since I’m 10 or 11 especially in English countries. I’ve been to the States, to the UK so I’ve been used to go abroad and I’ve always been attracted to everything abroad for a few years and I’ve been used to speak English too (Martine).

Martine’s comments substantiate claims from literature of the benefits of intercultural experiences during childhood. Children who have grown up in many foreign countries are referred to as Third Culture Kids (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001) whose experiences are uniquely different from the academic sojourners because they are usually accompanied by their parents. The frequency of these travels evidently reduces the intensity of culture shock if they are not totally eliminated, as for Martine, Alain and Charles. Foster’s (1965)

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4 When I arrived, I didn’t experience any culture shock. There were many changes but I had no problem adapting, none with the language, no difficulty in adapting (Martine).
interpretation of the concept of culture shock appears somewhat discordant with other approaches on this score. He argues one culture shock experience will not immunise the sojourner against future shocks, although these may be less severe, with relatively shorter adjustment periods. My data reveals that it took these three French sojourners a very short time to adjust and some with little or no evidence of culture shock precisely because they had participated in cultural exchanges previously, or had travelled extensively as adolescents to Anglo-Saxon countries. These global travellers had succeeded in putting their culture learning to good use, improved their proficiency in English language and as a result, found their adaptation to Australian society relatively easy.

Alain compares his experience with his first one in Australia four years earlier. He acknowledges that he was less shocked than the majority of French sojourners the second time around.

Je vais comparer [le choc culturel] par rapport à ma première fois ya quatre ans, disons j’ai été moins choqué que la plupart des français parce que j’avais déjà été dans des pays anglosaxons ... donc je n’ai pas été dépaysé pour cela (Alain).

Alain’s quote mirrors the explanations proffered by Martine above.

Finally, Charles admitted to a certain amount of trepidation because of his lack of proficiency in English, but the introductory semester of English language prepared him adequately for his Master of Laws degree. For Charles, nothing constituted stress that could not be quickly surmounted. He found that all administrative procedures were easy in Australia.

Dès mon arrivée, ça s’est bien passé, très facilement sans aucun problème. J’avais une petite angoisse au niveau du langage mais soudainement ça s’est plutôt bien passé. J’ai toujours eu l’impression que tout en Australie était facile. J’ai acheté une voiture et j’ai mis une demi-heure à l’acheter ... sans aide de la famille [d’accueil] et l’assurance n’a pas été un problème et c’est complètement différent en France (Charles).

5 I’ll compare culture shock with my first experience four years ago, let’s say I was less shocked than most French people because I had gone to Anglo-Saxon countries before … therefore I did not feel out of place (Alain).
6 From the moment I arrived, all went well, very easily without problems. I was a little apprehensive about the language but suddenly everything went well. I’ve always had the impression that everything in Australia was easy. I bought a car and it took me half an hour…without help from the host family and the insurance was no problem and it’s completely different in France (Charles).
In addition to the feelings expressed by his compatriots above, Charles adds a new dimension in coping strategies in a new culture. He found buying a car and organising the paperwork, including insurance easy, something which aided his process of adjustment in Australia. This is mirrored by Dominique who claimed to settle easily once she had done just that, with the added acquisition of a mobile telephone.

Conversely, the data suggests that several respondents claimed not to have experienced culture shock, given the cultural similarity and the western mentality of the two cultures, only to present incidences of culture shock, which resulted in various levels of stress. An interesting angle from the Franco-Swiss respondent Marc sheds light on the distinction made between their perceptions of the term.

*L’Australie et la France, la Suisse sont culturellement proches, rien ne choque mais ça étonne plutôt! Simplement c’est la curiosité vraiment! (Marc).*

In this quote, Marc argues that given the parallels between the French and Australian cultures, episodes that are suggestive of culture shock can rather be perceived as cultural astonishment and curiosity. Although he did not use the term, he subsequently revealed several instances of culture shock.

*Je suis arrivé, c’était le 26 janvier, Australia Day. Ça m’a beaucoup étonné. Les gens à Perth vont se mettre devant la rivière, yavait une espèce d’esplanade pour les feux d’artifices, les gens viennent avec des kilos et des kilos de pique nique, leurs chaises, et même y’en avait qui amenaient leur canapé de leur salon, des piscines gonflables pour les petits (Marc).*

Marc’s comment provides evidence of culture shock even if he defines this phenomenon differently from the other respondents. He denies experiencing culture shock but describes a number of ‘astonishing’ events. This clearly shows that although he did not observe the cultural distinctions as semantically similar, they nonetheless significantly marked him. *Etonnement* (astonishment) can be construed as ‘shock’ in this instance because the incidents correspond with the early phase of difficulty at the beginning of a sojourn which

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7 Australia and France, Switzerland are culturally close, nothing shocks, it surprises rather! It’s simply curiosity (Marc).
8 I arrived on January 26th, Australia Day. It really surprised me. The people in Perth go to the river, there’s a sort of esplanade for fireworks, people come with kilos and kilos of picnic food, their chairs, and there were even some who brought their sofas, inflatable swimming pools for the kids (Marc).
resulted from a loss of familiar cues. This is in spite of the fact that the novelty is generally correlated with euphoric moments at discovering new cultures. The cultural distinctions are in fact at the root of initial adjustment difficulties, when habitual cues are missing and homesickness is often a feature, these sentiments translating into loneliness. As a coping strategy, Marc chose to mock the custom of Australia Day revelry on January 26th in Perth on the river, although there was no malicious intent. He does this also when he recounts that he could not contain his mirth when, at Christmas on the Gold Coast, he observed the parties on the beach, with particular reference to the traditional paper crowns worn by all.

Marc finds the Australian cultural traditions at Christmas ‘bizarre’. Although the episodes described above did not occasion distress for Marc, it cannot be denied that the distinctive customs, especially at Christmas can be problematic because traditional cultural cues are missing at a very important time when family ties are most meaningful. These differences actually had an effect on him and he treated them with derision. This shows that these episodes correlate with a sense of disjunction between the French and Australian cultures and what Marc calls étonnement results from vastly different traditions.

Marc’s interview continued with further examples of culture shock that distressed him but they belonged mostly to the realm of behavioural and academic differences, gastronomic traditions and standards of dress which he found shocking because they were at odds with his ethical benchmark. Selected excerpts will be highlighted under the appropriate sections of this chapter. One example included here concerns misunderstandings with Australian friends in relation to invitations made to a barbecue.

[Un choc culturel] côté négatif, des petits malentendus. J’ai des amis australiens et quand ils ont une fête, je crois qu’en Australie, c’est un peu une tradition, une coutume, d’amener quelque chose, le BYO [Bring Your Own] ... Les gens apportent leur pack de bière, leur viande et puis ils mangent et ils boivent ce qu’ils ont amenés. Des fois ils amènent des packs de bière à moitié entamés, et puis ils ramènent ce qui reste à la maison. C’est le

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9 And then the first Christmas that I spent on the Gold Coast … we celebrate on December 24th, Christmas Eve, in the evening and here it’s the 25th during the day and often on the beach and they wear little hats, little paper crowns. It was so funny! … It was strange to see what the Australians were doing (Marc).
Marc was pleased to have been rescued by friendly people on occasion who offered him a sausage at a barbecue but during the interview, he was nonetheless quite upset by his predicament of turning up empty handed at a party because he had not been warned. He was also appalled at the thought that anyone could bring food and drink to a party without sharing with other guests and then take home the left-overs. This clearly clashed with his notion of correct etiquette. This episode is a patent example of how stressful the effects of culture shock can be. This example is representative of the majority of respondents’ thoughts on the subject.

There is further evidence of culture shock for Marc on a more personal level where intrinsic differences between accepted codes of behaviour between the two cultures become responsible for character and personality judgements. This can be disconcerting at best if not problematic during exchange situations and may cause conflict. Marc found the relationship between men and women quite distinctive from his accepted views. The fact that his girlfriend had thought him not a “sensitive new age guy” as he saw himself, but homosexual, left him bemused to say the least.

This quote provides further evidence of the inconsistency of Marc’s interpretation of culture shock. After having described how he had experienced no culture shock this example actually includes the term, as he finally accepted that this episode constituted perhaps the most critical affront to his persona. Marc’s comment indicates surprise that the

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10 Negative [culture shock], little misunderstandings. I have some Australian friends and when they have a party, I think that in Australia it’s a tradition, a custom, to bring something, BYO [Bring Your Own] … People bring their packs of beer, their meat and then they eat and drink what they have brought. Sometimes they bring half opened packs of beer and then they take home what is left over. That takes the cake! That takes the cake! … I must say I have often been rescued. Someone gave me a sausage (Marc)!

11 Here is more evidence of culture shock! I find that relationships between men and women … I found Australian men to be very macho, musn’t show our emotions. And with my girlfriend, she was telling me that at the beginning she wondered whether I was gay, because I was not at all like the typical Australian male precisely because I showed my emotions … so that’s true that this was a little shocking (Marc).
cultural mores of the two countries should be so at odds that it could result in the incorrect presumption of a person’s sexual orientation. This is because of the difference in the ways masculinity is enacted from both cultural perspectives, Australian and Swiss, i.e. Australians do not act that way. It is not difficult to see how this type of situation can cause intercultural conflicts.

Jacqueline’s remarks also describe her views on the cultural similarity of both countries followed by evidence of shock during the Christmas break.

*Je n’ai pas éprouvé de choc culturel finalement. On est tous des occidentaux et voilà notre manière de penser et de travail mais j’ai pas trouvé de grandes différences. Ça ne m’a pas choquée du tout!* (Jacqueline).\(^{12}\)

In spite of Jacqueline’s observance of cultural similarities (both western cultures with analogous thought and work practices) diminishing the effects of culture shock, similarly to Marc’s, the following excerpt from a post card sent home in December 2002 provides evidence to the contrary.

*Cà fait quand même drôle de passer un Noël sous le soleil. Je suis donc pas tout à fait dans l’esprit de Noël comme vous pouvez vous l’imaginez* (Jacqueline).\(^{13}\)

This quote is suggestive of the kind of sentiment expressed from the data when especially at notable moments where social support from the home culture is most needed the sojourners have a tendency to be more homesick than usual. Homesickness is warranted as having potential disturbing effects on sojourners, the least of which include depression and anxiety (Smalley, 1963). Jacqueline was clearly stressed at Christmas because she was alone and could not relate the traditional festivities to those of her home. Clearly the loss of familiar cues plays an important part in this situation. Not being in the spirit of Christmas is indicative of signs of depression at being all alone in a foreign land.

Both of these accounts contradict the initial perception of both Marc and Jacqueline because during Australia Day celebrations and the Christmas festivities, they recounted

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\(^{12}\) I didn’t experience any culture shock finally. We are all westerners with western way of thinking and working but I didn’t find big differences. I wasn’t shocked at all! (Jacqueline).

\(^{13}\) It’s really quite funny to be spending Christmas in the sun. So, I’m not really in the Christmas spirit as you can imagine (Jacqueline).
what can only be conceived as culture shock, especially when they felt most vulnerable. This is because culture shock in this instance constituted a negative period encompassing feelings of anxiety, hastened by difficulties in coping with new cultures and mourning for lost familiar signs and symbols (Church, 1982; Zapf, 1991). The climatic and cultural shock of spending Christmas on the beach in 35 degree heat on December 25th instead of the Réveillon on Christmas Eve as is customary in France, in close to freezing temperatures cannot fail to highlight distinctions in cultural mores between both countries. Inability to share family traditions only contributes to loneliness during such times, especially as the majority of sojourners and host nationals go home for the Christmas break.

Arlette is one of the few respondents who had carried out research on Australia because she was granted a scholarship to study in Victoria for her project on the Aborigines. She noted marked cultural differences in academic work practices and university life as common and not problematic. She then proceeded to mention something which really distressed her.

Ce qui m’a marquée surtout c’est que quand j’allais dîner chez des amis australiens, j’avais l’impression en fait d’être une toxicomane parce que je pouvais pas prendre tranquillement une cigarette et la fumer. Il fallait qu’on aille dehors, dans le froid parce que en plus il faisait froid, et aller dehors pour fumer ma cigarette vite fait parce qu’il fallait que je rentre après. C’était plus un plaisir, c’était comme si j’étais obligée de fumer ma cigarette dans un coin quoi! Et c’était désagréable en fait! C’est vrai que comme différente culture, c’est frappant! (Arlette).

Arlette is a smoker and was shocked at the restrictions on smoking and especially at being asked by her hosts to smoke her cigarettes on the terrace in the middle of winter because non-smoking laws are so stringent in Australia and many people do not tolerate smoking in their homes. In this quote she finds the cultural differences ‘striking’, quite clearly a very unappetising aspect of Australian culture given her displeasure during the interview. Just as Marc’s identity and personality were brought into question because of his behaviour which was different from his Australian male counterparts, Arlette also became anguished during the interview when she recounted the intrinsic difference between male and female relationships in Australia.

What really struck me was when I went to dinner at Australian friends’ houses, I got the impression in fact that I was a drug addict because I could not pick up a cigarette and smoke. We had to go outside, in the cold in fact because on top of everything it was cold and I had to go outside to smoke my cigarette quickly because I had to get back in. It was no longer a pleasure, it was as if I had to smoke my cigarette in a corner! It was very unpleasant actually. It’s true that as a cultural difference, this is striking (Arlette).
La drague, j’ai trouvé ça vraiment bizarre. Parce que c’est presque politiquement incorrect de draguer. Au bout d’un moment, je me suis dit: « Bon il doit y avoir un problème avec ma personne. Voilà, je dois pas être belle ou je dois avoir pris du poids, ou ya quelque chose parce que jamais personne qui me drague. Personne me fait des compliments » … Les gens ne se regardent pas en fait … C’est comme si ils allaient se prendre une claque … C’est désagréable parce qu’on se sent moins bien et en même temps on se sent bien plus en sécurité (Arlette).  

Arlette perceived the pursuit of women in social situations by males in Australia was seen as politically incorrect. In her eyes, as the methods used by males to attract women in Europe contrast so dramatically with Australian tradition, Arlette felt quite hurt that no one ‘had chat her up’. She began to feel that she was unattractive because they would not even look her in the eye. The effects of culture shock in this instance were well-defined because it struck at the core of her identity as a woman. The loss of familiar cues once again affects this situation. She was clearly distressed that no one had even looked her way. However, on a more positive note, she admitted that the distinctive manner which Australian males used to show interest in a woman had its merits because women ultimately felt more secure. Analysing and accepting this cultural distinction between the French and the Australian males could be construed as a coping strategy for Arlette because ultimately it helped her increase her self-worth in the process. She could then justify to herself that she was not unattractive because Australian men did not look at her or try to pick her up. This respondent continued to offer proof that she had after all experienced culture shock in different forms. In particular, she recognized the superficial nature of Australians as an impediment in the formation of good friendships. In addition, worst of all, she perceived the friendly, innocuous, light hearted conversations customarily used in shops as intrusive and intolerable and was clearly distressed by these encounters.

Je trouve que c’est difficile de se faire des amis [en Australie]. J’ai trouvé que ça reste superficiel … on se racontait pas notre vie, on allait pas dans la profondeur des choses en fait. C’est aussi comme dans les magasins on vous demande toujours comment ça va mais c’est superficiel. Je détestais ça, je trouvais ça insupportable! Ah non! Là, ça je n’aime pas du tout (Arlette).

15 Picking up, I found this really weird. Because it’s almost politically incorrect to pick up people. After a while, I said to myself: “Ok, there must be a problem with me. There, I must not be beautiful, or I must have put on weight, or there must be something because no one ever tries to pick me up. No one gives me compliments” … In fact, people don’t look at each other … It’s as if they would be slapped for it … It’s really unpleasant because you don’t feel good about yourself and at the same time you feel much more secure (Arlette).

16 I find it really hard to make friends [in Australia]. I feel it stays superficial … we didn’t talk about our life, we didn’t go into depth about anything in fact. It’s also like in the shops they always ask you how you are going but it’s superficial. I hated that. I found that unbearable! Oh no! That I did not like at all (Arlette).
The blame for Arlette’s inability to make Australian friends was clearly levelled at the perceived superficial nature of relationships. This dismissive reaction was perhaps her way of coping with the stressful effects of the cultural shock experienced during friendship formations. She equated the difficulty of making friends to the general intrusive nature of shop assistants who mouthed niceties without meaning, something she found intolerable. To complete the picture on this issue, apart from behavioural discrepancies with her way of thinking, Arlette missed the treatment of customers by French waiters because Australians were “too nice”.

A vrai dire aussi, ce que je n’aimais pas c’est que dans des restaurants ils étaient trop gentils. Et c’est insupportable! …et même des fois j’allais au restaurant français à Melbourne juste pour me faire maltraiter par les serveurs parce qu’ils étaient français et ils maltraitaient bien les gens (Arlette) ¹⁷

Arlette went as far as seeking out the French restaurants in Melbourne just to experience a little immersion back into French culture, where she claimed she would be treated badly. This is in stark contrast with Australia which constituted a problem for her because she needed to be treated in the way she was used to. Clearly the cultural cues were missing here as they were in the experiences of her previous quotes.

Natalie professed to have had an excellent adaptation process and insists there was no culture shock. Following this statement, what ensued can only be classed as exactly that when she recounted the difficulties she had evinved because of academic challenges and linguistic shock which she found very stressful.

Ça a pas été un choc parce que je me suis très vite adaptée, donc je peux pas dire qu’il y a eu des chocs (Natalie) ¹⁸

What this quote shows is that like some of her compatriots above, perhaps because they managed to overcome the difficulties encountered rapidly, these participants quickly dismissed the stressful episodes of culture shock as insignificant. Findings from literature corroborate the view that those who have experienced a successful sojourn tend to

¹⁷ To tell you the truth, what I didn’t like is that in restaurants they were too nice! And that’s unbearable! … and sometimes I would even go to French restaurants in Melbourne just to be treated badly by the waiters because they were French and they treated people badly (Arlette).
¹⁸ It wasn’t a shock because I adapted very quickly, so I can’t say there was culture shock (Pierette).
remember mostly the good times, rarely focusing on the negative aspects (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001).

Natalie’s comment was immediately followed by an explanation of how the differences in academic writing caused her stress.

En Australie, tout ce qui était les papers qu’on a eu, jamais j’avais eu ça … et on avait en plus les mid-term papers et les examens. Et donc c’était se prendre en main pour faire des recherches et un paper structure, organisé, et surtout c’était le Harvard system, reference system. Alors ça c’était le stress. Le plagiat qui n’existe presque pas ici … ça a été du boulot de plus quoi … ça allait pour les cours parce que les profs avaient un débit de mots qui était très facile à comprendre … Par contre, il y avait des étudiants qui eux faisaient des exposés ou participaient, là il fallait s’accrocher (Natalie).\textsuperscript{19}

This quote shows that because Natalie had been questioned on possible negative aspects of her sojourn, she focused on something she had found problematic but managed to resolve finally. It shows that she may not have mentioned these difficulties unless prompted to define specific aspects of her experience.

Angélica who adapted very quickly to the Australian way of life also denies having experienced the stressful effects of culture shock only to provide examples of this. She claimed that as Australia was also a western country and she had been briefly to the US nothing shocked her.

[L’Australie] c’est assez occidental. Je connaissais déjà les US. J’étais allée en trois fois passer un mois, ya rien qui m’a choquée (Angélica).\textsuperscript{20}

The fact that Angélica identified the French, Australian and American cultures as homogenous meant there was little culture shock for her. Although she admitted that she did not know the US sufficiently well to draw conclusions, she had found little that could shock her, therefore expected no shock in Australia based on this presumption. However, in thirteen months, she had moved house four times because of various problems with

\textsuperscript{19} In Australia, everything concerning class papers, I had never had these … and in addition, we had mid-term papers and exams. So you had to take yourself in hand to do research for a structured, organised paper referenced by the Harvard system. So that was stressful. Plagiarism which is almost non-existent in France … that was extra work … it was ok during tutorials because the lecturers were easy to understand … on the other hand, there were students who participated and presented papers, then you had to concentrate (Natalie).

\textsuperscript{20} (Australia) is quite westernised. I already knew the U.S. I had been there three times for one month at a time, nothing shocked me (Angelica).
shared accommodation, possibly because sharing a flat is not a common practice in French culture. This custom in fact contributed to culture shock. Another respondent, Arlette and others explain firstly why sharing accommodation is uncommon for French students.

Yavaït beaucoup de gens qui habitaient en colocation, et évidemment ça c’est très différent de la culture française. Moi je crois dans toutes mes études je connais que deux personnes qui ont habité en colocation en France. Ça se fait pas ici ... Je sais pas, je crois que c’est juste pas dans la culture des étudiants français ... C’est pas évident quand on ne l’a jamais fait. Et moi, plus jamais de ma vie, je recommencerai plus jamais. Je veux bien vivre avec mon ami mais c’est tout. Alors en plus vivre avec quelqu’un qu’on connait pas! (Arlette).  

Arlette’s comment illustrates that sharing accommodation constituted a cultural shock in itself because the French students simply were not accustomed to it. As they were forced to do so in Australia due to financial constraints or the need for their own cultural support group, this aspect of their adjustment was problematic. The interpersonal relationship problems arising from shared accommodation with flatmates comprised of compatriots and other international students are significant in this study in light of differences between French and Australian cultures in that respect. French university students as a general rule do not share apartments unless obliged to do so, and this can be perceived as tantamount to an invasion of privacy as well as being indicative of class distinctions. The following comments further illustrate this problem.

... J’ai habité avec [un français et un srilanquais] pendant un mois par ce que ça se passait pas très bien ... C’était des hommes, c’était sale, bon bref ça a pas marché! (Arlette).  

Ce qui m’a pas mal déçue là-bas c’est d’être avec des français beaucoup ... J’avais choisi de vivre avec des collocs australiens, mais ils n’étaient pas non plus facile d’approche ... il s’est pas créé une atmosphère très conviviale ... on ne partageait rien vraiment enfin (Monique).  

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21 There were a lot of people in shared accommodation, and evidently this was very different from French culture. I think that in all my years of study I only know two people who shared an apartment in France. That is not done here (in France) ... I don’t know, I just think it is not part of French student culture ... It’s not easy when you have never done it. And as for me, I shall never do this again. I want to live with my boyfriend but that’s all. And then, on top of this, living with someone you don’t know! (Arlette).

22 I lived with [a French person and a Sri Lankan] for one month because it was going badly ... They were males, it was dirty, well finally it didn’t work (Arlette).

23 What disappointed me over there was being with French people a lot ... I had chosen to live with Australian flatmates but they were not very approachable either ... There was never a convivial atmosphere ... we really had nothing in common (Monique).
Même si j’étais avec une amie au départ j’ai eu une mauvaise expérience de colocation et donc ça s’est pas bien passé. J’étais avec un français et un russe. J’ai déménagé rapidement et puis après j’ai vécu avec un australien et un argentin et c’était très bien. Au début je pensais que c’était moi qui m’adaptais pas bien et en fait c’était pas du tout ça, c’était les personnes avec qui je vivais qui étaient pas … qui savaient pas vivre en communauté (Lise).  

The excerpts provided above show that the experience of shared housing was a novelty for the French students who were not used to this. Similar sentiments were expressed by Pierrette and Jacques also. Their avoidance of their cultural group appears to be justified in light of disagreements arising between flatmates evidenced by their frequent moves. Further, this strategy was instrumental in their success at improving their English. They moved in together initially in order to ease the transitional process of adjustment to a new culture but the fact that they were not used to sharing sometimes caused friction. Clearly, the frequency with which they changed their living arrangements from semester to semester was not always attributable to holiday travels. In the end, there is evidence in the data that French sojourners related much better to other international students in shared accommodation. This did not preclude differences in values and behavioural modes which contributed to culture-based problems with other Australians or international students however. Angélica recounts her experience in shared accommodation during her sojourn.

... J’ai pris une colocation avec un français, c’était un peu une erreur … en fait les trois premiers mois j’habitais à Bondi avec un français … et au bout de ces trois mois j’en ai eu marre parce qu’on parlait toujours français … J’ai déménagé, encore avec des français, mais y avait une suédoise, une amélioration … et après j’ai encore déménagé, quatre fois, je suis allée avec une suédoise et une norvégienne, plus de français cette fois … C’était sympa mais pas aussi fun qu’avec les autres colocs, et du coup j’ai redéménagé à Gleebe avec un australien et deux françaises … en fait … ça qu’avec des français qu’on peut avoir une discussion des choses qu’on a en commun, et on a des références en commun (Angélica).  

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24 Even with a friend in the beginning, I had a bad experience sharing accommodation so it didn’t go well. I was with a French student and a Russian. I moved out quickly and then I lived with an Australian and an Argentine and that was very good. At the start, I thought it was me who was not adapting well and in fact that was not the case at all. It was the people with whom I was living who were not … who didn’t know how to live communally (Lise).

25 I shared with a French student, that was a mistake … in fact during the first 3 months I lived in Bondi with a French student … and at the end of the 3 months I had had enough because we were always speaking French … I moved, again with some French people, but there was a Swedish girl, an improvement … and afterwards I moved again, 4 times, I was with a Swedish girl and a Norwegian girl, no more French people this time … It was nice but not as much fun as with the other flatmates, so I moved back to Glebe with an Australian and 2 French students … in fact, it’s only with French people that you can have a discussion about things you have in common, and we have common references (Angélica).
Angélica’s quote describes the problems shared accommodation posed for her during her year abroad. Like most of her compatriots, she was intent on sharing with international students and Australians in order to perfect her English but also torn between sharing with the French because of the social support this network provided during stressful times or when they felt homesick. They also felt the need to discuss matters only French people could relate to at times, sharing a common frame of reference. Conversely, unlike the majority of her co-national group, Angélica ultimately chose other French people as part of her most important social network of friends. This respondent continues to provide sources of distress emanating from cultural shock during her sojourn despite claims to the contrary at the beginning of her interview.

[Un choc linguistique] oui, là alors! Le problème c’est que surtout avec les collègues français c’est qu’on a un peu une espèce de frustration quand on arrive parce que tous les autres parlent très bien l’anglais, les suédois, les allemands, ils sont courants en anglais et nous on arrive et on parle trois mots d’anglais. Enfin on est bon en écrit, en grammaire, on sait mieux écrire que des australiens parfois, mais par contre à l’oral c’est la cata! C’est la catastrophe! (Angélica).

Angélica describes the linguistic shock which caused her the greatest amount of distress because she felt the frustration common to so many of the participants in regard to their lack of oral proficiency in English. She resorted to a co-national friendship network during this difficult time in order to ease the process of adjustment. Her frustration was palpable during the interview, indicating that she had not appreciated being set apart along with her compatriots among those who could not compete linguistically in classroom situations. She described this situation as catastrophic, a clear indication of its effect on her. Another source of culture shock for Angélica was in regard to the multicultural content of Australia, especially in Sydney. She confessed that due to the misinformation common to French people where Australia is concerned, the significantly large number of Asians on campus and in town was a definite shock she could not get used to. This made it difficult to meet and socialise with Australians because as well as this fact, the cultural habit of going out early and finishing early contrasted dramatically with the French students who stayed out all night. Those who remained at the end of a social evening were the French, Norwegian and the Asian contingents.

26 [linguistic shock] now that’s something! The problem is that among the French colleagues, we have this frustration when we arrive because everyone else speaks English very well, the Swedish, the Germans, they are fluent in English and we get there and we speak 3 words of English. Well, we’re good at writing, at grammar, we know how to write better than Australians sometimes, but on the other hand, when speaking, it’s a catastrophe! A catastrophe! (Angélica).
Ça m’a choquée que ce soit aussi multiculturel mais disons que le truc c’est que quand on arrive en Australie on connait rien de l’Australie. En France personne ne parle de l’Australie. En histoire pas du tout. C’est vrai que je me suis pas trop habituée quoi, qu’il y ait tant d’asiatiques à Sydney. Tout le monde sort hyper tôt en Australie quoi. Pour tout faire, pour manger à 18.00h etc. Souvent ceux qui restent à toute fin, jusqu’à 4.00h, 5.00h du matin, c’est les français. Yavait beaucoup d’asiatiques, de norvégiens aussi (Angélica).  

Angélica describes further frustrations during her sojourn in Australia in this quote. Blame is placed on the French educational system which makes no reference to Australia and its culture (cf. Smalley, 1963). This quote also highlights the lack of readiness of the French group in general prior to their sojourn which was found to contribute to culture shock.

Yet another respondent, Eveline claimed to have experienced no culture shock only to cite perhaps one of the biggest sources of distress when a foreigner attempts to deal with government immigration departments in most countries.

[Les démarches] étaient énormes parce que le dossier devait faire au moins sept, huit centimètres de haut. L’entreprise devait prouver qu’ils avaient cherché des australiens et qu’ils avaient trouvé personne pour ce poste [de boulanger]. On a été obligés de passer par un avocat et c’est ça qui nous a couté cher ... Après avoir fait le dossier, si l’administration pour les visas refusait ça il devait repartir en France, et yavait 4 000 dollars qui étaient partis. [Des cours d’angalis] étaient inabordables parce qu’on avait pas assez d’argent (Eveline).

Where the fact that Eveline was accompanied by her boyfriend naturally made the acculturation process easier, interpersonal relationship problems emerged because of the continuous stresses during the first three months. Their inquiries having met with unsatisfactory results at the Australian Embassy in France, they arrived to find that her boyfriend could not work without the correct visa. Interminable red tape and costly negotiations with lawyers ensued with a tax invoice of $4,000 representing an immediate drain on their savings. There was no money left to even consider English classes.

27 I was shocked that [Australia] was so multicultural but let’s say the thing is when we arrive in Australia we know nothing of Australia. In France no one speaks about Australia. In History, not at all. I must say that I didn’t really get used to the fact that there are so many Asian people in Sydney. Everyone goes out really early in Australia. For everything, to eat dinner at 6.00 pm etc. Often, those who stay out until the end, until 4.00am, 5.00am, are the French. There were many Asians, Norwegians also (Angelica).

28 [The protocol] was huge because the file must have been at least seven, eight centimetres in size. The company had to prove that they had looked for Australians and had found no one for the position [of baker]. We were forced to go through a lawyer and that’s what cost so much … After having completed the file, if the administration for the visa was refused [my boyfriend] would have to return to France, and there went $4,000. [English lessons] were unaffordable because we didn’t have enough money (Eveline).
Other examples of culture shock included codes of behaviour which were at odds with French mores. The fact that they did not initially condone the different behavioural modes however, did not deter Eveline and her boyfriend from adopting some of these habits, such as for instance, wearing thongs. Gastronomic differences on the other hand caused stress because of the reported enormous fat content in the Australian diet. The consequence was that they had put on 7 or 8 kilos during the first phase of their sojourn. Eveline voices her concerns in the next quote.

_Honnêtement quand on est arrivés en Australie, on a du prendre au moins 7 ou 8 kilos, parce qu’on mangeait un peu n’importe comment, entre les Burger King et les machins fast food. Au départ on n’avait pas trop d’argent. Je trouve pas du tout que la nourriture est équilibrée là-bas. C’est vrai que ça ne me paraît pas génial. Mais c’est que la plupart des choses sont assez grasses. Je me rappelle pas vraiment de plats qui soient typiquement australiens … Je voyais les femmes qui achetaient [des sausage rolls] à 9.00h ou 10.00h pour leurs petits enfants qui avaient trois ans. En Australie, tout le monde mange un peu n’importe quand (Eveline).²⁹_

Eveline admitted to financial constraints preventing them from eating traditionally French food, should they even find it. She found it an indictment that mothers were offering their children sausage rolls at 9.00am and that they ate indiscriminately, at any time of day or night, because eating habits and child rearing in France contrasted so dramatically with Australian culture. Resorting to criticism of Australian customs apparently minimised the effects of culture shock experienced in this instance, because it justified their acquired eating habits and absolved them of blame.

One final vignette describes Thierry’s claim of no culture shock but he then argues that due to the multicultural nature of Australia he found the fact that he met so few Australians quite difficult. He explains why.

_It’s rare to run into real Australians here but I like it … It makes it difficult too because you have no reference in the way you live or the way you should behave in this country, there’s no reference. Everybody does it his way here. So it’s difficult because there is a lot of communities … and you have to adapt yourself to the Brazilians, the Norwegians, British, Germans … doesn’t make it easier (Thierry)._
Thierry complains about the commonly reported difficulty in meeting ‘real Australians’. This was cause for stress because he lacked the required frames of reference to integrate into a society that offered few examples of how to behave.

This section has measured the declaration made by several subjects that they experienced no culture shock but subsequently produced evidence to the contrary. This is significant for this project because it demonstrates that the French sojourners did not always have a clear idea semantically of culture shock. The term ‘shock’ may imply something quite severe. The fact that they referred to this phenomenon using euphemisms to describe the difficulties and stress experienced through its effects, shows that due to successful adaptation they may have relegated the negative periods early in their adjustment process to the recesses of their minds. It became clear through the vignettes provided that cultural cues were missing and that they were quite distressed by the lack of consonance in the two cultures. This section confirms findings from literature that no one is exempt from culture shock, although the degree of stress varies considerably. The data showed that only three participants who made this claim maintained the status quo throughout the interview. It is only to be expected that these few students who were well-travelled and more proficient in English than their counterparts would adjust more easily to the host society.

4.2 Elements from Australian culture occasioning stress for French sojourners.

There is a range of factors which contribute to culture shock for French sojourners in the Australian context. There was an effect of pre-existing stereotypes, academic culture, linguistic shock, behavioural differences and lack of consonance in social mores in relations between the sojourners and the host nationals which engendered value conflicts. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the most significant elements from Australian culture causing distress for the French were derived partly from an intrinsically poor knowledge the French have about the host country. Based on this premise, pre-existing negative stereotypical views from both parties were responsible for cultural conflict with ensuing levels of anxiety because when one is confronted with negative judgements about one’s culture, retaliatory remarks are not uncommon. It is appropriate to note the inter-relatedness of the themes proposed in this section because of the overlap that exists between, for instance, stereotypical views and behavioural codes in social interactions. Some areas pertain as much to the area of academic culture as to social mores or value conflicts.
The incidences of culture shock were chiefly restricted to initial phases of adaptation to Australian culture because, to use one example, most derogatory stereotypical views were dispelled by the end of the sojourn when successful adjustment had occurred. The other elements of Australian culture which reportedly caused stress in the French sojourners are equally noteworthy to this project. Academic challenges, including linguistic shock clearly produced the greatest amount of distress for the French because of dissimilar practices between French and Australian educational systems and poor oral proficiency skills in English.

Another significant element which may be construed as constituting culture shock for this study concerned the behavioural differences and value conflicts between Australians and the French. Differences in gastronomic traditions may have produced nothing more than curiosity had the visitors been better informed about traditional Australian customs. Instead, findings showed a marked negative reaction when interacting socially mostly as a result of conflicting cultural standards and habits. Last but not least in importance, general acclimatisation shock was registered by all students, irrespective of how this was perceived.

4.2.1 The effects of negative stereotypical images on intercultural relations.

The data has revealed that a significant incidence of culture shock was registered by French academic sojourners, particularly during their initial encounter with Australian culture, where erroneous cultural stereotypes came into play. Varying degrees of culture shock ensued, as pre-conceived ideas may be viewed as judgemental and provocative in intercultural relations. Discrepancies in cultural practices were evident, discernible through behavioural differences and academic difficulties for instance. Many cultural anomalies that actually produced stressful periods for the group, generally expressed in terms of bizarre, strange, frustrating or astonishing were reported because some incidents contrasted so drastically with their culture.

A number of quotes support the claim that pre-existing stereotypical images of the respective cultures and a negative attitude can adversely affect intercultural relations between sojourners and host nationals with ensuing levels of stress. Pejorative comments were seen as inflammatory and contributing to distress for the sojourners. These events corresponded with the most vulnerable moments of their sojourn, generally in the initial stages of their adjustment process. These issues are significant and can be construed as
culture shock because they precipitated varying degrees of stress for the individuals who found it difficult at first to reconcile the dissonance between elements of Australian culture, their own cultural values and social mores. These stressors became manifest in feelings of anxiety, irritability, frustration, disillusionment, anger and other analogous emotions (cf. Church, 1982; Gaw, 2000).

The following quote contrasts the significance of national pride of the French students compared to their host national counterparts. Brigitte is very patriotic and loves French culture and history and is clearly proud of being French. It is therefore natural for her to exude this pride through her conversations with the host nationals. This was especially pertinent in her self-ascribed role of ambassador during her sojourn. Further, although the quintessential pride she and her fellow sojourners feel in their identity and in French culture was oft mistaken for arrogance, they made no apologies for this view.

...On s’aperçoit combien sa culture est intéressante et importante pour soi ... on s’aperçoit parfois d’être obligés d’en parler tout le temps et parfois les gens peuvent se sentir gênés et qu’on est un peu arrogants quand on parle de la culture française. La fierté peut passer pour l’arrogance (Brigitte).\(^{30}\)

This quote is representative of the epitome of the sentiments of national pride of this academic sojourners group. It shows that feeling the pride was insufficient for Brigitte and her compatriots. They appeared effusive in their expression of this pride on every occasion. With no intention of denying this perceived arrogance, Brigitte also attested to feeling:

... plus française qu’avant (Brigitte).\(^{31}\)

This demonstrates that the overseas experience highlighted her pride in being French. This enhanced view of Frenchness is significant because its frequent re-iteration in the data from other subjects shows that the French came to assign greater core value to their language and culture thanks to the intercultural exchange experience.

Jacqueline’s views of French pride resonate with Brigitte’s sentiments.

\(^{30}\) One becomes aware how interesting and important one’s culture is ... one is aware sometimes of being compelled to speak about it all the time and sometimes people can feel embarrassed and [think] that we are a little arrogant when we speak about French culture. Pride can be construed as arrogance (Brigitte).

\(^{31}\) … more French than before (Brigitte).
Further, in the process of developing their new cultural identity, the majority of respondents, like Brigitte and Jacqueline, discovered that they preferred being French in the microcosm of the French group in Australia to being part of the crowd at home. At this stage of their acculturation, this observation relates to their cultural pride put in relief with what they perceived to be a dearth of culture in Australia, boosting their perceptions of their own culture in the process. This argument will be further discussed in due course. Given such overt attitudes in regard to national pride when confronted, either in gest or in earnest, it is not unusual that one would retaliate and offer substantiation in vindication. A case in point is derived from Eric’s interview. He was quite distressed because of the treatment he received in the beginning because he was French.

The Australians were mean at the beginning. I know some guys and they tease us all the time. I get: “Ah ah ah! How are you froggies?” I go: “I’m fine thanks” (Eric).

When asked if he took umbrage at the jocular statements, he replied:

Of course, I sort of went: “What did I do to you? Why do you do this? What’s your problem?” and I was a little bit sceptic at the beginning, I wasn’t happy and I was very rude. I said: “What are you talking about? Stop it! You’re from Australia. You have no culture, you have no gastronomy”. I was very irritated and I retaliated. And now I’m more cool and more strong (Eric).

For those respondents who felt like Eric, the provocations from Australians were so abrasive that they felt the need to retaliate. This reaction is clearly dependent on one’s personality however as the decision to dismiss or react to comments such as these, largely depends on the coping strategy used to mitigate the situation. Terms such as “froggy” may in fact become a term of endearment in certain cases (Patron, 2002).

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32 We are really very French; I notice … even [those] who go abroad … the humour is very French, the demeanour, it’s typical and I recognise French people in the street sometimes. It’s obvious! I am proud of my language and I find it beautiful, rich … there are so many words, we are so proud of our language and our country (Jacqueline).
Eric also had the following comment on the potentially disastrous effects of stereotypes. He felt the need to defend the French who come here to study and believes that the Australians need to challenge the French before they criticise.

_We’re not that arrogant. Australia has to challenge us to have better wines, better gastronomy but they have a long way to go … You’re French so you’re arrogant. You’re very serious, snobbish sort of stereotypes. I wouldn’t say that about us. I think they have to be a bit more understable (sic) we come to this country, we are a little bit reserved because we don’t speak a lot and we have problems in the beginning to be understand … understood by people … I think they should be more tolerant about the fact that we don’t speak the same language and we come to Australia, we travel 40,000 kilometres and we’re far from home. I dare them to come to France and just learn the language like that and try to be … to have a social life with the French people … I want them to stop to have stereotypes about French people. We’re very open-minded except for the fashion, we have good taste because Australian fashion is not that great (Eric)._

This lengthy quote demonstrates the hurt and anger felt by Eric, and also by many others who were judged as arrogant by host nationals as a result of preconceived stereotypical ideas about the French. Culture shock resulted through the contrast made between the efforts of the French sojourners who ventured far from home in an attempt to embrace English in their linguistic repertoire as opposed to the Australians who perhaps do not feel the same need because of the hegemony of English worldwide. Eric challenges the host nationals to be more empathetic to the predicaments of foreign students in his situation and criticises them for their lack of understanding because he essentially recognises that it is a very difficult process that most Anglo-Saxons are clearly unaware of. Béal’s (1992) research on the tensions and conflicts surfacing from interactions from opposing perspectives, particularly from the French and Australian viewpoints, also recognises the effects of negative stereotypes on cross-cultural encounters. Prejudicial views in her study were derived from mis-communication arising from conversational strategies that failed to convey the right interpersonal messages. This situation promoted equally biased cultural opinions about each other’s nationality as those emerging from the present study. Béal (1992 p.24) reports that in Australia her own experience demonstrated that her compatriots are perceived as “blunt, arrogant and self-centred” and the Australians spoke of “the French tendency to be self-centred, forceful and insensitive to other people”. The French in turn, perceived the Australians to be insincere and indifferent, largely as a result of different conversational practices.
The French sojourners reported that they were indubitably notorious for their fierce national pride, their self-professed superiority expressed through appreciation of their language and culture, their gastronomy, history and literature. Consequently, it is fortunate that the paradoxical nature of Australian sentiment in regard to the French, perceived through the eyes of the majority of the French sojourners in the data, has resulted in a general acceptance of this ethnic group on a broad scale. This conception is identified by Brigitte who describes the paradox that exists essentially between the French and the Australians as attirance-jalousie (attraction-envy), a private thought not readily volunteered in social interactions. In the next quote, Brigitte explains why the sentiments she often felt were never voiced.

... I was educated in the middle class but my parents always told me you have to adapt in a high class but also in a low class and to be able to move from one to the other and not be arrogant with your education (Brigitte).

This paradox is mirrored in the relationship between the French and the Americans, as well as the British. This contradiction in terms attraction-répulsion (Nevers, 1985) a love-hate relationship, is frequently re-iterated by the respondents in this project and highlights the ambivalent attitudes which were instrumental in both provoking culture shock and assisting these sojourners in their acculturation process. Brigitte’s opinion on this paradox was carefully evaluated after examining the situations she had been involved in during her 18 months in Australia. She shows much acuity in regard to the interesting analogy she proposes for this perception in the following quote.

La première chose qu’ils nous ont fait sentir c’est l’arrogance. C’est un stéréotype mais aussi cette espèce de jalousie, attirance-jalousie. On ne nous disaient pas ça personnellement mais ils disaient: « The French are arrogant » ou alors j’ai senti ça dans la Law School. Ya beaucoup de choses qui sont copiées en Australie sur la France, sur l’Europe mais ils ne veulent pas l’admettre. ... Comme nous les français on ne l’admet pas pour les américains. Les australiens ont une espèce de respect quand on parle de Paris ou la France, c’est tout de suite: « Great, c’est fantastique! ». Mais pour cette histoire de champagne par exemple, ils vont dire: « Oh! Les français sont arrogants! ». Ils sont difficiles à vivre ou rigoler, quand on veut se donner un petit style, quand on va parler de la bonne nourriture française, ils vont essayer de nous faire dire les mauvais côtés de la France par exemple. Je sens ça comme une attirance/répulsion ... un paradoxe. Ils veulent un petit peu être comme nous, ils veulent copier et ils veulent pas l’admettre (Brigitte).33

33 The first thing they made us feel was arrogance. It’s a stereotype but also a sort of jealousy, attraction-envy. We were not told this personally but they would say: “the French are arrogant” or else I felt this in the Law School. In Australia, many things are copied from France and Europe but they don’t want to admit it … as we, the French don’t admit with regard to Americans. Australians have a sort of respect when we speak of Paris or France, immediately it’s: “Great, it’s fantastic!” But when it comes to champagne for example, they
This quote shows the intensity of the emotions Brigitte felt on the love-hate relationship she perceived to exist between the Australians and the French. It became evident in the interview that this aspect of her sojourn had caused her distress during her encounters with host nationals. She was clearly unhappy during the interview that her national pride had met with this reaction. However, she readily admitted that the French could also be tarred with the same brush when it concerned Americans. Once again certain aspects of French culture met with praise from the host nationals, but when an element of competition was brought into the equation, such as French gastronomy or French champagne with regard to the nomenclature of ‘champagne’ exclusively used for French sparkling wines, the Australian response was perceived as envy. Nevers (1985 p. 115) argues that this illogicality in English sentiment toward the French denotes mixed feelings but acknowledges there is much history behind it: “L’anglais vous aime et vous déteste; il aime votre savoir-vivre et déteste votre impolitesse” (The English individual loves you and hates you [French people] … loves your etiquette but hates your rudeness.) There is no historical justification for Australian stereotypical impressions of the French but some respondents suggested that certain American movies, such as French Kiss and Maid in Manhattan are at the root of many derogatory comments. This is because French behaviour is epitomised in these films and has become firmly inculcated in the minds of foreigners, particularly when they visit Paris. This is in spite of the allegedly warm welcome that Australians receive in France, as opposed to their American and British counterparts.

The ambivalence Australians feel is apparent in the positive sensitivity toward the French expressed in this comment.

[S’ils nous aiment] c’est essentiellement parce que nous sommes français et que la France a toujours été bien vue; c’est le symbole européen de l’élégance et ils adorent la langue française (Robert).34

Robert’s quote demonstrates how historically the French have been appreciated because of the prestige France enjoyed over the centuries; in its representation as the European

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34 If they like us], it’s essentially because we are French and France has always been well perceived; it’s the European symbol of elegance and they love French language (Robert).
symbol of elegance and the French language. Finally Christiane offers her point of view on this subject.

*They like us because they use so many French words and it sounds like upper class, very hype, I noticed that ... because they have maybe not so much culture they like France ... like the Americans (Christiane).*

Once again, Christiane’s comment reiterates the kudos French language and culture enjoys in Australia and world wide presumably because, in contrast, other nations are perceived to be lacking in culture. She, like so many other respondents, found the Australians and the Americans were closely linked culturally.

Evelyne echoes the views propounded by Brigitte when she recounts a heated argument in a tutorial about wine. She acknowledges that issues in class discussions ranged from a dispute about wine to nuclear testing in the Pacific, but the latter was a battle that would never be won.

*I had to defend France] sometimes in a tutorial when somebody was talking about wine ... I was the only French in the class and I had to say something to defend our wines. There was a fight about it. But I was lucky because the teacher really loved French wines so she defended it too ... I know that Australian people think the French are a bit proud of themselves and arrogant. There were so many problems with the nuclear testing (Evelyne).*

This quote demonstrates that the contentious issues on the subject of wine and nuclear testing in the Pacific, which occasioned intercultural conflict, were not easily resolved. The subject of wine represents a significant way Australians show pride in their culture, according to the French, evidenced by the growing export trade in quality Australian wines in the last decade or more. The host nationals were unhappy that their sparkling wine for instance, which they proposed was on a par with French champagne, could not enjoy the same accolades because the French had a monopoly on the name. The fact that Evelyne’s teacher appreciated French wines helped diffuse the situation in that instance at least. However, Evelyne’s subsequent comment indicates that the accusations levelled at the French for their nuclear testing in the Pacific could never be refuted. The French sojourners were largely intent on distancing themselves from discussions on this point.

The most provocative stereotype held by the French, that Australia has no culture to speak of, was potentially damaging to intercultural relations between the visitors and their hosts.
This criticism was a recurrent theme in the interviews. Although there was consensus on this view from the majority of respondents, the subjects reported that this criticism was generally covertly implied. However, retaliatory remarks were occasionally used when the French felt goaded into rebutting, in which case the overt claim *Australia has no culture* was used defensively, generally in response to the commonly held view *the French are arrogant!* By and large, this type of derogatory comment was reserved for members of the host society who directly provoked some respondents, especially during the war with Iraq in 2003 or when conversations turned to France’s nuclear testing in the Pacific. In addition, perhaps the most common occurrence of this kind of stereotypical typecasting emerged as a result of congregated groups of French people speaking French. Further examples concern remarks made about the predicament of Aborigines in Australia which met with accusatorial comments on the perceived rampant racism in France.

Where nuclear testing was no longer an issue, the stance taken by the French on the war with Iraq produced stressful moments for the French sojourners in this country. Véronique voices her concerns in this quote.

*We were a bit shocked but we were proud that France didn’t go to Iraq and in the newspaper like the Age we can read some very aggressive articles about French people. We were really surprised about that because Australian people were really welcoming when we came in Australia, and with this event they just like were saying some bad things... [We felt] very disagreeable about that, very shocked ...but when we spoke with Australian people about war they were all in the same way than French people, they didn’t agree to follow the Prime Minister (Véronique).*

This quote demonstrates the effects of culture shock that manifested in worry and fears of rejection for many French sojourners early in 2003 when the war with Iraq was in its early stages and France and Australia were antagonistic toward each other, particularly in the press. Fortunately, the discrepancy evident between the media and personal contacts with their peers resulted in more favourable perceptions than the sensational rhetoric reported daily. Veronique was shocked by the aggression evident in the press reports.

A composite of vignettes from the cross-sectional data substantiates the argument that pre-existing negative stereotypes confirmed by popular films and the behaviour of the French sojourners may be detrimental to intercultural relations, culminating in distress for either or both parties. The French opinion was that Australians perceive the French to be well
educated but selfish, arrogant and rude but at the same time it appears they are envious of French culture.

*I think they think that we are quite well educated but also arrogant. It’s true that in films we are always portrayed as arrogant … and immediately there’s this image that the French are selfish (Josiane).*

This quote, like those following, shows that films dismiss the French as arrogant and selfish, in spite of their education. This perception was so common that it could not fail to aggravate relations between visitors and hosts. Monique’s attitude was to challenge the negative stereotypes addressed to her by agreeing with them but by proving them wrong because she was different.

*I think the French are pretentious or this kind of thing but I am still French and I told them: “Ok they are like this, arrogant or something but do you think I am like it?” I am not so, they can see! (Monique).*

This quote depicts the change that had begun to take place for the French who tried different tactics in coping with the challenges they faced in interpersonal conflicts with host nationals. Several respondents preferred to deal with the stress of being typecast in this pejorative fashion by using a conciliatory approach, as Leah also explains:

*I had no qualms in telling me: “French people are arrogant!” etc. All these stereotypes, and so I showed them that ok, I am French but I am not arrogant (Leah).*

Leah felt that proving stereotypical misconceptions about the French as erroneous by her contrary example was a far better coping strategy than retaliating.

Robert recounts a very distressful episode in a train during a trip to the Whitsundays where he and his fiancée were verbally abused by a passenger because they were speaking in French between themselves. This theme is recurrent throughout the interviews also.

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35 I think they think that we are quite well educated but also arrogant. It’s true that in films we are always portrayed as arrogant … and immediately there’s this image that the French are selfish (Josiane).

36 They had no qualms in telling me: “French people are arrogant!” etc. All these stereotypes, and so I showed them that ok, I am French but I am not arrogant (Leah).
Etrangement il y avait une personne devant nous et je pense qu’il avait un problème et il nous a agressés verbalement: « Oh! Vous êtes des français. Ça se voit. Vous pouvez pas parler anglais. Vous parlez français entre vous, c’est vraiment rude. Ça se fait pas! Rentrez chez vous! Vous méritez bien votre réputation ». Je pense que cette personne était un peu dérangée! (Robert)

This quote demonstrates that although some respondents were hurt by the unwelcoming attitudes of some Australians, there was a better way of handling the issue. Robert and his fiancée dealt with this awful confrontation by surmising that the passenger may have been deranged! They were unhappy to have been accused of disrespect, a sentiment Jacqueline echoes in her comment.

_The image of France is not really good, everybody I have spoken to in Australia, they think that French people don’t like to speak English. They don’t know how to speak English. They think they just speak French. They don’t respect you ... they say: “We don’t speak French here!”_ (Jacqueline).

Once again, Jacqueline’s quote raises the contentious issue of congregated groups of French people being perceived as rude and incapable of speaking English. She sees this as tarnishing the image of their culture, something she gleaned from numerous sources during her sojourn. The resultant lack of respect for her nationality was a grave source of concern for her, manifesting in culture shock because she had not expected this reaction from host nationals prior to arriving in Australia.

Angélica offers her own theory on the reasons for intercultural conflicts between Australians and the French and puts this down to the difference in their humour, a commonly reported viewpoint.

_En France on a un humour très particulier! (Angélica)_

During an altercation caused by a French friend teasing an Australian girl on a social outing, Angélica adopted an observatory stance and reflected on her theory. In this case the Australian girl was offended by the teasing of a French girl whilst she played pool, but her

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37 Strangely, there was someone in front of us and I think he had a problem and he verbally abused us: “Oh! You’re French. It’s obvious! You can’t speak English. You speak French between yourselves, it’s really rude! That is not done! Go home, you deserve your reputation”. I think this person was a little deranged! (Robert).

38 We have a peculiar sense of humour in France! (Angélica).
French counterpart was upset when she was perceived as rude and arrogant, not quite understanding why.

C’est vrai que les australiens étaient un peu choqués quoi! Même si c’est en rigolant! Alors donc du coup, moi je me suis dit: « Si on est considérés aussi rude, bon d’accord on est impolis, on respecte pas les règles, on passe devant tout le monde dans les queues, on s’en fiche, on essaie de pas payer, c’est un peu les clichés mais quelque part c’est un peu la mentalité française quoi » (Angélica).

Angélica’s criticism of her nationality’s cultural reputation for a markedly different sense of humour, their teasing and their irreverence for the rules in general resulted in culture shock because she had not expected these elements of French mentality to clash so drastically with Australian ways. She puts this down to French mentality which was construed as clichés but she could not rebut their accuracy. Her realisation of this fact is significant because it provides evidence of the journey the sojourners make during the developmental process of culture learning. Once this takes place, these sojourners become intercultural, tolerant individuals through intercultural contact situations and harmonious encounters become possible.

Similarly, Thierry’s impression is somewhat ambivalent as he speaks of his annoyance at Australians because they find the French quaint and arrogant but on the other hand he suspects that they may be somewhat justified. In contrast he also believes he is respected and appreciated because he is French.

Je crois qu’on les fait marrer! Ils ont ce côté énervant qu’ils pensent que les français sont arrogants. On doit l’être. C’est peut-être qu’on est trop sûrs de nous, je sais pas, mais ils nous aiment bien, on a ce côté French kiss, passion, ils respectent pas mal ça, et la civilisation aussi ... on a un pays assez cultivé donc tout ça. J’ai toujours l’impression d’être respecté et plutôt apprécié plus parce que je suis français. Les gens disent: « Ah! Il est français! » ... Les profs me retiennent parce que je suis français. On n’est pas nombreux quand même ici (Thierry).

39 It’s true that the Australians were a little shocked! Even in jest! So, I said to myself: “If we are considered as rude, ok, we’re impolite, we don’t respect laws, we push in ahead of others in queues, we don’t care, we try to avoid paying, these are clichés but somehow this is part of French mentality! (Angélica).

40 I think we make them laugh! They have this annoying trait that they think the French are arrogant. It must be true! It’s perhaps that we are so confident, I don’t know, but they quite like us, we have these attributes: French kiss, passion, they respect us for this, and also civilisation … we are a cultivated country and all that. I always get the impression that I am more respected and appreciated because I am French. People say: “Oh! He’s French!” … The lecturers remember me because I am French. There are only few of us here (Thierry).
This quote is representative of the majority of views in this study where the dichotomy of feelings Australians have toward the French emerges on many occasions. Once again, the paradox is placed along a continuum. Australians find French culture laudable and respect the French for this but they do not refrain from criticising their shortcomings. Thierry, like several subjects above, was at a loss to disprove the arrogance of French people. In this instance however, it appears he is respected more than criticised for his cultural origins. Further, the small contingent of French students in universities in Australia again favours them as an international group.

These vignettes show that the French are generally not impressed by the insulting judgemental ways Australians speak of their nationality but they acknowledge their ambivalence also. When challenged about their cultural behaviour, many French respondents retorted with equally damaging comments about the host nationals. However, when they were praised for their French heritage, they modified their stance on pejorative views about the host nationals. This demonstrates how widespread the ambivalent sentiments toward the French were for the subjects, confirming the aforementioned paradox about attitudes toward their nationality. Some respondents preferred to defuse altercations with host nationals by simply avoiding situations that had the potential for intercultural conflict. Their passive attitude however did not hide covert ill-feelings they harboured during these situations. This strategy may be construed as displaying the arrogance they were accused of, which they employed in order to minimise the stress they experienced. Further, they refused their interlocutors the opportunity of justifying their arguments by dismissing their views.

Although the incidence of racist comments toward the French was infrequent, they managed to cause distress. Alain recounts two episodes where a group of French students went on holidays and were insulted because they were speaking French among themselves.

Le seul point où j’ai senti [de l’animosité] de la part des australiens c’était à propos des essais nucléaires. J’étais sur la Barrière de Corail et y avait un plongeur qui m’a bien fait sentir qu’il n’était pas content que je sois froggy, français, parce qu’on avait fait des essais nucléaires dans le Pacifique ... Dernièrement, c’était quand j’étais en vacances avec un groupe de français et on parlait français évidemment. On n’était pas très discrets c’est certain, disons qu’on parlait fort, c’était en plein jour, ya un local australian rural, un bushman d’Australie, il nous a insultés comme des paquets de je sais pas quoi parce qu’on parlait français. Il n’arrêtait pas de nous dire: « Bon, si vous parlez français, vous n’avez
This quote confirms negative Australian attitudes by some members of the public toward the French. Both episodes were near the Barrier Reef in Queensland and the first was targeted at the nuclear testing in the Pacific. The animosity the Australians in question exuded cannot be construed as other than distressing for these sojourners, particularly when told to go back home. After a period of time, there was an increased realisation that Australians liked the French, therefore, the surprise at discovering that there were negative elements within the Australian public contributed to culture shock.

As a riposte to a French lack of knowledge about Australia, some respondents are highly critical of Australian adherence to stereotypical views of the French based on the same premise. The following vignette from Marc indicates how friction and stress can be caused by having to defend French culture because of the damaging views held by the host nationals. He is disparaging in his remarks about this common reaction.

Marc’s quote conveys the inflammatory nature of pre-existing stereotypical views held by Australians in regard to the French. He concludes that their misconceived ideas are at the source of the ambivalence they feel.

The stereotypical images of French and Australian cultures depicted above by both acculturation and repatriation groups respectively are echoed throughout the data where appreciation and denigration of both cultures are prevalent. An interesting point providing consensus however is in relation to gastronomy. Where the Australian counterparts were seen to hold French cuisine in high esteem in some instances, Australian cuisine per se or

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41 The only time I felt [animosity] from Australians was concerning nuclear testing. I was on the Great Barrier Reef and a diver showed his discontent at my being a Froggy, French, because of French nuclear testing in the Pacific … Recently, it was when I was on holidays with a group of French people and of course we were speaking French. We were not very discreet, it’s true, let’s just say we were loud, it was daytime, there was a local rural Australian, a bushman, he realy insulted us because we were speaking French. He didn’t stop telling us: “Well, if you speak French, you can just go home.” We ran into a lower class racist who didn’t appear to socialise much (Alain).
more appropriately the fusion of East-West cuisine did not feature especially as warranting inclusion in terms of admiration, from the French point of view, apart from the Australian tradition of barbecues. For example, Christiane sees this praise of French cuisine as part of the general appreciation of French culture, as did most of her compatriots.

Because they have maybe not so much culture, they like France ... they like the wines, French food because it’s very tasteful, classy, this kind of French elegance. They try to adopt the French culture ... Ahhhhh! Le moment fatidique de l’australien typique - le barbecue - ça c’est bien. On a fait notre premier barbecue avec des étudiants internationaux ... à Springbrook ... mais j’ai jamais fait ça avec des australiens! (Christiane).42

Christiane confirms a commonly held view from her compatriot group that Australians love French culture, gastronomy and so forth ostensibly because they have no culture of their own, especially where cuisine was concerned. The fact that she and her multi-national group took full advantage of the barbecue tradition is indicative of the pleasurable moments this provided for many sojourners. However, the social network groups that these French sojourners chose remained primarily with other international students because friendships with host nationals proved difficult. Disparagement of Australian cuisine also constituted part of culture shock for the French primarily because of its ties to l’art de la table (the art of entertaining) which was completely at odds with Australian culture. Further, many of them had difficulty in adapting to Australian food because their budgetary constraints would not allow them to indulge in French fare should they even find it. This subject was also cause for many incidences of cultural conflict as a result of perceived French arrogance about their gastronomy as Robert’s comment shows.

... La nourriture a été un problème au départ ... on a trouvé la nourriture particulièrement sucrée comparée a la nourriture française. Maintenant étrangement je pense que notre goût s’est habitué au goût australien parce que maintenant on mange du vegemite. On trouvait ça infecte quand on est arrivés ... le fromage est particulièrement cher, donc on achète peu comparé à la France (Robert).43
Criticism of Australian cuisine is further explained in Robert’s quote, expressing general feelings about the sweetness of the food in this instance. In other cases, there was concensus that the fat content in Australian food was similar to that of American food. To counter this, the obsession with fat free products met with disapproval with the purist French who believe that eating properly is more important, even dairy products with high fat content. They adapted to most foods in the end but remained critical of the tendency of Australians eating indiscriminately and at any moment of the day.

4.2.2 Ambivalent views about Australians

The next set of vignettes demonstrates the importance of ambivalent views about the Australian public that characterised the sojourn experience of the French. These views were responsible for both the incidences of culture shock and the eventual ease of integration into the host society by the French. The following comment is also representative of majority views of Australians. The vignette is derived from the re-entry data, where there is a balance between disparagement and praise for the culture one has left, a reaction typically noted whilst one is experiencing a state of reverse culture shock (Storti, 2001b; Ward et al., 2001). Angélica thinks that Australians are

... cool, mais vraiment le terme cool, ils sont un peu ‘slow’, mais ils sont très ouverts, très détendus, no worries mate! Ça c’était l’australien. Et moi c’est ce que j’ai apprécié! (Angélica).  

Angélica’s comment epitomises the feelings that the majority of the French had in regard to their hosts. What it in fact shows is that their views were also paradoxical, such as those propounded by Brigitte earlier. A consensual view in regard to the ambivalence noted above emerged from the re-entry interviews, but others were more of the opinion of Robert who

... feels more cultured than the Australians because he [Robert] has been subjected to cultural influences from Europe ...C’est quand même étrange pourtant. En Australie, ya beaucoup d’influence étrangère, multiculturelle (Robert).  

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44... cool, but really the term cool, they are a little ‘slow’ but they are very open, very relaxed, no worries mate! That was the true Australian. And that is what I appreciated (Angélica).
45... It’s really quite strange though. In Australia, there is a great deal of foreign influence, multicultural (Robert).
Robert’s opinion about Australians appears arrogant and consistent with the views propounded by respondents that Australia lacked culture. His surprise emanates mostly from the fact that Australia is immersed in multiculturalism. Conversely, it is interesting to note that above all other respondents, he was honoured at being selected as best man at the wedding of an Australian friend.

J’ai trois vrais amis australiens … je suis content parce que la semaine prochaine je suis témoin d’un mariage d’un de mes copains australiens. C’est un témoignage de sympathie (Robert).46

Robert counted three Australians among his best friends during his fifteen months on the Gold Coast. This is unusual as many subjects reported difficulties in making friends with Australians. However, many of the participants who cast aspersions on Australians regretted leaving the country at the end of their sojourn, with hopes of returning to live or visit in the near future. They also adopted many cultural traits and customs from their hosts. Uncomplimentary views about Australians however were vigorously refuted by a few enlightened subjects who could not condone that uneducated French critics expect a country that is 200 years old to possess the cultural heritage of centuries of history, epicurean savoir faire and fashion sense that a country such as France embodies. Marc demonstrates his vehement opposition to commonly held, derogatory views about Australian culture. He advocates little tolerance for French people who demean Australia for its lack of culture by calling it inexistente and extols the virtues of a young nation that needs to be appreciated from a different perspective, this, in spite of its somewhat invasive influence from American culture.

… Ça m’énerve un peu parce que c’est voir culture dans un angle un peu restreint en fait, un peu obtus, parce que la culture australienne existe mais elle est faite de différentes choses, par exemple le sport. La place du sport dans la culture australienne est très, très importante … les National Parks, le respect de la nature, c’est typiquement australien … la cuisine australienne, à Sydney ou Melbourne, on fait une cuisine cosmopolite, des mélange entre l’asiatique et l’européen (Marc).47

46 I have 3 real Australian friends … I am happy because next week I am best man at the wedding of one of my Australian friends. This is a mark of friendship (Robert).
47 … It irritates me a little because that’s seeing culture through a rather restrained angle, a little obtuse, because Australian culture exists, but it is composed of different elements, for example, sports. It’s place in Australian culture is very very important … national parks, respect for nature, it’s typically Australian … Australian cuisine in Sydney or Melbourne, there is a cosmopolitan cuisine, a mixture of Asian and European (Marc).
Marc’s comment embodies what he considers to be the best elements of Australian culture, perceptibly different from the facets of French culture. In this quote he adopts the same defensive stance taken earlier for French culture as perceived by Australians. He in fact criticised both nationalities for their judgemental attitudes towards one another, a factor that can effectively provoke conflict situations. His emotionally charged statements, used in defense of both cultures, shows perspicacity on his part, demonstrating how the process of adjustment in a new country can culminate positively, producing balanced and tolerant individuals.

In summary, it was revealed that one of the recurrent themes emerging from the data on the French which occasioned negative judgements of French people by the host culture concerned their overt national and cultural pride. The vignettes epitomised the perception that the majority of the French students have of their culture, a feature which was recorded by a large number of subjects as contributing to misunderstandings between the respective groups. These nationalistic views in fact contributed to varying degrees of culture shock in the early stages of the adjustment process. Conflict situations are difficult to avoid if international French sojourners are typically considered as arrogant by virtue of their own testimony. This was largely due to the pre-existing perceptions endorsed by Australians about the French in general and confirmed during sojourn exchange encounters.

Nationalistic cultural views expressed by the French had the potential to correlate with a negative adjustment process, particularly if discord results between cultures based on stereotypes and cultural biases. This was fortunately averted through positive attitudinal change.

It is also intriguing to note that the ambiguity felt in relation to these issues by many French sojourners, closely linked to perceptions of cultural stereotypes, is indicative of predictable patterns frequently reported during the initial stages of adjustment and readjustment in contemporary acculturation and re-entry literature (Bond, 1986; Byram, 1999). For example, Byram’s (1999) views on the effects of stereotypical judgements in intercultural situations substantiates the arguments propounded in this chapter. Commenting on the Canadian context, he suggests the teaching of French was promoted with the aim of improving relations between the French and English language groups. He argues stereotypes about French speakers held by English speakers are prejudicial to unification processes of the two cultural groups and language teaching is a possible solution for this problem, although it must be recognised that positive attitudes cannot be
forced on people. The importance of this feature in foreign language teaching is highlighted through the development of cultural awareness.

There are however, researchers who are not convinced that negative stereotypical views can be dissipated completely (cf. Liberman, 1994; Lin & Yi, 1997; Stroebe et al., 1988). For example, Stroebe et al. (1988) argue that two assumptions made about the impact of student exchange on national stereotypes are deceptively plausible. They argue that these assumptions are predicated firstly on acceptance that stereotypes and attitudes play a causal role in generating, preserving or exacerbating intergroup conflicts. Secondly, one can assume that the intercultural exchange typically alters stereotypes in ways that favour the host nation, thus serving a function in conflict reduction. The latter is however contingent on favourable conditions empowering the resolution of conflictful situations, such as intercultural contact between visitors and hosts being equal status, voluntary and cooperative (Ward et al., 2001). Stroebe et al. suggest that although the emphasis is on stereotypes as products and not initial causes of intergroup conflict and hostility, one can generally assume that negative stereotypes and attitudes can prejudice future interactions during intercultural exchange situations between members possessing these characteristics. Both these assumptions were found to correlate positively with my study on the French sojourners in Australia. On the other hand, Stoebe et al.’s study of American students in France and Germany reported a dramatically different picture. After their year in France, there was no evidence of improvement in the students’ attitudes or stereotypes toward their hosts. On the contrary, there was more antipathy toward the hosts with increased negative views of the French. In this case, familiarity evidently did breed contempt. The report indicates that difficulties in meeting locals as well as apparent hostility toward Americans contributed to this outcome.

In the current study, judgemental attitudes which can provoke incidences of culture shock on the one hand were subsequently balanced with positive and tolerant views on the other, which dispelled potentially conflicting situations on the road to adjustment in a new culture. This will become more apparent during the course of ensuing chapters. In spite of broad and clear stereotypical impressions of both cultures, by both groups, the French sojourners, the host nationals and the multi-national groups co-existed harmoniously in the same geographical space without unresolved overt conflict, akin to Bond’s (1986) findings on the constructive aspects of stereotyping and their role in the maintenance of harmony in intercultural contact situations of sojourners. Opper’s (1990) study on the impacts of study
abroad on students and graduates is another example. Opper argued that on the basis of European findings, the degree of knowledge and corresponding opinions correlated closely with stereotypical views where knowledge was low and that as a result of information gleaned from the intercultural experience such thinking was counteracted.

The French participants of my study can be classified as having adopted an ethnographic technique in cultural learning in the Australian context, constituting an effective modus operandi which provides opportunities for cultural learning (Liddicoat et al., 2003). This is achieved through interactions taking place with members of the target language such as sojourns in the target country. Although these researchers claim that in-country experience does not necessarily promote intercultural awareness and positive attitudes to the culture in question, they concede some studies (e.g. Armstrong, 1984; Barnlund, 1997; Hannigan, 1990; Hashimoto, 1993) have revealed that such exposure to the target language norms may culminate in the development of greater self-confidence in communicative situations using the target language and more positive attitudes to and greater understanding of cultural distinctions. On the other hand, intercultural preparation is advocated as a key factor in determining a positive or negative outcome. This feature has overwhelming support from literature. Notwithstanding the fact that the French sojourners in this study had almost unanimously been ill-prepared for their experience in Australia, a positive outcome was experienced by all respondents. This was however, not without varying degrees of culture shock during the early stages of their sojourn. Now the attention turns to issues of significant concern for the contingent of French sojourners, academic issues which precipitated culture shock.

4.2.3 Culture shock and academic issues

Problems arising from the distinctive academic cultures of France and Australia constituted a form of culture shock for this group. This matter features quite significantly in the present study as all but three respondents from both longitudinal and cross-sectional groups have attested to English proficiency problems and issues with academic best practices constituting culture shock during their early adaptation phase at their host universities. Barnlund (1997) offers an interesting point of view to analyse this situation of culture shock. When individuals from different psychological worlds meet, there are often clashes in cultural perspectives and communicative codes which ultimately sabotage any attempt at understanding each other. He argues the foreigner may leave behind him/her a trail of
frustration, mistrust or hatred, sentiments of which he/she is blissfully unaware. The outcome is neither party, the foreigner, nor the host individual, comprehends that this conflict arises from deeply rooted rhetoric on which their society is predicated. Further, Barnlund argues people essentially view their world through categories, concepts and labels that represent products of their culture. They share similar beliefs, values and attitudes. As communication is cultural, it stands to reason that distinctions between cultures engender different communication practices and behaviours (Barnlund, 1997). In light of these arguments, the acknowledged cultural similarity between the French and Australians resulted in a resolution of difficulties between the two and shared meanings became possible.

There is consensus among researchers that although most problems are not exclusive of other cross-cultural travellers, such as linguistic difficulties (linguistic shock), discrimination, homesickness and loneliness, the most important concerns pertaining to international students relate to personal and social difficulties (interpersonal relationships) and sociocultural adaptation problems (adjustment to different norms and customs). In addition to these, the sojourning student faces added pressures in their role of ‘foreign ambassador’, a role readily assumed by most but firmly rejected by others (Church, 1982; Kennedy, 1999; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

In this section, if problematic sojourner adjustment prototypes in a foreign culture can be conceptualised as variations of their inter-connectedness with the traditional expression ‘culture shock’, the ensuing analysis of the data will provide evidence of French sojourner adaptation in Australia in terms of academic difficulties with subsequent degrees of linguistic shock, satisfaction in performance and interpersonal problems during interactions with the host nationals and compatriots. The point I wish to argue is that the academic problems experienced by the French students in Australia have developed essentially because of vastly different principles in educational systems between the two cultures closely linked to linguistic difficulties. The visitors reported that French pedagogy in foreign language learning was to blame for their poor command of the target language even after many years of study (cf. Smalley, 1963). Their indictment of the system is predicated on traditional methods of instruction in foreign languages in France, where little emphasis is placed on cultural acquisition as a dynamic process. This process is intrinsically linked with language acquisition, a lack of knowledge about the target country as well as inadequate intercultural preparation prior to departure.
4.2.3.1 Linguistic Shock

When a sojourner’s foreign language experiences are problematic, with subsequent varying degrees of difficulty in expression and comprehension, this may be regarded as linguistic shock (cf. Smalley, 1963). Possible causes for the difficulties may emanate from a vastly different pedagogy in language teaching from different countries involved but also largely from the inadequate preparation of the sojourner who arrives in a foreign land expecting to cope with only minimal practice. Linguistic shock may occur when international students expect to communicate well, believing they have sufficient knowledge in the language, and instead, are disappointed and frustrated when their efforts are thwarted as a result of accents and colloquial expressions that form part of that culture’s repertoire. The state of linguistic shock is differentiated here from the general phenomenon of culture shock but is analogous to it. This term can thus be employed because it pertains to the domain of language. Linguistic shock also tends to occur during the initial period of adjustment and can manifest in stressful situations until coping strategies have been devised to mitigate its negative effects.

Firstly Clément expresses his views on the subject.

*Yavait juste la barrière de la langue. Au début c’était vraiment difficile (Clément).* 48

Clément, like others, dealt with the linguistic problem by focusing on contact with other than French people in order to overcome the linguistic difficulties. He reported suggesting to his friend, also part of the same exchange, that they find appartments separately for the purposes of improving their English, a strategy which proved quite successful for those who applied it.

The following quotes offer an insight into the measure of inadequacy levelled at French foreign language pedagogy as seen by the students because as previously mentioned, their lack of preparation in general, coupled with their inadequate language background, contributed to adjustment difficulties in a multicultural milieu where other European foreigners at least had an excellent command of English. When they arrived in their Australian classrooms, they felt frustrated because they were ill-equipped to cope with classroom discussions, clearly due to a lack of proficiency in oral skills in English.

48 There was just this language barrier. Initially, it was really difficult (Clément).
Secondly, they were bewildered by the broad Australian accent, the speed of interlocutors and slang utilised, especially in telephone conversations and more often than not, by Asian students’ accents in English. Firstly, Kati recounts her distress and embarrassment especially during telephone conversations including the address she was given for her shared accommodation in “Ron Penhaligon Way” which the estate agent was forced to repeat several times.

... Le téléphone, l’accent australien, l’argot, et le fait qu’on soit pas habitué et qu’ils parlent trop vite, c’était horrible ... je comprenais rien (Kati).  

She then explains:

J’avais un bon score en TOEFL mais je sais que j’ai toujours eu beaucoup de problèmes dans la practice et surtout tout ce qui est speaking and listening. J’ai énormément de mal déjà à comprendre. Je comprends pas pourquoi après avoir fait la PREPA en France, ça avait relevé mon niveau en anglais ... comme me disait mon prof, j’avais un bon vocab, une bonne grammaire, et la prononciation était terrible! It’s such a pity! Parler anglais c’était toujours un challenge (Kati).  

Kati’s comment is a criticism of the French educational system that systematically upgrades the students to enhanced levels of language learning purely based on the written command of the language. She was at a loss to understand why advancement to the next level was based on the simple fact of having completed the difficult Preparatory class (PREPA) at her institution. Both she and her teacher were under no illusions as to her oral and listening skills in English, whilst both professed to her having an excellent standard in other areas. Her TOEFL score was the reason she was selected to participate in an Australian exchange and she had no doubt expected to cope because of this. Speaking English was in fact an enormous challenge for her. For this reason, her fears of linguistic shock were realised (cf. Jochems et al., 1996).

Even Josiane who had an Australian father who lived in France was not spared linguistic difficulties and frustrations when she began her journalism degree.

49 … The telephone, the Australian accent, slang, and the fact that we were not used to English, and that they spoke too quickly, it was horrible … I couldn’t understand anything (Kati).
50 I had a good TOEFL score but I know I always had a problem in practice especially with speaking and listening. I have great difficulty with comprehension. I don’t understand why, after completing the PREPA course in France, I had been advanced to a higher level … like my teacher used to say, I had a good vocabulary base, a good grasp of grammar, and my pronunciation was awful! It’s such a pity! Speaking English was always a challenge (Kati).
Josiane’s problem was mostly in comprehension and the formulating of intellectual thoughts for assignments rather than speaking because she had never been exposed to a broad Australian accent in spite of having an Australian father. Further, concentrating for two to three hours at a time in order to focus on the development of intellectually appropriate ideas, posed a problem for her.

Along similar lines, Gilbert who had previously been to Anglo-Saxon countries on study trips expected few linguistic problems. However he surmised it was a combination of factors to do with the Australian accent, jet lag and homesickness, but he just could not understand English. During the first two to three weeks at his home stay he was so distressed that he cried and wanted to go home.

Gilbert’s experience constituted a combination of cultural and linguistic shock once again precisely because he had not expected the Australian accent to be problematic. He was greatly distressed and wished to go home because the shock of not being able to comprehend his interlocutors coupled with homesickness, was severe.

51 The hardest thing was to hand in assignments initially and to understand lectures, firstly because of the Australian accent. I was not used to hearing such a strong accent. Secondly, it was also getting used to English for two, three hours intensively and trying to understand it from an intellectual perspective and to develop one’s ideas (Josiane).

52 The person who came to pick me up … I could understand one in three words … plus jetlag and exhaustion. I couldn’t understand because I was tired, and I spoke English well! I had good marks in school and I was surprised in fact. I understood everything the teachers said but faced with Australians who spoke like Australians, it was the accent! Initially, I really couldn’t understand, even if the host mother spoke slowly … and in the second and third weeks, I cried. What was I doing in this country, so far from my family? Yet, in Florida, one is not so far away, an eight hour flight but in Australia it was not possible. It was my first experience of total immersion and that was what was so hard (Gilbert).
A composite of vignettes presents the consensus of views on the subject of linguistic shock because this was a topic that generated much discontent.

... et la peur qui est toujours française de pas toujours bien parler, de pas avoir un bon accent etc. (Natalie).

Natalie explains that there appears to be an innate fear among the French of not speaking English well and especially with a bad accent. Her comment pertains to the notion that ‘native speaker proficiency’ should be the goal of second language acquisition. Natalie’s comment indicates that there is more at stake where foreign language speaking is concerned. This may have a lot to do with the pride and savoir faire of the French, which is allegedly lacking in the domain of foreign language learning.

Diane and Brigitte provide evidence of the type of comments that their accents provoked. Brigitte was mortified by her self-professed “bad accent” and was upset that she could not go unnoticed in any situation. She was clearly stressed because she believed people thought her arrogant as a result of what most Australians referred to as her sexy French accent. This can be seen as the direct result of traditional foreign language pedagogies in France. With intercultural language teaching methodologies, Brigitte would have established a comfortable third place as a speaker of the foreign language, speaking it fluently but with her own particular accent (cf. Liddicoat et al., 1999). It was in fact Diane, whose distinguished English accent was not representative of her co-national group, who tried to analyse why Brigitte complained about her accent.

I have some classmates and they say that my accent is sexy. The French accent is sexy when ... more when I speak French ... I can’t explain because most French people have a strong accent, like a friend of mine [Brigitte] and she complains about this and I try to analyse why she does this. I think I have a musical ear ... I’m used to the music so I can adapt to another accent. I can mimmick, copy another accent (Diane).

Diane prided herself on her excellent English and appeared to thrive on compliments that her linguistic abilities far surpassed those of her co-nationals. She put this down to a musical ear and training but could not really understand why Brigitte objected so strongly to her accent.

... and the fear, that is French, of not speaking properly, of not having a good accent etc. (Natalie).
When I speak English with English or Australian people I meet, I get the impression that because of my accent, I come across as a little arrogant … Maybe one prefers to remain inconspicuous, but for me it was embarrassing … You have a tendency to have little self-confidence, you say to yourself: “Oh là là! My English seems so bad” [even French people here] they tell me I have a strong accent. When they tell me: “Oh! You’re French!” it makes me uncomfortable (Brigitte).

Robert’s comment reflects more commonly held impressions from the study.

Robert remarks that Australian slang made comprehension difficult. He notes that at the start there are problems because international students remain emphatically sojourners, temporary visitors who are in Australia for a short term. He sees the language barrier as a factor which contributes to culture shock manifesting in difficulties in the adjustment process.

In the following quote, Marc confirms the frustration and exhaustion that having to speak English continually produced. However, he resisted seeking out other co-nationals to resolve this problem.

54 When I speak English with English or Australian people I meet, I get the impression that because of my accent, I come across as a little arrogant … Maybe one prefers to remain inconspicuous, but for me it was embarrassing … You have a tendency to have little self-confidence, you say to yourself: “Oh là là! My English seems so bad” [even French people here] they tell me I have a strong accent. When they tell me: “Oh! You’re French!” it makes me uncomfortable (Brigitte).

55 [I experienced] culture shock more with the language initially because Australians aren’t exactly easy to understand. It was a problem originally because they use a lot of slang, it’s true it was not easy at the start. We are there for a short term, we don’t live our lives here … given the language barrier, we are not Australians. We speak English badly, we are perceived as a foreigner (Robert).
... I have to say that sometimes I felt really tired of speaking in English and I just wanted to get up and speak in French with my flatmate but he didn’t speak French. So that was a bit hard sometimes. I was just so tired, so tired of speaking English ... but I don’t think I actively looked for people speaking French (Marc).

Joachim’s comments below echo the feelings expressed by Marc who found it very stressful to be speaking English all the time in the beginning.

Ce qui était dur au début c’était de parler tout le temps l’anglais ... j’ai eu vraiment mal à la tête de parler toute la journée en anglais ... J’avais l’impression de tourner en rond niveau vocab, d’utiliser toujours les mêmes mots ... c’était assez limité mais après j’ai vite acquis le vocab grâce aux cours, suivre la télé en anglais tout ça ... J’aime pas prendre la parole, je n’ai pas beaucoup parlé en classe. Tout le monde discute mais j’aime pas trop ça moi (Joachim).  

Joachim’s stress however, culminated in headaches because of the intensive concentration needed each day. He overcame this problem by acquiring vocabulary and watching television but in spite of this, his educational training and cultural classroom practices precluded him from participating in class discussions. It became apparent that one of the greatest threats to French sojourners’self-expression in English classrooms is that they feel intimidated by the fluency of other European international students in particular. Angélica’s comment earlier reflected common sentiments on the subject. Here, Arlette provides further evidence of notable distinctions in classroom practices, again suggestive of majority views.


Arlette’s comment is a clear example of majority views, stating that the fluency of other interlocutors in class is intimidating for the French. Consequently, few volunteer to

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56 What was hard was speaking English all the time ... I really got a headache from speaking English all day. I got the impression of going around in circles with the vocab, of always using the same words. It was quite limited but afterwards I quickly learned the vocab thanks to the classes and watching TV in English and all that ... I don’t like to initiate conversations, I didn’t speak much in class. Everyone speaks but I don’t like that (Joachin).

57 [I didn’t speak] at all in the classes. No, oh no! not at all! ... especially self-confidence, especially seeing all the others who succeeded in discussing so well, who were so comfortable in fact. No, I didn’t feel at all good. I had no self-confidence (Arlette).
participate in class discussions. Further, the divergent classroom practices play a major role in adjustment in a foreign classroom (cf. Cortazzi & Jin, 1997).

Brigitte’s annoyance and frustration at being too slow to participate in the Master of Laws tutorials during the initial stages of adaptation is a commonly occurring reaction in this study especially for those who are talkative and outgoing but she also confessed to being a perfectionist, which could only have exacerbated the situation.

... Pendant les premiers temps c’est certain qu’au niveau de la participation, on traduit du français à l’anglais. Pendant qu’on fait ça, quelqu’un a dit votre question et voilà! Donc c’est super énervant! … Il fallait que je sois au top pour vraiment réussir et avoir de bonnes notes. Je voulais faire le maximum et puis c’était mon challenge! … Quand j’entreprends quelque chose, quand c’est mon projet, mon bébé, j’aime que ce soit parfait (Brigitte).58

Brigitte explains that by the time the French students process and translate the information mentally, it is too late to participate, should they have wanted to. The need for her to adapt to legal jargon was coupled with the loneliness she expressed is a feature of the Master of Laws programme because working independently meant less access to other English speakers, compounding the stress she experienced.

An interesting coping strategy utilised by Jacqueline on the other hand was to brave criticism from her confident peers by participating regardless of the errors she made. This proved successful in overcoming the fear and intimidation she felt. She psyched herself in the following manner.

Ecoute! Tant pis! Tu te lances, sinon tu vas jamais parler! Je pense que c’est toute une question d’attitude, la volonté de parler ou pas. Il faut la confiance en soi aussi. Je pense que la personnalité joue un grand rôle (Jacqueline).59

This quote reveals strength of character on Jacqueline’s part who refused to allow the linguistics shock she experienced to marr her sojourn. Her professor’s encouragement was instrumental in her fast progress with the language on this count. This was also commonly

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58 … Initially it’s true that where participation is concerned, one translates from French to English. Whilst we are doing that someone has asked your question and there you are! So it’s really annoying! … I had to be at my best to really succeed and to have good marks. I wanted to do the maximum and then again, it’s my challenge! … When I start something, when it’s my project, my baby, I want it to be perfect (Brigitte).
59 Listen! Too bad! Get into it, or else you are never going to speak. I think it’s a question of attitude, the desire to speak or not. One needs self-confidence too. I think that personality plays a big role (Jacqueline).
recounted in the interviews. Linguistic difficulties in cross-cultural education are only to be expected but the personality of each sojourner, as well as individual learning styles, play significant roles in how quickly these problems are resolved, if ever (Banks & Banks, 1995; Chen, 1994; Irvine & York, 1995; Shade & New, 1993; Thomas, 1994; Ward et al., 2001). Jacqueline puts it down to a question of attitude, the desire to speak or not, but admits that a certain amount of self-confidence may be necessary, something she gained through this experience. She took this opportunity to enhance her personality and character and succeeded because of a strong will.

The importance of personality traits is reiterated in Kati’s reflections on this subject. Like Brigitte, she is very talkative but professes to be reserved.

... *Je me suis rendu compte que dans une autre langue on est moins timide. En fait on parle pas sa langue. On a l’impression que c’est une autre personne qui parle, donc ça devient un jeu (Kati).*

In this quote, Kati drew a parallel between foreign language speaking and acting. She equated this to playing a game, or becoming an observer, assuming an actor’s role which proved to be an excellent method for losing her shyness. She managed to unwind and relax mentally, coping better as time went on.

A certain degree of stress was generated, because in the academic setting more concretely, the accents of Asian students in particular made it very difficult for the French to follow discussions. Further, they reported that the lack of common frames of reference made discussions often intolerable. Criticism was based on the fact that there was no yardstick apart from the lecturer’s accent, by which the students could gauge their progress in English proficiency. In addition, especially because it had been largely unexpected, the significant Asian presence in the student population, as well as the general social fabric of Australian society, created a situation which contributed to linguistic shock because the French claimed that they met negligible numbers of what they considered to be ‘real Australians’. This reportedly hindered their improvement of English. These appeared to be legitimate reasons for unhappiness in the French contingent because their academic sojourn had been based on the premise of an experience in an Anglo-Saxon environment; therefore they were disappointed to encounter a vastly different situation. This manifested

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60 ... I realised that in another language one is less shy. In fact, you’re not speaking your language. You get the impression that it’s another person speaking, so it becomes a game (Kati).
in stress and disappointment because it made the formation of friendship networks with host nationals even harder than empirical research suggests. Many respondents were ambivalent about the multicultural make-up of the university population, in this instance, grateful because of its obvious advantages, but Brigitte’s comment is typical of the dissatisfaction felt during the intensive English course she attended during one semester prior to beginning her Master of Laws at the university. Her views reflect the majority opinion.

What I liked when I arrived here was I could talk to Asian people because it was very international here in the campus. You see more Asian people than Australians. So actually that was hard as well for me because the accents were so different. For instance the Indians, they don’t speak very good sometimes. They have a strong accent. Maybe my English was not so bad … maybe I was not so confident with my English but the thing is it was worse because I was meeting people from other countries with other accents other than English ones. And I couldn’t know if my accent was good because they were doing mistakes and I had only my teacher to know what was exactly my level and what was English exactly … in my class I was the only European out of 20 … so it was difficult for me to know how I was progressing. We didn’t do things the same … for instance reading and talking about the text, we didn’t have the same view of the article, not the same culture, not the same way of thinking as the French (Brigitte).

Brigitte complains about the Asian student contingent which was problematic in group discussions because of the culturally different work mentality and frames of reference. She had no Australians to compare with which substantiates the claim made above that the students could not gauge their progress without the perceived ‘correct’ standard of English.

The following excerpts demonstrate how the typical linguistic problems encountered during classroom interaction affected others. Lise has an interesting way of describing the Asian accent in English.

They were speaking like sausages, you know, like the words cut so it was difficult to understand them but it’s like everything, you get used to it (Lise).

This quote adds a different dimension to problems caused in the linguistic domain. The fragmented speech of Asian students contributed to the difficulties the French generally experienced. Véronique offers another perspective to this argument.

Véronique admits in this instance that it was not only the Asian students who augmented the linguistic shock they experienced, that in fact this appeared to be a mutual problem, characteristic of language schools, because the French accent caused difficulties as well. She clearly admitted to complicating the process for other foreigners also. The data showed that only one French student from Paris was completely unskilled in English. The distinction in levels of stress is obvious by the intensity of Adrienne’s complete cultural and linguistic shock on the Gold Coast.

Alors, à part le choc linguistique total … le premier choc culturel … enfin c’était au deuxième weekend et j’étais sortie avec un australien qui travaille ici … on est sortis en boîte, en groupe et je me suis retrouvée toute seule, entourée … de purs australiens, sans un mot d’anglais. Je comprenais un petit peu … et là je me suis dit: « Les gens sont sympas, ils ont l’air gentils, mais je comprends pas. Ça va être dur ». Je suis arrivée à Surfers et surtout c’était la nuit, et je me suis dit: « C’est l’endroit où je vais habiter pendant huit mois ». Yavait des enseignes japonaises partout … Mince, elle est où la beauté de l’Australie quoi? … Mais tout est aseptisé, touristique, c’est vraiment qu’ya rien d’original, ya pas un cachet (Adrienne)62

Adrienne’s comment represents the embodiment of a complete cultural and linguistic shock because she alone had no prior knowledge of English. Nor had she prepared herself for her sojourn. It is not surprising that the initial stages of her adaptation process should result in anxiety and depression upon realising the degree of the difficulties confronting her. These feelings made her reassess the decision she had taken to come to Australia because she was clearly shocked by the unexpected touristic “Australian” milieu displaying an abundance of Japanese signs. She had not known that the Gold Coast was a

61 There were many Asians and it’s true that initially, I had trouble understanding them as they had understanding me. Because with our accent! [French accent] … [The Australian accent] is quite strong and there were expressions I found very difficult. Slang … but as I was in class with Asians they also have their own accent. They said they had trouble understanding my French accent (Véronique).

62 So, apart from total linguistic shock … the first cultural shock … it was during the second weekend and I had gone out with an Australian who works here … we went to a night club, in a group and I found myself alone, surrounded … by real Australians, without a word of English. I understood a little … and I said to myself: “People are nice, they seem kind, but I don’t understand”. It’s going to be hard … I arrived in Surfers and it was evening, and I said to myself: “This is the place where I will spend eight months”. There were Japanese signs everywhere … Damn, where is the beauty of Australia? But everything is sterile, touristic, it’s really that there is nothing original, not one element (Adrienne).
popular tourist destination. Adrienne’s experience is mirrored in Smalley’s (1963) research as he describes language shock as one of the basic ingredients of culture shock. He argues the sojourner is humbled by the foreign cultural experience because of a lack of the most essential element for communication. As individuals find themselves without the cues to interpersonal relationships, they are reduced to childish behaviour in their conversations, belying their level of intelligence and education.

Smalley’s arguments are clearly relevant to this chapter as language shock, a term employed by many participants involved in this study, was a primary contributor to culture shock for the French students who admitted poor proficiency in spoken English upon arrival in Australia. This was diametrically opposed to their self-professed excellent proficiency in written skills. Smalley (1963) argues that language shock is one of the main components of culture shock for it is in this domain, the language area, where many of the cues to interpersonal relations are found. In the worst cases, if the newcomer is totally inept in the foreign language, (epitomised by Adrienne’s case), the stranger is deprived of his primary means of interacting with others. The data revealed Adrienne was subject to constant mistakes, comprehending little that was going on around her. Smalley compares this to being placed on the level of a child once again. This situation is not easily rectified. This experience is symptomatic of issues to do with self-worth as the individual in this position is unable to display his/her education and intelligence, the symptoms responsible for the ascribed status and security at home. In this position, Adrienne was incapable of relating intellectually to her peers and lecturers in the university setting in other than childish utterances, for want of a more complex way of expressing herself. Adrienne’s coping mechanism in this first phase of culture shock was to resort to her co-national flat mate who eased the process of communication considerably for her. Findings indicated that not only Adrienne’s case provided evidence of these sentiments. There was general consensus from the data that these views are consistent with Smalley’s contentions.

In summary, this section has presented evidence of linguistic shock experienced by the French sojourners in an academic context primarily, but also in the wider Australian society. The vignettes utilised were offered in substantiation for the various types of linguistic shock they experienced, attributable mostly to the Australian accent, slang and foreign interpretation of English. This constituted perhaps the most stressful aspect of culture shock for this group because of its potentially negative effects on their academic performance and psychological well being. These findings are reflected in other studies.
(Jochems et al., 1996; Smalley, 1963), with Jochems et al.’s (1996) study, for instance, finding that students perceive limited language skills as contributing significantly to their academic problems. The fact that the French apportioned blame on French foreign language pedagogy did nothing to alleviate the traumas they underwent in the first phase of acculturation until a satisfactory state had been attained. These researchers argue the measures used to determine language proficiency, such as the TOEFL test, are questionable as a good predictor of academic success as this test does not evaluate the qualities necessary to complete a study in a foreign language adequately, covering only selected aspects of proficiency. The elitist selection criteria were conceivably preferred to distinguish those with better proficiency in English. However, although the majority of respondents attested to excellent written skills in this language, their self-reported poor oral skills in English was reason for disappointment and distress upon arrival in Australia. This factor clearly exacerbated their stress levels. These researchers also admit that the trend suggests that language proficiency is more important for academic success in non-technological courses, such as in social sciences for instance, a point also substantiated by my study.

4.2.3.2 Academic culture and culture shock

Apart from linguistic difficulties reported by the majority of French sojourners, dramatic differences in thought processes for academic writing were responsible for the myriad of difficulties experienced by these students. Academic writing and linguistic difficulties constituted a high degree of culture shock for the group. It is a natural reaction for international students to compare academic settings in their country to that of the host country, but generally, sentiments were polarised between those who preferred one system to the other. Practices in classroom interaction rated as a major stressor for the French as interactive classes, which they reported to be rare to non-existent in France, are an integral part of normal academic expectations in Australia. The fact that participation is crucial and counted towards final results caused major distress for the French who openly admitted that their accent was poor, and they lacked the confidence to integrate into the Australian classroom. This view is reflected in the following comment by Jacqueline, who professed difficulties in this area.
Jacqueline’s comparison of the different academic cultures sets the scene for the types of problems experienced by the French during their sojourn.

A fundamental feature of interaction between cultures, communication and learning is that international students bring academic cultures and theories with them into the foreign classroom but that they also use these cultural perspectives to interpret and evaluate other people’s worlds, actions and academic performance. Academic cultures are the constructs of beliefs, expectations and cultural practices of academic performance (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). When writing their dissertations, the French students assumed they were communicating what they had learned. However, the interpretation of the lecturers did not always resonate with their views. Further, and more importantly, the referencing system was cause for concern for these students who could not comprehend why they were not allowed to argue their point without referring to a researcher who had conceived the idea in the first instance. The culture shock this generated was seen to be dramatic as grades fell consistently until students learned to abide by the rules.

There was consensus on the issue of academic writing requirements in Australia as contributing to the general anxiety experienced by the French. The Australian academic culture attracted much criticism because the principles were directly at odds with their educational training (cf. Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). Firstly, adherence to an unfamiliar referencing system left the French students totally bemused and highly stressed. Not to mention the fact that “plagiarism” for them does not have the same connotations as in Australia. This fact in particular represented serious distress for some students who could not understand why their habitual excellent standards in essays were systematically downgraded due to a failure to reference correctly. As a result of this, they seriously questioned their intellectual abilities which in turn provoked more anxiety due to fear of failure in their course work. Secondly, they targeted the workload of various subjects as particularly stressful, especially in the number and length of assignments required. The Master of Laws students in particular testified to this. They found this aspect quite onerous, especially when it involved a lot of research and referencing. Further, the problem was

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63… Participation carries a lot of weight. We have very interactive courses in Australia, much more than in France where it’s less communicative (Jacqueline).
compounded because there was little opportunity to improve their English in this situation. The most practical coping strategy used here was to observe more closely the booklet on referencing methodologies offered them, which soon became more important than their bilingual dictionaries. It usually took but one bad result in an essay before the unsuspecting student adhered to the rules.

The following examples are an indication of the frequent occurrence of this type of situation. The first quote is taken from Marc’s interview.

... Donc, j’ai dû m’adapter; ça a été difficile mais mes profs ont vite compris que j’étais étranger, que j’avais été habitué à quelque chose d’autre, et m’ont expliqué quoi faire. On n’a pas l’habitude de références, et puis le plagiat on en parlait, mais moi je comprenais pas parce qu’on faisait toute une histoire autour du plagiat et en France on a plus l’habitude d’apporter ses idées à soi plutôt que de chercher des idées que quelqu’un d’autre a exprimé. Moi je mettais mes idées et j’ai eu une très mauvaise note. Donc j’ai compris! (Marc).

Marc notes that given the difficulties experienced, one is forced to adapt quickly. He also admits that the patience of lecturers cannot be underestimated in the equation. Added to this, an analogous comment from Natalie confirms this view.

... [Referencer], alors ça c’était le stress! Le plagiat qui n’existe presque pas [en France] ...de faire attention à bien tout référencer, ça aide à être très structuré. Ça a été du boulot de plus quoi! (Natalie).

Natalie’s quote indicates the magnitude of this problem for French sojourners, translating in anxiety. Like many international students, Monique had recourse to social support systems to resolve the academic problems.

It was very difficult for me to write because I missed references ... because in France you don’t need to reference. You have to just write your ideas ... If you don’t have any references you get a bad mark [in Australia]. [In] my first essay, even if my ideas were good it was not enough. You got only 50% because you didn’t put references. I was so disappointed because for me in France it would be a really good paper. I thought: “Oh my

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64 ... So I had to adapt; it was hard but my teachers quickly understood that I was a foreigner, that I was used to different methods and they explained what I had to do ... We are not used to referencing, and then plagiarism was mentioned but I didn’t understand because they were going on about plagiarism and in France one is more used to expressing one’s own ideas rather than searching for ideas expressed by others. I used to offer my ideas and I got a really bad mark. So I understood! (Marc).
65 ... [Referencing], well that was stressful! Plagiarism almost doesn’t exist [in France] ... making sure you reference everything helps you to be very structured. It was a lot of extra work (Natalie).
God!” And I didn’t like this English academic way to do it. First of all it was very difficult, so I asked to Australian people to help me with it. And to English friends and they corrected me and it was ok ... (Monique).

Monique’s quote shows what the majority of students did to reconcile this problem in the early stages of their sojourn. Their successful adjustment was contingent on finding ways of minimising the severity of the issue of correct academic writing and it appears that this was obtained through the host-national support network (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). Further, criticism of their academic achievements could also be construed as a slight on their self-esteem. Once home in particular, this could seriously affect their re-entry process if they are judged as having performed poorly abroad. It was critical that they learn how to address this problem if their standards were to be maintained. It appears that those who found this area much less stressful belonged in faculties where the practice of academic writing was not featured extensively, such as for instance in Information Technology. The biggest problem apart from being obliged to follow very difficult styles of writing concerned the perception that the student’s opinion has no value in Australian academic writing. It was severe culture shock and frustrating to say the least for most students who regarded it as an insult and clearly resented being challenged on this issue. Léah gives her opinion on this.

[Ce système] ça m’a beaucoup gênée parce que j’avais l’impression qu’il fallait que je trouve des auteurs ... et j’avais donné mon opinion pour les essais ... En France on peut donner son avis personnel si on justifie, soutenu par des auteurs ... mais en Australie la démarche ... c’est finalement plus un travail de recherche et on a un sujet de réflexion et il faut comparer plusieurs thèmes d’auteurs différents et c’est pas vraiment ce qu’on a à dire (Léah).66

The preceding quote epitomises the vexation experienced by many French sojourners because they were not allowed to exercise their usual method of self-expression. Clearly, they believe that the inclusion of a reference section acknowledging the literary sources utilised at the conclusion of their essays offers sufficient evidence of use of sources. The shock they felt in this regard was tantamount to an insult on their intellectual abilities of free thinking, on which French philosophy has been founded, since Descartes.

66 [This system] really bothered me because I got the impression that I had to find authors … and I had given my opinion in essays. In France you can give your personal opinion if you justify it, supported by authors … but in Australia, the procedure, it’s finally more a work of research and we have to reflect on a subject and we have to compare various themes of different authors and it’s not really what we have to say (Leah).
Conversely, Matthieu throws a curious light on the subject, showing perspicacity not representative of his group.

_In France, on fait semblant d’arriver à une solution nouvelle nous-même, bien que l’idée on la cherche d’un autre auteur. C’est peut-être un petit peu plus hypocrite! (Matthieu).*

Matthieu explains that in France one pretends to arrive at an original solution when in fact the ideas are derived from literature. It is interesting that he should be the only student to voice this opinion as the majority expressed anger at being obliged to conform to an academic culture they found offensive.

In light of the major stressors translating into difficulties for the French sojourners, perhaps the greatest cultural shock experienced by all respondents concerned interpersonal professor/student relationships, class interaction and academic writing practices at Australian universities. It must be pointed out however, that whilst the consensus viewpoint on the issue of professor/student relationships was largely positive, some students revealed that the laid back attitude was stressful for them because it was totally contrary to their accepted codes of behaviour. For example, a confusing and stressful situation arose when Brigitte seriously questioned the motives behind the familiarity of her professor following an invitation to coffee.

_Au début ça ma vraiment choqué, j’ai eu vraiment du mal à voir que vous et vos collègues organisez des soirées avec les étudiants, vous sortez ensemble. Pendant les cours on dit John. Je pouvais pas dire Mr. ou Professeur. Et même quand un prof m’invitait à prendre le thé, j’étais pas vraiment à l’aise, je me disais: “C’était pour me draguer, me faire la cour?” Alors pas du tout. Il voulait juste me parler d’un sujet. Tout était la manière qu’on réagissait. Il fallait se remettre en question très souvent (Brigitte).*

Brigitte swiftly discovered that her perception was incorrect, that the intent was quite genuine and innocent. However, the culture shock this episode generated forced her to reassess her values at this stage in order to understand that the respectful distance between

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67 In France, we pretend to arrive at a new solution alone, even if the idea has been derived from another author. It’s perhaps a little more hypocritical (Matthieu).

68 Initially I was really shocked, I had a lot of trouble coping with the fact that you and your colleagues organise soirées with students, you go out together. During classes you say John. I couldn’t say Mr. or Professor. Even when a professor invited me to have tea, I was really uneasy, I said to myself: “Is he trying to pick me up, to court me?” But that was not it at all. He only wanted to talk to me about something. It all depended on one’s reaction. You had to reassess your values quite often (Brigitte).
lecturers and students was much smaller in most instances in Australia. Her professor had only sought to discuss a legal matter with her. She never resolved this issue because the cultural cues she was used to in the academic arena were firmly inculcated in her upbringing. The *rapport de copinage* as she called it, sanctioned by teachers, remained a source of contention and anger for her because in addition to this feature of Australian academic practices, she found it difficult to tolerate what she described as deplorable behaviour by the students in class (evident through their dress codes, classroom etiquette or rather lack thereof and manners in general). This was primarily because failure to enforce dress standards, by the lecturers and the institutions, demonstrated a lack of respect for professors, a characteristic which is of paramount importance for the French. The behaviour engendered by this attitude would never have been accepted by her professors in France (cf. Liberman, 1994). Another quote from Brigitte supports the stance taken in this argument.

*In class [in France] one is very formal … one tries to dress appropriately, one does not come in shorts to university. One sits up straight, correctly in the chair, not with feet on the desk, lying on the table, wearing thongs and with holes in one’s clothes. It’s disgusting! In France, the lecturers would criticise this. I said to myself: “Well, [a student] he’s up himself!” And the lecturer looked at him, continued to speak looking him in the eye without so much as a reproach like: “Behave yourself!” No there was none of that. It’s true that initially this really irked me, I must admit. I wanted to say to him: “Who do you think you are? To behave like that in class!”* (Brigitte). 69

This quote demonstrates the shock Brigitte experienced in her Australian classes. Where etiquette was concerned, she admitted feeling anger during her Master of Laws classes because she was appalled at the behaviour of students in class. This was not exclusive of Australians because her campus was very international. She did not externalise her irritation to the group because of good manners, but this remained a bone of contention for her for the duration of her studies. French etiquette, to which she adhered, was dramatically put in relief with what she observed in the Australian milieu and what upset

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69 In class [in France] one is very formal … one tries to dress appropriately, one does not come in shorts to university. One sits up straight, correctly in the chair, not with feet on the desk, lying on the table, wearing thongs and with holes in one’s clothes. It’s disgusting! In France, the lecturers would criticise this. I said to myself: “Well, [a student] he’s up himself!” And the lecturer looked at him, continued to speak looking him in the eye without so much as a reproach like: “Behave yourself!” No there was none of that. It’s true that initially this really irked me, I must admit. I wanted to say to him: “Who do you think you are? To behave like that in class!” (Brigitte).
her most was her perception that the professors did not command the respect of their students. They were clearly not disconcerted by this behaviour.

In contrast, Angélica adds that inappropriate classroom behaviour in France is not tolerated.

... et on est aussi beaucoup plus « carrés » dans notre comportement, ya beaucoup moins de choses qui sont tolérées, par exemple on mange pas en cours ... c’est pas bien vu parce qu’on fait du bruit. Le téléphone portable, s’il a le malheur de sonner, il est dans votre sac et vous avez oublié de l’éteindre, il sonne et le prof devant tout le monde, devant tout l’amphi, il va faire une réflexion ... Alors qu’en Australie moi ça m’a choquée! [Le téléphone] sonne, les gens: « Alô, oui, etc. » (Angélica).70

Angélica’s quote illustrates the annoyance she felt when perceived unacceptable behavioural codes were observed in class. She notes the extent to which disapproval by French professors is evident even when an unsuspecting student has inadvertently forgotten to switch off a mobile telephone. The contrast with noticeably different manners of Australian students who go so far as answering the telephone, and speaking whilst the lecturer is teaching is incomprehensible to her, as to her co-national group. This point further reinforces the importance of correct etiquette and strict upbringing imposed on French youth.

Comments from Gilbert and Eric provide further insight into how classroom etiquette is always observed in France. This constituted culture shock for the French not only on a behavioural but linguistic level. During lectures Gilbert was distracted and could not follow the discussions. Interaction in lectures and tutorials were in stark contrast with French customs where the professor was seen as tantamount to a Deity, especially in law. No one else speaks.

Surtout dans les conférences, d’ailleurs ça c’était dur. C’est qu’en France quand on a une lecture on ne parle pas, ya pas d’interaction comme ya ici. Par exemple, en Droit, le prof est comme un Dieu. On dit « Maître » et les rapports entre les profs et ceux d’ici sont très différents. Dans les tutoriaux non plus ya pas d’interaction ... Donc ya cette phase d’adaptation aussi parce qu’on appelle ses profs par leurs prénoms mais en France c’est

70 ... and we are also more correct in our behaviour, there are far fewer things tolerated, for example, one does not eat in class ... it’s not correct because it makes a noise. The mobile phone, if perchance it should ring, it’s in your bag and you forgot to turn it off, it rings and the lecturer, in front of everyone, the whole theatre, he will criticise you for it ... whereas in Australia, this shocked me! [the mobile phone] rings, people go: “Hello, yes, etc.” (Angélica)
inpensable, inpensable! On ne tutoit jamais ses profs, c’est très très mal. Même les tuteurs qui sont les étudiants, on ne les tutoit jamais! (Gilbert).  

Gilbert’s quote reflects opinions from his co-national group highlighting the dramatic contrast between academic cultures. These distinctions could not fail to create shock for these students because they found the transition from one academic system to the next difficult to reconcile. The significant academic cultural distinctions generated stress for the French because of issues of inadequacy where linguistic expertise was concerned. Gilbert recalls vividly that he had shocked his tutors in Nice by being informal with them after a sojourn in Canada where practices were similar to Australia. This demonstrates that it is a very stressful process for the French who feel it is sometimes impossible to undo twenty years of education in manners. There are many young French people who simply find it impossible to say “tu” to French residents in Australia, even after considerable time.

Quand j’ai étudié à Nice en Droit, j’avais des tuteurs qui étaient presque de mon âge et je les ai tutoyés. Ils étaient vraiment choqués (Gilbert).

Gilbert’s comment indicates to what level the respect for those in a position of power extends. Even tutors command the respect from students who are the same age as them. Eric was one student who appreciated the relaxed relations between teacher and pupil and finally accepted the differences in cultural practices.

Ça m’a un peu choqué au départ, d’appeler le professeur par son prénom. C’est un peu bizarre! En France le prof vient à son boulot, il parle une heure et il repart. Pas de commentaires, pas de rapports ... Je trouve que le système éducatif [australien] pourrait être un peu mieux. Ce qui m’énerve c’est le fait que dès qu’on vous donne des présentations power point on nous dit juste qu’il faut apprendre et puis après on régurgite et puis on sort ça à l’examen. Je trouve ça dommage! Un peu décevant! ... Je trouve surtout que le niveau est complètement nu! ... Dans les recherches, il faut cracher ce que dit quelqu’un ici ... on nous apprend à chercher mais pas à penser par nous-mêmes ... C’est une spirale, on part de l’extérieur et on va vers l’intérieur, tandis qu’en France, on part de l’intérieur vers l’extérieur, et on s’exprime. Et on a le droit de le faire. Mais ici

71 Especially in lectures, that was hard. It’s because in France during a lecture one does not speak, there is no interaction like here. For example, in Law, the lecturer is like God. We say: “Master” and the rapport between lecturers and students compared to here is different. In tutorials, there is no interaction … So there is an adaptation phase also, because you call lecturers by their first names but in France it’s unthinkable! Unthinkable! One is never informal with one’s teacher, it’s very bad. Even with student tutors, one never says “tu” to them (Gilbert).

72 When I studied Law in Nice, I had tutors who were nearly my age and I used to say “tu” to them. They were really shocked (Gilbert).
Eric’s comments confirm majority views in regard to teacher/pupil relationships. However, he denigrated the tertiary Australian education system particularly for their pedagogy and academic referencing systems. This represented a significant source of stress for him as for the majority of French sojourners.

It is important to realise that references levelled at Australians in relation to classroom interaction involved at times a mixed group of international students also and their comments and criticism are not exclusive of other students. Brigitte’s comments below refer to the discussion above on standards of behaviour in class and respect for figures of authority in France. The Australian and American contingents in particular in some law classes are the subject of her criticism here.

… Another big difference with French behaviour and education. My teachers in Paris would laugh if they heard about [classroom behaviour in Australia]! (Brigitte)

This quote provides further evidence that certain behaviours that are acceptable in Australia are not tolerated in French universities. It is interesting to observe the perception the French respondents had of the American students. They essentially classified Australians and Americans as a homogeneous group in most cultural aspects. This is quite possibly because the common assumption behind the stereotype that Americans are ‘loud’ and argumentative in classroom interactions is construed as a sign of disrespect for the teachers. However, according to Hofstede’s (1980) argument, power distance is an important feature of the American communication system. In spite of their inquisitive and apparently belligerent nature, Americans in fact, have the greatest of respect for their ‘superiors’, their presidents or those in positions of power, and in this case their Professors, finding it quite difficult just like their French counterparts, to adopt the informal

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73 I was a little shocked initially, calling the professor by his first name. It’s a bit odd! In France, the lecturer goes to his job, he speaks for one hour and he leaves. No commentary, no rapport … I find the [Australian] educational system could improve. What annoys me is when we are given a powerpoint presentation we are told to learn it and then regurgitate it and then it’s in the exam. I find this a pity! A little disappointing … I find the level is really bad! … When you do research you have to spit out what someone else has said … they teach us to carry out research but not to think for ourselves … it’s a spiral, we move from the outside in, whereas in France, we move from inside out, and we express ourselves. And we are allowed to do it. But here you can’t. You can’t give your opinion about many things. And this system of referencing, it’s completely useless! It’s a pity! (Eric).
relationship with lecturers that Australians find normal. This is yet another example of the negative effects of cultural stereotyping.

The data on the French sojourners revealed that students in France are not in the habit of volunteering information in general discussions as they are taught to observe the greatest respect for the lecturers. Some respondents suggested that should they even attempt to speak up and question the lecturer, they are treated with condescension and embarrassed for speaking up. This concept is also evident in the respect they show for not only their teachers, but for anyone deserving of being treated with deference. The use of courtesy formulae, which involve addressing a person in a sociolinguistically appropriate fashion, is testimony to this in the French as well as other cultures. Email communications between professors and students were also cause for alarm in some instances because the unsuspecting visitors did not want to appear disrespectful before their teachers. Many students deliberated for some time as to the correct manner of addressing their professors via email. They quickly learned that “Dear John” would not incur any loss of standing between them because it complied with Australian cultural mores.

Apart from the tenuous oral skills of some French students, another reason for the stressors which manifested during their acculturation, was linked to attitudinal behavioural differences between the two cultures. Many respondents reported that their inability to contribute to class discussions emanated from French academic mentality. The data shows that the dictates of French culture appear to endorse a cultural trait where the opinion of students is rarely valued by the French academics who sit on their pedestal and impart their knowledge to the students. The following quote from Angélica supports this argument and confirms Eric’s and Gilbert’s earlier quotes, in reference to the lecturer being perceived as a “God”.

It appears the professors’ arguments are rarely challenged, and should they be contested, students are rebuked or ridiculed and discouraged from pursuing the practice. Several students from the cross-sectional data attested to this kind of reaction and were highly critical in particular when an unsuspecting international student volunteered her opinion in a French lecture. The following contrastive excerpt, clearly constituting culture shock and supported by many respondents, is derived from Angélica’s interview.
The French sojourners’ criticism of the academic practices of some professors in France is eloquently represented in this comment as contributing to their adjustment problems abroad. Culture shock resulted because it is not easy to adopt new methodologies in foreign pedagogical practices when there is no precedent to follow. This group, like many other international student sojourners, found the transition from their academic system to the Australian one traumatic because years of cultural training have been inculcated. These findings also reflect Opper et al.’s (1990) and Klineberg and Hull’s research on the impacts of study abroad programmes on students. Opper et al.’s study confirmed the perception of French institutions as stressing the importance of teachers as the primary source of information, lectures as the predominant mode of instruction and written assignments as a ubiquitous mode of assessing student performance. These instructional methods also focused more heavily on grades. The latter was quite significant for the French sojourners who received poor marks as a result of conflicting methodological practices in essay writing for instance. Klineberg and Hull’s (1979) study revealed foreign students experience difficulties in French educational systems as a result of dramatic differences in academic requirements, inaccessibility of lecturers and difficulty in making friends with locals.

Although the professor in Angélica’s quote attempted to redress the incident causing embarrassment for the foreign girl, Angélica claims:

74 There’s this mindset in France where students are discouraged, well, I don’t know if this is voluntary, I think it’s really a French cultural frame of mind … The lecturer is the Master, ok, he’s the professor, and the students are the students. And he has an authority, and his objective is to make himself respected … and if something doesn’t go his way, he says it, he yells, he raves on. He reprimands you … it’s quite humiliating sometimes. Some professors are really sadistic. They make fun of you, they’ll be mean to you, whereas in Australia, the professor will say: “It’s terrific, but you could have bla bla bla” … and you don’t get the impression that you are an idiot or something. In a multicultural course there was a foreigner who put up her hand, she answers the questions, well it’s quite brave … and the lecturer says: “Oh no! That’s not right!” Or something like that. Then the girl was embarrassed. She no longer knew what to say (Angélica).
Angélica’s quote can be used to demonstrate how this situation relates to culture shock for foreign students. The difficulties they experience in Australia emanate from incongruous practices which prevent academic sojourners from participating freely in class simply because they are not accustomed to it. Those respondents from the study who are more extroverted managed to override their initial fears of being linguistically deficient by launching into discussions in spite of the consequences, indicating that personality traits are an important feature of this equation. However, the data shows that those who readily volunteered their views in class were few and far between. The majority of sojourners found it impossible to change twenty years of habit in spite of being outgoing and talkative. The difficulty in adapting to the Australian academic system can be explained because the focus on theorising, giving one’s philosophical point of view is very much a part of French consciousness and in the field of academia there is little difference (cf. Cortazzi & Jin, 1997).

Many excerpts support views related to power distance and the collectivist versus individualistic cultural principles (cf. Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1990), described as issues as especially provoking culture shock among the French sojourners. As previously mentioned, they had great difficulty in addressing their lecturers on a first name basis for instance. This aspect of their culture was also responsible for many negative stereotypical views the French formed about their hosts and American counterparts, as a result of their classroom interactions. These students became critical of what they perceived to be offensive behaviour and characterised those not conforming to their cultural codes of conduct as rude and disrespectful. This situation is linked to a further variable affecting this study, the significance of tight versus loose cultures (cf. Triandis, 1990). Homogenous cultures are seen to be rigid in enforcing that in-group members behave according to culturally and socially accepted norms of behaviour, at the risk of severe sanctions being imposed on them.

In summary, results of my qualitative data analysis resonate with wider empirical literature on the above subjects, both quantitative and qualitative in methodology (Liberman, 1994; Liddicoat, 2005; Liddicoat et al., 2003; McCargar, 1993). Liberman’s (1994) study of Asians in America has certain parallels with the current study as the sentiments expressed

75 It was too late and I imagine she would not have raised her hand again! (Angélica).

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by the French about the hosts and other foreign students in the classroom match the 1994
study. Both groups provided harsh criticism of the life and social customs of the host
nationals, particularly for their shallow, superficial and selfish nature. A major contrast
with the studies however was that the disparaging comments the French made about
Australians were eventually dissipated when mutual acceptance and harmony reigned
among the hosts and visitors. On the other hand, in spite of the disparagement of the
Asians from Liberman’s study for American university instruction, the majority expressed
approval for their educational experience.

Shade and New (1993) argue that writing is a complex form of communication permitting
individuals to utilise their language to convey their perceptions as well as being a reflection
of cultural understanding. In light of this, one can understand the predicament of
sojourners in a foreign academic context when faced with academic writing assignments. If
they are expected to abide by certain specific patterns of reasoning, ways of presenting
arguments and structured organisation of their written work, it is not unusual for them to
have difficulty in conforming to the cultural beliefs and conventions of the host institution.
My findings are also consonant with studies derived from educational literature on
overseas students in higher education where mismatches in cultures of learning occur, and
cultural dilemmas become manifest between nationalities because of the different
approaches to culture and intellectual styles used in academic discussions, written
assignments and exams.

Other difficulties were mostly apparent in styles of academic writing, classroom behaviour
and interaction and relationships with lecturers. Further, linguistic shock caused
aggravation in many instances until a workable proficiency was attained in English.
Although poorer grades are to be expected when an international student attempts to study
in a foreign language and country, the findings reveal that respondents were disillusioned
and highly critical of the system of academic writing particularly in Australia. The distress
they experienced because of lowered grades was the result of their perception that this was
a slight on their intellectual abilities. This lasted in principle for the first semester because
once they had been encouraged to comply with the specific rules for referencing and
plagiarism they adhered to them religiously. The data indicated that the familiarity of
interpersonal relationships with lecturers received more favourable responses than negative
therefore inducing a lesser amount of stress. Nonetheless, for some, conflicting values
were not always easy to contend with because familiarity was definitely seen as breeding contempt in this cultural group.

Section 4.2.3.2 has dealt with the most significant stressors of adjustment for French academic sojourners. Findings indicated that the French were no different from most of their international counterparts, while their English proficiency was a particular problem for their academic adaptation. This factor, they blamed on the traditional French foreign language pedagogies. Linguistic shock and dramatically divergent academic practices contributed concretely to incidences of culture shock which culminated in angst and distress for these sojourners. However, due to the apparent homogeneity of certain cultural and linguistic elements between France and Australia, all respondents reported a successful adaptation into Australian society.

4.2.4 Behavioural differences and value conflicts

Core beliefs about essential values based on one’s cultural mores are important for all members of a society. Therefore it is not uncommon for value conflicts to emerge when there is a discrepancy between notions of appropriate behaviour in cross-cultural situations with subsequent judgements cast which can have potentially deleterious effects on intercultural relations. This section will examine incidences of culture shock provoking anxiety, embarrassment, stress and frustration which resulted from different expectations about behaviour and values. One issue which led to cultural conflict was French sojourners’ perceptions of alcohol consumption. Marc’s opinion is largely representative of respondent views on the subject.

J’ai suivi pas mal toutes les activités qui étaient ici. Je buvais occasionnellement disons mais j’étais pas comme eux ici, totalement détruits après être allés au pub ... [J’allais au pub] parce que je savais que j’avais vraiment intérêt à le faire pour m’aider à m’intégrer, pour rencontrer des gens, mais yavait des périodes ou simplement je pouvais plus aller quoi! Ça me désolait, ça me gonflait vraiment, c’était trop d’aller là-bas juste pour boire des bières. Cette culture du pub me rend un peu triste ... et en plus les filles qui boivent! (Marc).

76 I took part in quite a lot of activities here. Let’s say I drank occasionally, but I wasn’t like them here, completely trashed after going to the pub ... [I’d go to the pub] because I knew that it was in my interest to do so in order to integrate, to meet people, but there were times when I could no longer go! It used to sadden me, it annoyed me really, it was too much just to go there and drink beer. This pub culture makes me a little sad, and to top it all, girls drinking! (Marc).
Marc’s shock at observing the pub culture and seeing the behaviour of girls in the pubs and other social functions engendered a situation where he reached saturation point. He professed to no longer being able to cope with this aspect of Australian culture he considered to be incomprehensible. Earlier, we saw that he was shocked at being perceived as homosexual because of his effusive emotions. His subsequent comment completes the picture of the shock he experienced in interpersonal relationships closely linking behaviour with this drink culture.

... et puis aussi la manière dont les filles se comportent dans le pub et bien, me tapant sur l’épaule comme ça « Salut mon pote! » Complètement saoules à la fin de la soirée. Ça c’est vrai que j’avais pas trop l’habitude. [En Suisse] les filles ne recherchent pas d’alcool tellement ... elles boivent aussi mais pas la bière comme ça, pas souvent. C’est plutôt un verre de vin (Marc).77

Marc’s judgemental comment in this instance about the behaviour of girls who overindulge is significant because it highlights further distance between French and Australian cultural traits. The fact that he found this unacceptable contributed to culture shock for him as for the majority of his compatriots because of the dismay he felt. It pained them to see girls behave in this way.

The attitude of Australian youth toward drinking was of concern to the French group. Observations about this issue were made, not only after witnessing evidence of overindulgence on their campuses, but during “Schoolies Week” on the Gold Coast. Episodes recounted constituted a source of shock and consternation for the French who claimed they had been brought up without alcohol restrictions and as a result do not feel the need to overindulge. Robert felt that maturational constraints and the expected behaviour of a 28 year old negated the need for frequenting the pubs with the students in order to feel part of Australian society. In the next quote, he recounts this to a friend.

Je lui racontais que les australiens boivent comme des trous! ... Le pub crawl, j’ai jamais fait l’expérience. Mais cette culture c’est vrai qu’ils boivent beaucoup ... les français aussi boivent mais ça dépend si vous êtes seul ou pas ... single, célibataire ... Ce qui est choquant avec ces jeunes étudiants qui boivent ici c’est les débordements qu’il peut y avoir suite à ça c’est tout. Je pense au Schoolies week, tous ces jeunes sur la Gold Coast qui viennent, et ils boivent à tout casser. Ça c’est déplorable! (Robert).78

77 ... and then also the way the girls behave in the pub, tapping me on the shoulder like that, “Hi there mate!” Completely drunk at the end of the night. It’s true I wasn’t used to this. [In Switzerland] girls are not that interested in drinking ... they drink also, but not beer like that, not often. It’s more a glass of wine (Marc).
78 I was telling him that Australians drink to excess ... The pub crawl, I’ve never experienced it. But it’s true that in this culture they drink a great deal. French people drink also but it depends if you are single or not ...
This quote reveals Robert’s disquiet during the interview because of his perception of youth drinking habits. It further corroborates the majority views on the subject. Other male perspectives on the subject of girls drinking and their dress codes show how widely this trait bothered the French.

Joachim’s quote also confirms the majority views but extends the problem to incorporate the wider society where women of a mature age behaved in a similar fashion. These remarks cannot help but place in perspective the attitude toward alcohol observed in France compared to the drinking culture in Australia. He also criticises the mentality of single women on the Gold Coast who dress elaborately to go to a bar on a Friday night. Although Jacques’s comment is no less judgemental, it shows that the process of culture learning has been successful because though he may not condone this behaviour, he had to stop judging Australian women and accept that they were in their environment.

From a female perspective, the shock at the behaviour of their counterparts in the host country was even more striking. Lise gives her opinion on this.

I was really shocked by the way the girls behaved. I mean the girls I saw they were drinking a lot and they were screaming and it was not very feminine. It was not what I was used to see in France ... I drink wine but I know when I can stop and I don’t scream in the

What is shocking with these young students who drink here is the consequence this can have afterwards, that’s all. I think of Schoolies Week, all these young people on the Gold Coast who come and drink themselves to oblivion. It’s deplorable! (Robert).
streets. But it belongs to my values so I can’t generalise it. Generally speaking I have become more tolerant. I just accept it. The girls just have to get drunk! (Lise).

Like her compatriots, Lise found it hard to condone such behaviour because it struck at the core of her being as a woman. Her feminine instincts were shocked because it was offensive that women acting in this fashion tarnished the image of women in general. In the end however, she was wary of casting aspersions on the Australian culture which did not match hers and she just accepted the differences as part of the culture learning process.

Christiane calls the behaviour of girls who drink to excess depraved and is clearly shocked by it.

... On ne boit pas à en mourir hein en France. C’est à dire on va boire pour être un peu gai, pour se mettre un peu dans l’ambience. Mais on va jamais aller dans la rue, marcher en travers, se jeter par terre comme on voit à Surfers à chaque fois. C’est quand même assez flagrant! Elles sont dépravées, dire des obsénites à la fin de la soirée « Bitch! ». Elles vont se coller aux garçons, et nous on regarde ça et on se dit: « Mais nous on peut pas quoi! » On sait qu’au bout d’un moment qu’il faut plus boire. Ya une barrière et on sait que si on continue on va passer d’un côté ou on va mal se comporter (Christiane).  

Christiane’s opinion on this subject is a clear indictment of Australian drink culture which she sees as excessive and uncontrolled behaviour and which she also attributes to American students. Like Joachim, she also makes an observation on the dress codes.

Ce qui est choquant en plus c’est que ces américaines prennent deux heures pour s’habiller ...et au bout de la soirée elles ressemblent à un sac à patates parce qu’elles ont trop bu, elles vomissent, elles sont vulgaires quoi ... quand elles arrivent ici c’est la dépravation ... les australiennes c’est pareil, dès dix-huit ans, elles se jettent sur les bars. C’est impressionant! Nous on appelle ça l’alcoolisme du weekend! (Christiane).
Christiane’s quote reveals that not only her core values were shocked by the behaviour of the girls but their lack of appreciation for fashion was evident by the little respect they showed for their clothes by the end of a debauched evening of drinking. She could not see the sense in spending hours dressing prior to an outing only to finish in a lamentable state. These kinds of views are echoed throughout the interviews with contrasts made between the Gold Coast and other Australian cities with regard to the drink culture. The French respondents had little hesitation in condemning the Gold Coast for its dearth of culture, indicating that this attitude was not prevalent in Melbourne or Sydney, cities they claimed, had class.

Other incidences of culture shock generated by dissonance in various cultural domains, closely linked to contrasts in behavioural modes between Australians and the French, are presented below. Besides the drinking culture of Australian youth, French sojourners’ perceptions of appropriate manners in academic and social contexts had the potential for causing conflict between hosts and visitors. Australian attitude to food also elicited criticism, contrasting with French epicurean traditions. Few excerpts have been included in this instance to illustrate these distinctions because they are largely representative of the majority of the French in this study. The perceived shallow nature of Australians who casually invited the sojourners to their functions but rarely followed through was cause for concern in the French community early in their adjustment process (cf. Liberman, 1994). Lise gives an example of why this perceived trait of the Australian hosts bothered her and her compatriots.

[Les Australiens] disaient: « Bon je t’appelle, on va faire ci, on va faire ça » et en fait ils vous appelaient jamais. C’était plutôt une manière de parler. Je me rendais compte que les gens étaient très superficiels et que c’était pour être gentils, pour être polis mais que yavait rien derrière (Lise).82

This quote is typical of majority views on this subject. It illustrates an element of culture shock with ensuing negative sentiments emanating from vague invitations that had no serious intent. This prompted the respondents to judge their hosts as shallow, as this behaviour clearly contrasted with their cultural etiquette in France. This naturally

82 [Australians] used to say: “ok, I’ll call you, we’ll do such and such” and they never called. It was a form of speech. I realised that people were very superficial and they did this to be nice but there was nothing behind it (Lise).
manifested in disappointment and made interpersonal relationships harder to establish with this social support group.

It was highlighted in this chapter that Marc, who had claimed to have experienced no culture shock actually provided a rich source of examples to the contrary. He indicated that he was not impressed with the manners of his hosts in social and classroom situations. Due to space constraints all pertinent excerpts on behavioural distinctions from the data cannot be included in this thesis. Therefore, the long discourse from Marc below epitomises majority sentiments on the cultural behaviour and perceived poor manners of Australian hosts. His comments underscore the fact that the French did not appreciate the Australian café culture, eating and drinking whilst walking, the consumption of food and drink in class, dress codes in class and the habit of walking barefooted in the street, among the many examples appearing in the data.

Marc’s quote encompasses all the perceived ills of Australian culture in regard to the behaviour of the host nationals which clearly shocked him because they contrasted so drastically with French ways. However, it did not deter him from adopting the habit of bringing coffee to class with too many 8.00am classes to attend. It represented the limits to which he was willing to change though.

83 I get the impression [Australians] go to restaurants to be fed, yes, not for the pleasure of dining out … furthermore, coffee is something that amazes me here, the fact that people buy a coffee and drink it on the way! In fact, I’ve learned to do this, I must admit! That is not done at home … in class people bring their coffee, their sandwiches. That really shocked me. In Switzerland, the limit to what one can bring to class is a bottle of water … and then they come in bare feet, and on top of that they walk bare feet in the street! That’s something that really surprised me … even in thongs! That we would never do! I never did it. Coming to class in thongs! I always wore clean clothes after having washed … I don’t go around in a bathing suit, in trackie dacks, in track suits. These are things I have never been able to get used to. (Marc).
Feelings such as these may cause stress because they may inhibit friendship formations in international contact situations. Examples of a similar vein are prominent in the data, conveying criticism levelled at Australian cultural practices. The data revealed there was strong criticism of Australian manners, or lack there of, which contrasted with French etiquette and they found host families rude and selfish in many instances, because they would eat in front of the television, order before all guests had arrived at a restaurant, clearly accentuating the fact that in France one arrives fashionably late. These issues distressed the sojourners because important cultural cues were missing, provoking in many instances, judgemental attitudes which may hinder the fostering of good relations between hosts and visitors.

A final category bearing the potential for creating culture shock concerned epicurean traditions which are examined in this chapter because of their potential for causing conflict situations between hosts and visitors. Particularly shocking to their epicurean standards was the ubiquitous tomato sauce added to everything. In addition, having to eat at 6.30pm was another custom that displeased the French sojourners because it interfered with sports or class times. Most students could not get used to this habit because although their meal times are regulated in France, dinner is rarely before 8.00 pm allowing them time for different pursuits. However, this type of situation was restricted to respondents who began their sojourn in home stays, generally not lasting for more than one semester.

The data revealed that the subject of food was a bone of contention for the visitors who missed French cuisine considerably. Their frustrations at not finding their usual products was compounded by budgetary constraints which precluded the purchase of all things French should they be able to locate them. This led to situations where experimentation of Australian foods resulted in weight gain for some sojourners, as well as, more serious health complaints for others. Monique explains what transpired in her case.

*The food is different because I think we are the country of food in France. I love food and in Australia I was a little bit frustrated in the beginning because I put on weight a lot, like four or five kilos because every week with a French friend we wanted to discover something new, so we have a topic for a week, so a week was cookies week, a week was muffins, another was hamburgers and a lot of chocolates, ‘Timtams’ ... I love it ... but because I got some cholesterol I can’t eat [cheese] and because of Australia, my level of cholesterol was high because of the fat food, because my parents got it ... my level was awful when I came back to France ... I hated me in the end, my body, because I didn’t feel good, I feel big and it was after three months and I decided to stop all this shit. And I*
couldn’t stand up any more fast food and chocolates … I can’t stand up any more to be in bikini during the holidays (Monique).

As she professed to be accustomed to fine cuisine in France, Monique was frustrated by the gastronomical differences in Australia. In an effort to correct this anomaly, she chose to experiment with certain food groups. Consequently, she put on weight consistently because she and a friend had set themselves the goal of discovering a new Australian delight each week. The result of this was not only weight gain but a dramatically increased level of cholesterol, a hereditary family problem which made her life a misery on two counts. Not only did she have to give up her favourite foods, but she also had issues of self-acceptance because Australian girls were always in bikinis in summer and she could not cope with being overweight. Monique’s story shows that the culture shock emanating from dietary differences can culminate in health problems which have repercussions on the psychological well being of a sojourner.

A feature which upset many French sojourners concerns the absence of the French gastronomic tradition known as L’art de la table. Diane comments on the importance of this for the French.

On avait été invités à une fête et chacun amène ce qu’il va boire et manger et ya pas d’échange quoi! Et ça m’a vraiment choquée et après j’ai compris ce que ça voulait dire en France l’art de la table, c’est l’art de recevoir … En France même si quelqu’un amène une bouteille de vin, on partage! Ça m’a choquée ici, et surtout de repartir avec la bière où le vin qu’on n’a pas bu (Diane). 84

This quote demonstrates that it was through the intercultural experience that Diane, like many of her peers, realised the importance of their culture because the discrepancies they noted in this case in ‘appropriate behaviour’ became apparent perhaps for the first time through the international contact. The cultural practices of French people were thus reinforced providing a contrast with the Australian ways because the cultural cues were found to be wanting. In this example, the French tradition of receiving guests was brought into relief when culture shock resulted from an invitation to a party. The absence of sharing what one brings to a party clearly shocked Diane. This comment is echoed by many

84 We had been invited to a party and everyone brings what they are going to eat and drink and there is no sharing! That really shocked me and then I understood what “the art of entertaining” meant in France. It’s the art of receiving guests … In France, even if someone brings a bottle of wine, we share it. It shocked me here, and especially when they leave with the beer or wine they have not drunk (Diane).
subjects who were hurt and disappointed when they observed the common practice of BYO in party situations.

In summary, the argument can be advanced that although this group of sojourners did not feel pressured to conform to Australian ways to fit in, they made the effort to participate in social activities of their own accord in order to integrate. There was consensus however on their role as observers rather than active participants in these situations but this practice diminished as time went by because they were distressed and saddened by the behaviour of their hosts. The fact that they adopted many Australian cultural traits by the end of their sojourn is testimony to the metamorphosis that took place on occasion. However, it must be stressed that the vignettes illustrating French sentiment toward the drink culture in Australia was one constant factor that remained unresolved for this group. This has everything to do with French mentality towards alcohol consumption, where a glass of wine diluted with water is customarily enjoyed at meal times even in childhood. Consequently the need for debauched drinking was never inculcated in their cultural repertoire. The pub culture and the consumption of alcohol by girls in particular was reprehensible behaviour in their eyes. This was judged as an indictment of Australian liberal attitudes and as a possible impediment to successful integration in the early phases because the ethical codes and moral values of Australians were at odds with French cultural traditions.

4.3 Successful adjustment in Australian society by French sojourners.

It may seem surprising considering the abundant vignettes offered in substantiation for varying degrees of distress, that all French subjects in this study reported a successful adjustment process in Australia. The length of time for this positive development is clearly an important variable in the equation. It appears that the incidences of culture shock occurred in the earlier phases of adaptation as generally attested in literature (cf. P. Adler, 1975; Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960; Ward et al., 2001; Zapf, 1991). Consequently, it did not take long for a satisfactory stage to be reached along the road to integration into the host culture by all respondents. No respondent registered a negative acculturation process. Selected vignettes show how successfully these sojourners integrated into their host society, in Sydney, Melbourne and on the Gold Coast. As incidences of successful acculturation were so widespread and space constraints preclude the myriad of examples, only a selected few will be included. As the multicultural status of Australia provided a
dramatic contrast with France, the following examples from the data on sojourners from Franco-Asian backgrounds who are bi- or multicultural, Kati and Léah, offer support and appreciation of Australian culture. Multiculturality of this country was instrumental for a positive acculturation. Kati’s comment explains why.

... Le fait d’être bi-culturelle, c’est un avantage, donc c’est pour ça qu’ici, j’apprécie bien. Je me sens plus à l’aise ici. Arrivée ici, j’ai fait: « Mais c’est pas possible! Comment on peut être raciste quand trois quarts des gens sont d’origine étrangère? C’est complètement multiculturel! » ... Pour moi [la double nationalité] c’est un atout! Donc je pense que ça m’a aidée à m’intégrer (Kati).

Kati attributes her successful integration in Australia to the multicultural environment in which she felt totally at home. These sentiments correlate directly to her being pleasantly surprised at the welcome she received and totally stupefied after the erroneous warnings she had received from a friend in France about racism in this country. This racism was clearly nowhere in evidence. The discovery of the complete opposite constituted a positive factor which assisted her during the difficult early stages. Léah, the Franco-Cambodian respondent mirrors these sentiments.

... Le fait d’être française c’est aussi exotique en Australie, parce que moi j’ai un visage asiatique mais je suis très française. J’ai pas du tout d’accent chinois quand je parle français ... et quand je disais que j’étais française, ils étaient tous [à Melbourne] agréablement surpris. J’ai été bien reçue, bien accueillie (Léah).

The above respondents convey through these quotes the advantage of being at least bi-cultural because of the exotic interest this generated. The fact that they spoke French but looked Chinese made them apparently more attractive, the emphasis here being on the prestige French culture enjoys.

The following quote examines Marc’s successful adjustment process.

The above respondents convey through these quotes the advantage of being at least bi-cultural because of the exotic interest this generated. The fact that they spoke French but looked Chinese made them apparently more attractive, the emphasis here being on the prestige French culture enjoys.

The following quote examines Marc’s successful adjustment process.

85 ... Being bi-cultural is an advantage. That’s why here, I really appreciate this. I am more at ease here. When I arrived, I said: “It’s incredible! How can one be racist when three-quarters of the population are foreigners. It’s completely multicultural” ... For me the [dual nationality] is an advantage. So I think this helped me to integrate (Kati).
86 ... Being French is also exotic in Australia because I have an Asian face but I’m French. I do not at all have a Chinese accent when I speak French … and when I said I was French, they were all [in Melbourne] pleasantly surprised. I was totally welcome (Léah).
Australia was my first experience of moving away. Then I knew it was only for six months for the States. It’s your frame of mind. I knew it was just for six months so I didn’t care as much. But in Australia I really wanted to settle. Even at first when I started my studies here, I did only the idea to do six months, one semester and it was only afterwards I decided to stay and I changed completely in between, completely because then I was doing a degree and I had to be serious about it. My mentality and my frame of mind changed completely ... once I knew I was gonna stay here, straight away we looked for a nice place that we would really like, by the beach and buy some proper furniture because it was for two years ... then I bought a car, I did my tax file number, I changed my visa to student working visa so I could work ... I worked [in the library] all the time I was there (Marc).

This quote illustrates how the process of adjustment was simplified for Marc as for many others whose sojourn was lengthy. Once their mind set had been established, they resolved to make Australia home for the duration of their stay. This involved attending to administrative issues and organising more comfortable accommodation. His brief sojourn in the United States was clearly uneventful for him because he knew it was a finite period and he was essentially marking time until he could return home.

Véronique’s successful adjustment to Australian society is consonant with many respondent views on the subject.

*Franchement à Melbourne ... vraiment j’avais le sentiment de bien être, de pas être stressée ...*" I think during my studies it was unreal. We did a lot of things maybe different than in France, like go out a lot and maybe sometimes drink more than in France, maybe just because we were in another country and nobody could judge us ... It was like a licence to do it over there, but with respect. I mean not crazy things but a bit more than in France (Véronique).

This quote contributes an added dimension to the positive acculturation of these students. The sojourn experience was tantamount to a licence to do things they felt constrained in doing in France.

Eric’s process of adjustment is from the perspective of someone who experienced a complete metamorphosis.

*The girls I was with in Orange in New South Wales, they told me they thought I was Australian, more than French. And I thought: “What the fuck! I’m not Australian, I’m French! What about my accent?” They thought I was more American. I was happy because it means that I was ... integrated. Definitely. My integration in Australia was done, that’s it. I’ve got Australian culture in a way that I’m not complaining now any*

87 Frankly in Melbourne … I really felt great, not stressed … (Véronique).
more, and I’m open-minded. I’m no worries mate, a little bit Australian. But I can’t forget my French culture (Eric).

Eric, who was the most vociferous in his argument about negative stereotypical views damaging international relations, is very proud of having succeeded in integrating into Australian society. This was the turning point for his change of perception about this country. The quote shows that the element of acceptance on the part of the hosts was instrumental in making the foreigner feel welcome and part of the group. It was pointed out that the most effective coping mechanism during the stressful phases of adaptation was acceptance of the host culture. The reverse was no less effectual it appears.

Christiane’s comment exemplifies the procedures utilised by some respondents in their efforts to remain in Australia following their successful acculturation.

*Bon, je crois que je me suis si bien adaptée ici que je voudrais bien y rester. Déjà je vais me renseigner pour trouver un boulot pour avoir en fait le Business visa. Il faut que j’en trouve. J’ai commencé à prospecter surtout sur Sydney ou Melbourne. Je veux pas rester sur la Gold Coast. La Gold Coast c’est pas l’Australie (Christiane).* 88

This quote shows that Christiane, like many other sojourners, investigated all avenues to remain in Australia. Unphased by her inability to obtain a Permanent Residence permit, she moved to Nouméa, New Caledonia, to await the possibility of entering by other means. She was hopeful that her boyfriend from New Caledonia who has residency in Australia would expedite this process. She clearly had no intention of returning to Paris.

This section has illustrated to what extent a successful adjustment process was registered by the French sojourners. Findings suggest that in spite of any culture shock experienced in the first phases of their adjustment process, the French fell in love with Australia and its way of life. They acknowledged their educational, financial and familial commitments in France but consoled themselves with a promise to return. In spite of the small number of subjects in this study, the data revealed attitudinal changes and the paradoxical dichotomy of feelings Australians have in regard to the French and their culture, as explained by the views of the respondents, had a lot to do with their successful acculturation. That is,

88 Well, I think that I adapted so well here that I would like to stay. I’m going to inquire about a job, to get a business visa. I must find one. I’ve started to look in Sydney or Melbourne. I don’t want to stay on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is not Australia (Christiane).
Australians criticise the French but they appear to love French culture and often wish to emulate the French. Although culture shock was temporarily perceived as a form of alienation in the new culture, it cannot be denied that the positive aspect of this phenomenon was of immense benefit to the French sojourners as it was to their Australian counterparts. This became evident when attitudes of both visitors and hosts changed (cf. P. Adler, 1975).

### 4.4 Coping strategies used to integrate into Australian society.

This section examines the different coping strategies used by the French sojourners to integrate into Australian society. These included a conscious change of attitude which occurred at the level of the individual, recourse to the various social support networks to assist in resolving problematic issues and to a minor extent, anticipation of problems.

#### 4.4.1 Change of attitude as a coping strategy

The significance of attitudinal changes is examined through the following vignettes which demonstrate that the sojourners succeeded in adapting to the Australian context. A remarkable example is derived from Adrienne’s interview, a respondent who took only a short time to adjust to Australian life because of the attitude she adopted.

> Je me suis adaptée totalement, dans une semaine. Je me suis dit: « Bon c’est quand même différent ». Et puis j’ai accepté et ça allait. J’ai mis peut-être une semaine, dix jours, voilà (Adrienne).

Recognising that everything was different and choosing to accept it was instrumental in Adrienne’s adaptive process. Her friendship with Dominique, a French girl she met on the way to Australia also assisted her in integrating. They became like sisters, lived together, bought a car and a mobile telephone. This however had an adverse effect on Adrienne’s progress in English initially. The quote shows that a change of mind set may appear simplistic but it actually involves taking a firm resolve to achieve this. It shows great strength of character.

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89 I adapted totally, in one week! I said to myself: “Ok, obviously it’s different”. And then I accepted this and it was ok. It took me about a week, 10 days (Adrienne).
Josiane’s technique for coping with the cultural dissonance is echoed in many of her cohort’s interviews.

*I think that I’m probably gonna keep most of the whole French culture, manners and things like that, it’s reinforced my French identity being here … I guess I’m more relaxed, the Australian way, maybe not worrying as much as I used to, not taking completely the ‘no worries’ approach but just being more relaxed. I’ve become Australian but not fully. I’ve taken the best of both worlds I think (Josiane).*

This quote illustrates accepting the good from both cultures as a way of minimising the effects of culture shock. This proved to be an effective method of reconciling problems of adjustment. The French systematically eliminated the aspects of Australian culture they found unappetising and embraced the positive.

A factor which contributed to a smooth adjustment for this group concerns their acceptance by the host society. Although this is not in itself a strategy, it is the cause and effect reaction of mutual acceptance of French and Australian cultures by both visitors and hosts which eased the process of adaptation for the French. Pivotal to this argument is the notion that when the French sojourners changed their attitudes toward the host members, they were immediately perceived in a more favourable light, confirming the significant strategy of acceptance of others’ cultural values during exchange situations. The following comments represent the epitome of what the majority of the French perceived as acceptance in Australian culture because they were French. Brigitte among others reflects on the importance of this.

*[Les australiens] aiment la façon dont on agit … quand on vient de Paris ça va être différent. J’ai senti aussi qu’avec les professeurs on va peut-être m’écouter avec plus d’attention (Brigitte).*  

Brigitte sensed that she was more respected than other foreigners by her professors simply because she was from Paris. She commanded attention by the mere fact of being French. This realisation in turn led her to accept more readily aspects of Australian cultural mores, even if she was uncomfortable with some characteristics. The essential strategy remains a change of attitude followed by acceptance of cultural distinctions which trigger a cyclical process where both parties gain a better appreciation of each other’s culture.

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90 [Australians] love the way we behave … when we come from Paris, it’s different. I also felt this with the lecturers, they might pay more attention to me because of this (Brigitte).
Analagous comments to this are provided by Léah but these views are representative of similar experiences.

Je me suis fait des amis en étant française. Et puis même c’était parfois parce que j’étais française que les gens venaient vers moi, par curiosité: « On a envie de te connaître » et yavait des amis qui me présentaient à d’autres en disant: « She’s from Paris etc. » ... et là donc ya pas eu de problème d’intégration (Léah).

This quote further illustrates how the cause and effect reaction highlighted the value of changing attitudes as a coping strategy, leading to a smoother adjustment process. In the quote provided above, as well as similar ones arising from the data, one can perceive that France’s long and respected history and culture, with all the positive attributes the country has to offer, were instrumental in the positive image that Australians have of the French. They are thus accepted and appreciated and they have the impression of being held in higher regard than their counterpart sojourners. This factor could not fail to ease the process of adjustment in spite of the negative sentiments which may have surfaced earlier as a result of pre-existing stereotypical views of each other’s culture. This is significant because ultimately a positive attitude assists sojourners in remodelling their cultural identity during the acculturation process, reinforcing their pride in the original culture whilst developing awareness and understanding for other cultures. This contributes to the fostering of good international relations.

Diane’s quote provides evidence of how an individual’s personal perception of his/her culture may be enhanced through the eyes of foreigners who appreciate them as a result of the cyclical process of acceptance.

Je pense qu’on arrive mieux à comprendre sa propre culture une fois qu’on est parti loin en fait parce qu’on regarde la France avec un autre regard par rapport à ce que disent les gens ici ... les clichés, La France, Paris c’est la capitale de la mode, quand on dit qu’on vient de Paris, tout le monde apprécie ... [they think] my accent is sexy (Diane).

91 I made friends because I was French. And sometimes because I am French, people would come toward me, out of curiosity: “We’d like to get to know you” and friends introduced me to others saying: “She’s from Paris etc.” ... so I had no problems integrating (Leah).
92 I think we understand our own culture better once we have left our country in fact because we look at France from a different perspective as a result of comments from people here … clichés, France, Paris is the fashion capital. When we say we are from Paris, everyone appreciates us … [they think] my accent is sexy (Diane).
This example illustrates how one can become enlightened through cross-cultural exchanges. Once again, the importance of acceptance is highlighted through a positive cause and effect situation. It is essentially the praise for her culture from Australians which produced a reciprocal reaction for Diane as well as increasing her awareness of the value of her French culture. When barriers have been eroded and positive and meaningful dialogue takes place between cultures that may not always have enjoyed comparable sentiments, personal growth results. In the process of acceptance of the host culture, sojourners’ respect for their own culture emerges and objectivity is attained. Consequently the self-ascribed role of ambassador takes on a positive note. This is substantiated in research on academic sojourners (eg. Brewster Smith, 1956; Eide, 1970; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward et al., 2001).

One of the most effective strategies used to integrate into the host culture was through travelling. Lise gives her point of view on this.

... J’ai fait énormément de choses et ça m’a beaucoup impressionné ... J’ai bien profité pour voyager et j’ai appris plein de choses sur les Aborigènes, enfin plein de choses sur l’Australie en général. Et vraiment j’ai l’impression d’avoir une approche complète de mon séjour là-bas. *I think I have a more open-minded way of seeing things than most French people. I mean I don’t see things in just a French perspective. I feel very multicultural. Travelling opens your mind, you are not ... you don’t have all the stereotypes you had before ... you try to challenge them more than before ... I think I’m more tolerant than before* (Lise).

This quote elucidates how beneficial travelling is because of the virtues of broadening one’s mind through providing a range of new experiences. This aspect of the sojourn was found to contribute largely to culture learning with a resultant enhanced personality. The French became more tolerant of Australians and their multicultural attributes. Lise’s view on the subject is a typically recurring response from the data as the majority of French sojourners had chosen Australia specifically as a journey of discovery of an exotic land.

The preceding excerpts suggest that when the French sojourners had changed their attitudes towards the host members, they were immediately perceived in a more favourable light. They appeared to assume a role of importance because their culture was sometimes

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*I did a great number of things and I was most impressed … I really took advantage of my travels and I learned so many things about Aborigines, well, many things about Australia in general. And really I have the impression that I have a complete approach of my sojourn there* (Lise).
placed on a pedestal. This included their sexy accent, their fashion sense, their gastronomic savoir faire and so forth. Ironically, some of the same elements induced cultural conflicts and threatened to impede the process of adjustment in the early phases. However, the period of crisis characterising the second phase of culture shock was perceived as largely reactive by the French, in accordance with research that demonstrates that during the initial stages of culture shock, the retaliatory reaction adopted by the French is normal. During the third and fourth stages of culture shock, recovery and full recovery respectively, is where they begin to accept the host society partially or fully which in turn promotes successful integration (cf. Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960). When the French sojourners noted that they had been accepted in Australia because they were French, a reciprocal process of acceptance of Australians ensued, putting an end to overt criticism and cultural conflict from both sides. This was an effective coping strategy which had a domino effect. It resulted in personal growth and open-mindedness which were instrumental in fostering positive relations between the two cultures. The French felt special in a foreign environment and this was critical to their successful adjustment.

4.4.2 Social support networks as coping strategies

The value of social support networks in international exchange situations cannot be underestimated. This section presents examples of the dynamics between the various friendship networks which assisted the French in minimising their problematic moments in the early stages. Thierry puts his successful integration into Australian society down to a coping mechanism based on becoming intercultural thanks to international and host national friendships.

[I integrated] pretty well. I know people from every background. My neighbours are Australian and I get along quite well with them. I’m international. I know where everybody is from and they know where I am from. Everybody keeps his, like, origin but I can settle somewhere else (Thierry).

Thierry was proud of his transformation into an intercultural individual who shared his experience with a multi-national group. An important point emerges from this contact situation in that, whilst becoming intercultural is commendable, one may still feel the need to maintain one’s cultural identity and individuality. This idea embraces the notion of a merger of individualist and collectivist cultural orientations (Storti, 1999). If one works from the premise emerging from the data that on the continuum between individualism and
collectivism, the French are closer to the former, this quote is significant because the majority of subjects had experienced immense personal growth that rendered their interactions more harmonious and tolerant. Thus, this position can be construed as a move closer to the collectivist orientation.

It is only to be expected that sojourners travelling together, either as friends or partners, essentially depend on support from their partners (cf. Furnham et al. 1977). This evidently represents the most effective coping stratagem available in times of stress. Loneliness and homesickness are not necessarily eliminated but these and other common manifestations of culture shock may be dramatically reduced in intensity. It must be remembered that the consensus view on the issue of co-national support was that although the French counted on one or two close friends from this group, they deliberately tried to avoid contact with their compatriots, as their major objective was to perfect their English. Jacques explains his explicit intent on avoiding his compatriots in the next comment.

... Straight away I started to be around Australians. Most of my friends were Australians and I got to know their Australian friends. I tried to avoid French people too because I don't know what the point is to get French because we speak the same language. All the French people from my uni I didn’t like them much! (Jacques).

Jacques explains that he made a concerted effort at integration into the host member group which he found gratifying especially when he began a relationship with an Australian girl. This evidently facilitated his adjustment process. Avoidance of his compatriots further confirms the preceding argument that like Jacques, the majority of French sojourners displayed more individualistic tendencies culturally, totally self-sufficient and independent from their co-national group. Another successful coping strategy used by Jacques was to find work as quickly as possible, which he did, at a Spanish bar and night club. This assisted him not only financially but allowed him to practise his Spanish also in a multicultural environment, contributing to an all-round successful acculturation process. Joachim’s way of coping with cultural differences offers a new perspective.

Oh moi j’étais en short tout le temps hein, en bermuda [et les thongs] pas de problème ... enfin des sandales. C’était agréable! On [les français] était bien intégrés, on a participé à
This quote illustrates that the embracing of Australian culture by emulating the host nationals and joining them in sporting activities was a very useful strategy. It was tantamount to adopting the attitude “when in Australia, do as the Australians” at least in dress codes and sporting and social activities. Many French students joined in the myriad activities and clubs offered to them on campus for just this reason. It is clearly an effective way of coping with the various degrees of stress experienced shortly after arrival.

The data showed that Kati and Jacqueline employed an interesting technique as a coping strategy in the early stages of adjustment, that of throwing themselves into the task of participating in class, with Kati adopting the added technique of observer and actress in order to reduce the embarrassment of speaking English badly. This strategy demonstrates that personality traits are also correlated with adaptation modes. In spite of years of training in an educational milieu that did not endorse interactive participation between lecturers and students, both of these girls decided that they would convince themselves to adopt Australian practices in class. They thus improved their English through participation, and in the process effectively reduced the linguistic shock and associated levels of stress which dominated this study, at least for these girls. It was also instrumental in helping reduce Kati’s shyness.

Brigitte travelled with her partner, Robert, to Australia, both studying in the same university. She explains how the dynamics of her relationship helped her.

*I think [the process of acculturation] was easier for me, I am sure of it, because at the beginning it’s quite hard when you are alone, it’s hard to meet people. You feel depressed because you are far away from France and it’s different from Paris, France, the culture, because you have to speak English all the time. It was easier for me to be with my fiancé. During the day I was always speaking English, experiencing my own life but at the evening at home I knew that [my partner] was there and we could share problems, issues (Brigitte).*

Brigitte admits readily that it was easier for her to adjust because of her partner. On the other hand she was not spared from the distress, loneliness and homesickness associated

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94 Oh! I was in shorts all the time, in Bermuda shorts [and thongs] no problem … or perhaps more often in sandals. It was pleasant. We [the French] were well integrated, we participated in university life, in sporting activities, in football and tennis teams. I also tried several times to surf but it was very difficult (Joachim).
with the early stages of culture shock. She did however succeed in overcoming these problems to experience a very satisfactory state prior to going home. Her views are echoed by the other couple with respect to coping strategies, although in that instance, the predicament of Eveline’s partner who did not speak English and needed to find work clearly exacerbated the problems in adjustment. The fact that Brigitte and her fiancé shared a house with a very multicultural group also assisted them in removing the linguistic pressures because they made every effort to communicate in English except when they were alone. This gradually eliminated one predictor of stress, namely linguistic difficulties. It was also fortuitous that Robert became very close friends with an Australian who invited him to be best man at his wedding and they shared many special moments with his family in Sydney.

This example indicates how association with a host national engendered a lasting friendship. This was significant as a coping technique for integrating, as was mentioned previously. For Robert, who was four years older than his fiancée, the coping strategy was thus centred on the relationship with his friend.

\[95\] This helped us integrate better into Australian society because we went on holidays with them, we met their parents because we were invited to a wedding. It was a sign of friendship which made us feel more accepted and a little bit Australian (Robert)\[96\]

\[96\] Evidently this helps the process of adjustment a lot but if I were alone, normally I am quite independent and I don’t need anyone else. I am a bit of a ‘lone wolf’. It helped a great deal to have a partner. In terms of exchange experiences, I think it’s good to go away with someone because one can exchange and discuss ideas and there is also this moral support even if I didn’t feel, perhaps because I am also a man, this uprooting, this detachment. It was difficult for my fiancée who felt more this distance from her family because she is younger, I don’t know. It’s also a question of personality, age … the fact that through the language barrier, we are not Australians. We do not speak well, one is perceived as a foreigner. Now with English, we feel a little more integrated (Robert).
As he did not experience the distress of being so far from home like his fiancée, Robert explains that his self-sufficiency, personality and age were quite helpful as well as the partnership for support. This example also shows that in spite of having difficulties in integrating on such a multi-cultural campus, increased proficiency in English was a definite advantage.

Eveline, who also came with her partner to Australia, concedes that being in a partnership may have also eased her adjustment process.

*I think my experience may have been different because we were two. We’re people from Paris accepted in Australia ...It was too hard for us to speak English to each other in the evening. You don’t want to lose too much time speaking English. It would be too hard. But I was nearly speaking English all the time (Eveline)*.

Eveline explains that despite the advantages of a partnership, it was difficult to practise speaking English with her partner as did the above couple, because firstly he could not afford to study the language and secondly they did not want to waste precious moments struggling with a foreign language in the evenings. Their positive acceptance as Parisians in Australia is linked with the paradoxical views the host nationals had for the French.

The importance of social support networks is irrefutable for the positive effects this has on adjustment processes of academic sojourners. The coping strategies employed by the French sojourners to minimise their culture shock that proved most successful in relation to support groups was the international network, followed by the co-nationals and finally the host national group. These findings differ from other commonly reported studies that examined friendship networks, where the order of salience appears to favour firstly the co-nationals, secondly the international group and last the host nationals. The findings of this study differ from those in literature because the French group went to great lengths to avoid their compatriots when in Australia, to the point of extremes at times, as illustrated in the data. This is possibly because most of the respondents could not conceive spending large sums of money to achieve their dream of studying in Australia only to be immersed in French culture with their co-nationals. They gravitated towards the international student contingent primarily as they had difficulties in meeting “real” Australians and secondly because they were somewhat attracted by the unknown, exotic nationalities such as the Asian population in Australia. The high incidence of friendships with international students
can be considered the key psychological resource for the French sojourners who experienced problems during the initial phases of acculturation in particular.

The gravitational pull toward the multinational group by the French students resonates with Wiseman’s (1997) study of American college students who studied in Israel, where the importance of social support in overcoming loneliness among academic sojourners far from home was highlighted. He argues that whilst feelings of loneliness are not unexpected in the early weeks of the programme for most students, they are not long-term and they can be assuaged through friendships with other international students. This argument is substantiated by Robert, whose statement aptly illustrates the majority views of the French on the subject.

*Je suis pas certain que beaucoup de [français] veuillent se former des groupes parce que beaucoup deviennent comme moi et ils se disent: « j’ai pas forcément envie de sticker avec des français, parce que ça m’apporte pas plus ». Si je suis venu en Australie c’est pas pour rencontrer des français. Je suis fier de ma nationalité mais je je suis pas revanchard! Je suis pas: « Oh les français, le camembert, le béret, son béret! » (Robert).*  

In light of the above, French sojourners investigated in the Australian context demonstrate the importance of friendship networks, but the networks they developed differed in order from Bochner et al.’s (1977) research, as the majority of respondents did not follow the trends suggested by their studies. This French group exuded significant national pride and unequivocal identification with their culture of origin. Perhaps for this reason, they did not feel the need for dependence on their compatriots whilst abroad. They did not appear to need their French identity re-affirmed and did not always seek those of their own nationality even when they suffered loneliness and distress during the early stages of culture shock. However, those who did gravitate toward their own national group were instrumentally motivated to do so. During the most stressful periods, it cannot be denied that association with select members of their country provided the necessary boost to their self-esteem, along with friendships that would stand the test of time. It must be re-iterated however, that these friendships were few and far between. My study concurs with Ward and Rana-Deuba’s (2000) research on that note as it is an emphasis on quality rather than

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97 I’m not convinced most [French students] want to form groups with their co-nationals, because many become like me and they say to themselves: “I don’t necessarily want to stick to French people because it doesn’t really achieve anything”. I didn’t come to Australia to meet French people. I am proud of my nationality but I don’t need to proclaim it. I’m not like: “Oh the French, camembert, the beret, his beret” (Robert).
quantity of social interactions that determined the choice of networks for the French students. These researchers argue the quality of relationships is essential for sojourner mental health as well as underpinning the experience of loneliness. The French were very careful in their selection of true friends during their sojourn.

4.4.3 Anticipation as a coping strategy

This final section illustrates what research has demonstrated to be one of the most effective strategies used for coping in a new culture. Anticipation of each phase of the acculturation process has been known to successfully mitigate the effects of culture shock (see for example Storti, 2001a; Ward et al., 2001; Weaver, 1994). In conjunction with this factor, keeping a diary is an excellent adjunct to achieving this. Unfortunately, this requires being prepared for the unknown, which only one respondent, Natalie was. She explains the procedure she used in the next quote.

[J’étais bien intégrée dans la société australienne parce que] j’ai anticipé chaque étape. J’ai anticipé parce que j’ai su passer par et je passe encore par des phases, des chemins. Je me suis dit: « Tu vas passer par là, par là, par là quand tu vas rentrer » et c’est exactement ce qui s’est passé ... ça m’a pas dérangée d’être assez seule pendant un an, c’était même agréable. J’ai pu m’amuser à écrire un peu. Enfin au niveau psychologique, je sais exactement quand j’étais bien etc. Enfin j’ai fait un journal au jour le jour ... c’est vrai qu’on dit qu’un journal est une bonne aide psychologique. C’est une thérapie (Natalie).

This quote exemplifies how awareness of the arduous and potentially traumatic process of foreigner adaptation to a new culture can be avoided. Natalie was actually completely aware from her research that the normal processes of adaptation in a new country were relatively predictable and as she proceeded from one stage to the next, clearly proved the advantage of preparation prior to departure, including the re-entry. She integrated successfully into her host society because of this. Further, she had met people from various friendship networks, a Dane and a French girl, through flat sharing but ultimately preferred solitude for much of the time. She devoted her time to keeping a diary, knowing exactly at what stage psychologically she was on her journey. There is clearly a need for careful

98[ I was well integrated into Australian society]. I anticipated each stage. I did this because I knew how to go through and am still going through each phase, the paths. I said to myself: “You are going to go through this and this and that when you go home” and this is exactly what happened … it didn’t bother me to be alone a lot for a year, it was actually pleasant. I managed to have fun writing a little. Psychologically I know exactly when I was coping well etc. Finally, I kept a diary … it’s true what they say that a diary is a good psychological aid. It’s therapeutic (Natalie).
preparation prior to the academic sojourn if the transitional processes of adjustment and re-entry are to be effectively traversed. Although all respondents succeeded in adapting to Australia through the use of various coping techniques, preparation prior to their sojourn may have dramatically reduced the effects of culture shock experienced by the majority of the group.

In section 4.4, the various coping strategies utilised by the French sojourners were presented. The result was an intercultural personality, open-minded and tolerant individuals emerged from their culture learning in Australia. This was only possible when a concerted effort was made by both visitors and hosts to amend their potentially damaging pre-existing stereotypical views of each other. Clearly, attitudinal changes played a key role in their attaining this intercultural stage. The most common techniques employed for minimising the adjustment difficulties ranged from acceptance of the new culture, having recourse to the available social networks, taking full advantage of activities offered on campus, travelling extensively and working.

Findings also suggest that one of the most significant reasons all respondents succeeded in their acculturation in Australia was due to a positive change in attitude by both sojourners and host members as well as to the duality of feelings the Australians demonstrated in regard to the French visitors. The paradoxical nature of their sentiments appear to be directly correlated with both the positive aspects of integration and the adverse effects of culture shock, such as pre-existing cultural stereotypes and a lack of consonance in behavioural and cultural mores. The French sojourners tried to avoid elements of French culture that caused irritation with the hosts. They made a concerted effort to refrain from irritating practices which generally resulted in positive acceptance of this group by their hosts. Of note also is the focus on travel around Australia, a factor which greatly enhanced their image of this country. Their emerging perceptions about Australia and its culture underwent a dramatic metamorphosis. They felt they had become evolved, open-minded and more tolerant. This resulted in the majority of the participants wanting to adopt this country as their own.

In order to minimise the difficulties they were experiencing, the strategy of seeking out Australians and avoiding French compatriots was very effectively used by the subjects, especially when male and female friendships became more intimate. This was particularly evident in the exclusion of French flat mates where possible. Through the network of
Australian friends, the door was opened for a satisfying and memorable association with host members. Unfortunately, those who benefited from close friendships with their hosts were few in number. The data showed that at least one close friendship with a co-national was beneficial and strategic in promoting a successful adjustment. The way the French sojourners dealt with perceived offensive codes of behaviour, inappropriate dress sense and deplorable eating habits was closely tied to attitudinal issues. When they learned to accept that the cultural mores were different, they became broadminded, less critical of their hosts and adopted the stance that it was easier to acknowledge only favourable aspects of both cultures. Once this stage was reached, they integrated easily into Australian society and were even ready to assume some of the unfamiliar roles.

4.5 Conclusion

The data has confirmed that in spite of a high degree of satisfaction with their acculturation experience, sojourners are not exempt from possible distressing effects of culture shock, particularly during the first phases of adaptation in a foreign country (cf. Church, 1982). Findings indicated that although many students believed there would be little or no culture shock given the western mentalities and perceived cultural similarity of Australia and France, only three respondents were actually consistent in their estimation of this. All others provided evidence to the contrary. Consistent with empirical literature on this phenomenon, as the French sojourners proceeded through the different phases of adjustment in Australia, they employed coping strategies to ease the process. Misunderstandings occurred as a result of erroneous interpretation of linguistic and cultural codes during communication. Conflicts emerged largely from perceptions predicated on diverse cultural practices and communicative codes which were misconstrued during social interactions (Barnlund, 1997; Béal, 1992).

Once cultural learning took place, the French sojourners emerged as evolved individuals, open-minded and tolerant of other cultures. An effective method of minimising the difficulties during adjustment to in Australia was accepting the differing attitudes and contrastive behavioural and social mores of their host country. This led to a recovery phase where all French sojourners were seen to reconcile differences in a satisfactory manner. Their interculturality is significant in light of the argument advanced that the individualistic cultural orientation of this group underwent a dramatic change when they

Kealey (1989) argues that strong interpersonal skills and social interest are the most salient characteristics associated with success in intercultural contact situations, but these factors affecting adjustment to new ways of communicating and interacting are nonetheless more disquieting and more difficult for those who do not possess these attributes. Further, sojourners who place more importance on personal relationships may suffer a greater sense of loss, generating in the process more intense acculturative stress. These issues were found to affect the French individuals in different ways as personality traits are known to influence contact situations whether this be in the context of their home culture or in the intercultural arena.

Paradoxically, whereas the French sojourners may have been prime candidates for an unsatisfactory adaptation to this country, due possibly to their overt cultural pride and other causal factors, they were auspiciously well received in Australia, a factor which dramatically contributed to a successful adaptation in this country (Church, 1982). It is safe to conclude that all French students have registered positive adjustment patterns in the Australian context. Stereotypes were responsible for a negative influence in interactions between host nationals and international students. It is the breakdown of these pre-conceived ideas which can either promote in many instances, excellent and lasting relationships between the two groups or serve to alienate them. Opper’s (1990) study on the impacts of study abroad programmes on students and graduates is in line with this argument. Contemporary research shows that mitigating circumstances, such as cultural similarity and differing personality traits and widely contrastive methodologies used in empirical data collection are known to produce very divergent results (Ward et al., 2001). In this study, the French sojourners appear to have successfully broken down the cultural barriers between hosts and visitors, evidenced by successful integration into Australian society by all concerned. Comparable results were found in Kramsch’s (1993) research in her study on culture and differing language teaching pedagogies which represented a reality check against stereotypical visions of the ‘other’. The end result was cross-cultural understanding traversing several stages: an initial misunderstanding of intent, followed by attempts to rectify this outcome, followed by explanations of the problem within the participants’ own frame of reference, and finally the necessary switch to the other person’s
frame of reference. This resembles the process undergone by both the French sojourners and the host nationals before negative stereotypes could be dismantled.

Although culture shock was temporarily perceived as a form of alienation in the new culture, it cannot be denied that the positive aspect of this phenomenon was of immense benefit to the French sojourners as it was to their counterparts. This became evident when attitudes of both visitors and hosts changed. When one succeeds in transcending the transitional conflicts that are a natural part of adaptation in immersion situations, the experience offers the potential for authentic personal growth and personality development (P. Adler, 1975).

This important chapter on the significance of culture shock during the initial process of adaptation to Australia by French sojourners has set the scene for subsequent chapters, closely interrelated thematically with identity issues, as a consequence of the cultural dissonance that characterises both groups followed by a satisfactory adjustment process. Although the conceptualisation of the term may be dramatically different from the respondents’ point of view, there should remain little doubt that even minor differences in cultural mores may act as catalysts for successful or unsuccessful adjustment patterns.

The cultural identity orientations most adolescents take for granted when at home, are brought to the forefront when challenged by foreigners and the ensuing identity conflict triggers re-modification of this important aspect of their self-concept, raising questions about who they are and where they belong. The vicissitudes of identity are all the more evident during cross-cultural encounters as Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) research suggests. The consequences of the remodelling of their cultural identity responses may thus have significant implications when they repatriate. This aspect of their return is even more heightened for younger sojourners, according to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963 p.40), as it is probable that they have not yet “found themselves” in their own culture. They argue that the resolution of their identity conflict overseas can imply that they have become “zealously converted” to new values, and this newfound security is something which they find difficult to relinquish. The French sojourners indeed became converted to new values, however, only selectively, as they chose to retain the intrinsic aspects of their original culture, such as language, behavioural mores and traditions. The following chapter focuses on issues relating to reverse culture shock and the vignettes from the combined studies will illustrate how crucial this area of research is for cross-cultural education.
It has been widely acknowledged that there is a gap in research describing the re-entry or re-acculturation processes of various sojourner groups following at least six months abroad in an immersion experience (Brabant et al., 1990; Kim, 2001; Martin, 1986; Storti, 2001b; Uehara, 1986; Werkman, 1982). The implications of cross-cultural education in distant locations may produce dramatically different experiences with diverse consequences from those exchange students who remain within Europe to a large extent. As neither Europe-based French academic sojourners, nor those who venture further afield to study, feature in empirical studies, the gap is significantly wider. Storti (2001b) among other researchers (eg. N. Adler, 1981; Austin, 1986; Gaw, 2000; Kim, 2001; Martin, 1986; Sussman, 2001; Uehara, 1986; Werkman, 1982), censures the lacunae in research in the area of re-entry processes, as scholars have focused essentially on the overseas experience. They have produced a voluminous literature on the phenomenon of culture shock, as well as seminars and workshops to ease the process of adjustment in immersion transitions in order to equip sojourners with coping strategies. Storti argues that, although sojourners are generally expected to go home at some stage, the significant process of readjustment in one’s own culture is totally taken for granted. Few returnees expect difficulties in re-adapting to their country of origin. When they have grown up in the familiar culture, there should be no unknown factors to challenge them and family and friends are there to welcome them back to the fold. One only need pick up where one left off. It is because of the familiarity with their culture that most expatriates encounter a situation of reverse culture shock which is claimed to be even more difficult than the adjustment process overseas (N. Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Kim, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2001; Uehara, 1986; Werkman, 1982).

This chapter will examine the extent to which the French sojourners experienced difficulties in their re-acculturation processes. French understandings of education mean that students are expected to be independent and would not be assisted in the various stages of difficulty encountered in their tertiary education, adjustment processes abroad and re-entry once they have reached adulthood at the age of eighteen (Asselin & Mastron, 2001; Kreitz, 2004; MacLeod, 2004; Martinez, 2004). Although family ties are close in French culture, the attitude that French youth must fend for themselves from late adolescence in order to fortify their resolve, to enhance their chances of survival in a tough and
competitive world, to prepare them for the hardships they must endure is very much part of French consciousness closely linked to their identity formation as independent young adults.

Section 5.1 presents the findings of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Section 5.2 focuses on the initial stages of the return and section 5.3 examines reports that respondents did not experience reverse culture shock to investigate whether these reports were accurate representations of their experience. Section 5.4 discusses reverse culture shock and interpersonal relationship issues. Section 5.5 provides examples of reverse culture shock and reactions to culture learning. Section 5.6 investigates an important feature of culture learning, the use of English and reverse culture shock. Section 5.7 examines the respondents’ report that they were in transit in France. In this section I shall analyse a fundamental concept underpinning this thesis, a finding which has become the leitmotif for the project Une année entre parenthèses (a year in parenthesis). Section 5.8 discusses the significant aspect of the incommunicability of the sojourn experience and reverse culture shock with examples of how difficulty in recounting their experience adversely affected the re-entry process for the French returnees. In section 5.9, reverse culture shock and cultural stereotypes, I scrutinize the relationship between the returnees and their compatriots with respect to pre-existing stereotypical views about Australians and the French. Section 5.10 considers employment and academic issues and reverse culture shock, whilst section 5.11 explores coping strategies, documenting the methods employed by the returnees to minimise the effects of reverse culture shock in this study. Finally, section 5.12 summarises the chapter.

5.1 Findings of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies

This section presents the findings of the longitudinal and cross-sectional studies on the specific issues constituting reverse culture shock arising from the data on French academic returned sojourners to France and Switzerland. Although most returnees from the re-entry study finally settled back into a semblance of ‘normality’ in their lives after a period of two months to a year, all returnees experienced a range of problems, comparable to those reported in re-acculturation research. There are critical re-entry variables which determine the degree of readjustment for the French and the Franco-Swiss sojourners as for their counterparts (cf. Church, 1982; Martin, 1984): background variables (age, academic level and status) being less important in this instance because the cultural group is similar in
cultural origin, than situational variables (such as length of sojourn, return to a familiar or unfamiliar environment, preparation for re-entry, social interaction, city of residence and previous cross-cultural experience).

5.2 Initial stages of the return

This section analyses the initial stages of the return of the French academic sojourners. The data underscores the significance of the incidences of reverse culture shock experienced by this group of returnees. As a result of immediate difficulties in re-adjusting the subjects recorded a brief honeymoon period that is partially consistent with findings from recent re-entry studies (Gaw, 2000; 2002; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2001; Uehara, 1986; Weaver, 1994). Most respondents attested to such a brief honeymoon period upon re-entry so as to be considered almost inconsequential. The honeymoon phase appeared to be omitted and reverse culture shock set in almost immediately, similarly to the predictions of the W-Curve hypothesis. A brief period of euphoria upon returning home was registered in the French re-entry data. Most respondents were happy to see their relatives once again, however, misunderstandings and general lack of interest from family and friends in their experiences made this short-lived. Reverse culture shock is exacerbated specifically because it is unexpected (NAFSA, 2002). Further, according to Storti (2001b), not only is re-entry shock unexpected and returnees unprepared for the experience but they are in fact expecting the exact opposite reaction. This significantly contributed to the brief honeymoon period upon re-entry. The following vignettes from Brigitte and Robert support this argument and indicate that French sojourners were not immune to reverse culture shock, even if partially prepared for their re-entry. They are representative of the majority of returnee comments.

*Quand je suis rentrée, je me suis rendu compte qu’il était plus dur pour moi de me réadapter à la France que m’adapter en Australie (Brigitte).*

This quote offers evidence that the re-entry experience was surprisingly problematic although Brigitte reported that she had mentally prepared for the process as a result of the acculturation interview for this project. After eighteen months away, re-adapting to a society that has changed as much as the sojourners have during their absence cannot be easy. Robert explains why.

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99 When I came home, I realised that it was harder for me to readjust to France than it was to adapt to Australia (Brigitte).
Robert’s quote reflects findings from literature on reverse culture shock that show that departure to a foreign land is filled with expectation and excitement but sojourners soon discover that the return is much more difficult to manage mostly because they had expected it to be easy. Although Robert had prepared mentally for his return following the interview for this project in Australia, it appears difficult for sojourners to make contingency plans for all eventualities following an extended absence. Like the majority of their cohort, these two respondents had not returned home for a holiday during their sojourn. My research has shown that the few subjects who had returned to France for a brief visit during their sojourn, or whose family had visited them in Australia, found the re-entry process easier. This factor contributed to a more significant impact of reverse culture shock for Robert and others who had not returned to France. In addition, the data revealed that the greater the length of study abroad, the more onerous was the re-entry process. This is once again consonant with findings from re-entry literature.

The following vignette reveals that even when the sojourners were excited at the thought of seeing their loved ones again, the first impressions could in fact be equivocal. Diane was one respondent who had immediate reverse culture shock upon seeing her family and friends once again.

J’étais [impatiente] tout mon voyage là-bas et puis au moment que je savais que j’allais les revoir, j’étais plus trop impatiente. Enfin, plus le temps se rapprochait que j’allais les voir, j’avais l’impression que ça allait être un truc extraordinaire … Les retrouvailles n’ont pas été celles tant attendues, tant espérées. La première semaine a été très dure, très violente. J’ai pas trop supporté de revoir [mon copain]. J’ai été très agressive avec lui, très froide et distante. J’ai même rompu avec lui au bout de trois jours. Et puis j’ai regretté. Je ne sais plus trop ce que je veux. Je suis revenue vers lui après lui avoir fait beaucoup de mal … Ce qui m’a déçu en fait c’est que rien n’a changé à Paris. Et ça bizarrement, ça m’a un peu agacé. Je me disais: « Merde, tout est pareil, rien n’a évolué! » J’ai eu peur de revenir en arrière, de régresser (Diane).
This quote represents one of the most emotionally charged accounts of reverse culture shock registered by these sojourners. The disappointment that emerged when the long awaited joyous reunion with loved ones did not eventuate is strongly portrayed by Diane. Her re-entry experience was a painful one after fifteen months’ absence because in her opinion nothing appeared to have changed at home as she had done while away. The confusion and frustration she felt translated into a state of depression which nine months later had not completely dissipated. Her interpersonal relationship problems were exacerbated as a result of this state which produced a vicious circle, especially where her boyfriend concerned. During the first three months, she had broken up with him three times and made up again. They have since remained only friends.

Another respondent, Jacques explains why the re-entry shock is so severe.

... You feel like a fish out of water. You feel like misplaced. Then you start to compare with Australia ... you’re just in between. You don’t fit in Australia any more but you don’t really fit neither in France ...I was so excited like being a student and being abroad because you learn a lot. You learn like everyday, you compare to something, you learn a little bit more, whereas when you come back to France you come back to normal (Jacques).

This quote reveals that the excitement of being abroad is not easily translated into the re-entry experience because it does not involve the same evolutionary journey experienced in Australia. The latter was tangible as a result of its novelty and opportunities for growth. The ostensibly static lifestyle back home compares harshly with the growth experience Jacques underwent in Australia. Jacques’s next comment shows why he chose to avoid speaking about his year abroad except with friends with similar experiences.

It was good to be with [friends who experienced something similar] ... they could understand me a bit better than people who stayed in France ... I felt, like a bit bossy, snobby, somebody who knows everything, you know, trying to explain. You don’t want to get like that (Jacques).

Jacques has one wish and that is to return to live in Australia. This quote shows he gravitated towards the people who were of the same mind because there was no point in trying to explain his experience. It proved to be a useful strategy in this instance, as in the majority of cases, to mitigate the effects of reverse culture shock. French people, it seemed,
get the wrong impression if one is overly effusive about one’s intercultural experiences. Werkman (1982) suggests this may represent a ‘splitting’ of the self, an adaptive need to repress important sections of one’s developmental experiences. The hidden part of the self only emerges through the mediation of someone who has shared an analogous experience. Monique explains how her return home was initially exciting because of her sister’s wedding, but the euphoria was short lived.

_I went to Bordeaux straight away because my sister was getting married so I had to come back. I was disappointed to leave Australia but I knew it was for something good in France … but after one week I completely depressed because after the wedding it was: “Oh God! I’m in France, without the sun”. Well there was sun but it was a shock. I mean my clothes were different, I was in the Australian way, Australian fashion, everything on me was Australian (Monique)._  

This quote demonstrates that when there is something important or exciting to look forward to for the return, the process is easier, but the moment it is over, the sojourner has to face the realities of re-immersion back into the home context, something most found traumatic. Once the joys expected dissipate, sojourners fall into depression because they miss the country they have left. This is seemingly because resuming one’s life after a year or more abroad involves many organisational matters that need addressing, such as finding accommodation, arranging telephone and electricity connections, resuming academic life and so forth. In Monique’s case, returning in summer represented holidays she would have preferred to spend in Australia following her studies. Instead she found herself in France and missing Australia enormously, including the fashion which she had adopted so readily because she made a point of dressing differently from her friends in France. Wearing Australian clothes was apparently one strategy for minimising the effects of reverse culture shock because it helped assuage the loss she felt at leaving Australia by bridging the gap between the two cultures. Monique was thus able to maintain cues from the lost culture and in the process allow herself to feel a little bit more Australian in France. She was perhaps trying to distance herself from other French nationals, reminiscent of the social comparison and mobility strategy begun by many of her cohort whilst overseas (cf. Tajfel, 1978).

Angélica’s comment also confirms why the initial euphoria on coming home after fourteen months was short lived, if it happened at all.
I was well in Australia. I had a great time, I had good friends, it was perfect. And I came back in France and I was pretty depressed because it was the end of the world. It’s so far that you can’t return when you want. You can’t really see your friends again and you leave everything and it’s more or less for life for most people, and that’s a big shock ... When you come back you feel like no one can understand you at first because no one has the same experience as you because they went to Germany or something, so it’s not the same. You can’t compare. Thankfully I had one friend from my [Australian] university who came back at the same time (Angélica).

Angélica’s quote substantiates the claim that French exchange programmes to European destinations rarely compare with an experience in Australia, particularly when prohibitive travel expenses preclude visits home. The loneliness and depression she felt at the thought of never seeing her Australian friends again was acute because of the geographical distance between Australia and France. Many respondents suggested the significant distance was one reason this destination was attractive to French students in the first place.

A further quote supporting the view that a honeymoon period was almost non existent for the returnees is taken from Martine’s interview.

… Retourner en France, ça a été vraiment très dur parce que j’avais l’impression qu’on m’avait enlevé une partie de moi-même, enfin une partie de ce que j’avais construit en Australie ... Ce que j’ai vraiment adoré, c’est ce côté facile, très décontracté des australiens ... et puis parler anglais. Ça m’a vachement manqué quand je suis rentrée en France, de pas pouvoir parler anglais (Martine).102

In this quote Martine accentuates the commonly reported positive impact the sojourn had on their lives which correlated negatively with the intensity of the difficulties they experienced upon re-entry. This has been recorded in literature on re-acculturation in various studies (cf. N. Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Kim, 2001; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Uehara, 1986; Ward et al., 2001). An important feature of her re-entry difficulties however is related to the inability to use her newly acquired English in French society. The high incidence of this problem will be examined in section 5.6.

The following vignettes illustrate the intensity of emotions the French sojourners felt at the thought of having to return home when they were not ready to do so. This factor was

102 Returning to France was really hard because I had the impression that a part of myself had been removed, that is, a part of what I had built in Australia … What I really loved was the easy, laid back character of Australians … and then speaking English. I really missed this when I returned to France, not being able to speak English (Martine).
largely responsible for their difficult period of readjustment back home, confirming the argument that the period of euphoria was short-lived. Angélica, like almost all returnees from Strasbourg, had educational obligations which forced her to delay her plans for returning to Australia.

"Je suis rentrée parce que j’étais obligée de rentrer pour l’université en France, histoire de finir mon cursus ... Donc en décembre, début janvier, j’ai un an en Australie, un an en entreprise, et j’ai fini mes études et là, je peux repartir en Australie (Angélica)."

Where Angélica, and the other exchange students, needed to focus on their academic studies or internships prior to returning overseas, some respondents from Paris who had travelled autonomously from tertiary institutions found themselves with considerable debts to repay before contemplating further travel. Robert’s and Brigitte’s examples are pertinent in this instance.

"Après un an et demi passés en Australie avec des finances un peu réduites à zéro, il était temps de rentrer de revoir sa famille et profiter des siens un peu quoi (Robert)."

Given Robert’s age upon his return, 30, this situation was problematic because after nine months he had still not secured employment. The predicament led him to accept work in Hong Kong, a decision which involved interpersonal relationship issues with his fiancée.

Brigitte also felt enormous pressure to find a job in a law firm following her extensive sojourn in Australia.

"I remember I was crying after one week I was at home and I said to my parents: “I don’t like it here. It’s too little, too restrictive”. I had a big pressure on me because I knew I had to find a job. I find it difficult to speak French again, and I find it difficult to share my experience with my parents. I think it was an identity crisis in a way (Brigitte)."

Brigitte’s experience upon her return home is poignant because it symbolises the traumatic episode the readjustment represented for her. This quote continues in the same vein as that

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103 I came home because I was obliged to return to university in France, so that I could finish my degree … So in December, beginning of January, I shall have one year in Australia, one year in an internship, and I will have finished my studies and then I can return to Australia (Angélica).

104 After 1 ½ years spent in Australia with finances somewhat reduced to zero, it was time to return home to see the family and spend quality time with them (Robert).
presented earlier in this chapter. Her disappointment at discovering that close family ties had changed led her to the realisation that she could only share her concerns with her partner and close friends who had sojourned with them in Australia. This factor added to the loneliness she felt and justified her reluctance in coming home in the first place.

Matthieu was fortunate in securing an excellent position in a law firm in Paris three weeks after his return. However it took considerable time for this fortuitous circumstance to appease his sense of disillusionment at being obliged to return home because of financial constraints.

Matthieu’s situation is synonymous with the respondents from Paris who had taken out considerable loans to pursue their postgraduate degrees in Australia for at least one year. The common denominator for the students from Paris was that they did not want to return home and only did so in order to meet their financial obligations. This contributed to substantial difficulty which manifested in anger and frustration and feelings of helplessness. Being forced to return home in fact exacerbated the problems they encountered upon re-entry.

Léah’s situation in Paris is similar to that of her counterparts in Strasbourg because she had to resume her studies at the university. However, another factor played an important part in her disinclination to come home.

I didn’t want to come back to France at all. I tried to extend my visa because I had a student visa and I had to change to a tourist visa and I was afraid to come back to France because of personal things but also because of the French people ... I was so welcomed in Melbourne ... but when I came back I thought like French people are sometimes, yes, coarse and arrogant (Léah).

105 What was hard was justifying to others, um, explaining that the only reason we came home was to reimburse a loan, without which we would never have come home. And they didn’t understand … Commitments awaited us … to feel obliged by a bank, i.e. an establishment we do not know just because of this, for money, well, that’s absolutely crazy! And to say to yourself you have to stop all this [the experience in Australia] (Matthieu).
Léah’s unwillingness to come home has a lot to do with the warm welcome she received in Australia thanks to her dual Franco-Cambodian nationality. It has already been mentioned that her Asian appearance coupled with her French cultural background were instrumental in her positive acculturation experience in Melbourne where she felt not only accepted in society but sought after because of the contrasts her origins represented.

This section has illustrated why the French sojourners experienced such a brief honeymoon period upon re-entry. Erroneous expectations and emotional and psychological changes in their persona contributed to difficulties in readjustment back home. A successful acculturation process in Australia clearly correlated negatively with their readjustment paradigms. Finally, resistance on the part of many sojourners to return home was associated with increased difficulties in readjustment upon re-entry.

5.3 **Respondents who claimed not to have experienced reverse culture shock**

This section examines the few cases of positive readjustment to life back in France and Switzerland where the respondents in question claimed to have experienced no reverse culture shock, only to provide contradictions to those declarations in the ensuing discussion. This curious situation bears similarity with the corresponding section in chapter 4 where several respondents made analogous assertions about their acculturation process and ‘no culture shock’ which they subsequently retracted. The re-entry study revealed that only five respondents have resumed a modicum of normality in their lives back in France and Switzerland with the express intention of remaining there for some time, although travel is on their agenda. However, although these individuals have professed to have experienced little or no reverse culture shock, similarly to the acculturation study, analysis of their interviews indicate no one escaped some form of this phenomenon. Once again, reverse culture shock was perceived in different ways, with varying degrees of intensity. Perhaps the most positive re-entry experience registered was derived from the one respondent who had anticipated every phase of her adaptation and readjustment prior to, during and after her sojourn. Natalie’s explanation shows discernment and substantiates the argument made in this thesis that appropriate measures are paramount for successful adaptation and readjustment processes.
J’étais contente de rentrer parce que ça faisait un an et puis en me disant en partant de l’Australie: « T’as bien profité de tout et tu n’as pas regretté. Si tu veux revenir, dis-toi bien que ce sera différent, parce que tu étais là en tant qu’étudiante et si tu veux revenir en Australie, ce sera pour chercher du travail ». Enfin je m’étais préparée parce que j’avais vu un film français avant de partir sur les voyages ERASMUS, un film de Klapisch « L’Auberge Espagnole » … Je suis restée une semaine et demie à Lyon chez moi et puis je suis revenue ici [à Strasbourg] parce que je devais emménager dans mon appartement … Je n’ai pas eu à me soucier de ça, ni des inscriptions parce que j’étais à l’IECS. J’avais un emprunt mais aussi deux bourses, donc c’était très bien … Pendant deux mois j’ai pas arrêté de bouger … à Strasbourg … en Bretagne … et on m’a appelée pour aller faire prof d’anglais en Suisse (Natalie).106

The advantages adequate preparation prior to an academic sojourn can have on young travellers are clear through this quote. It appears that little phased this respondent and even when things had the potential for causing difficulties in adjustment, Natalie kept moving from region to region and even to Switzerland to teach English. She was grateful that a film on the subject of academic sojourns for ERASMUS students had paved the way for her successful intercultural sojourns. However, in spite of this vignette representing the epitome of the perfect cross-cultural experience, there was one element of French culture which she found difficult to tolerate because she could not change it.

...[but] I was angry about some French people who don’t try to be open-minded. I would say that this is the thing that really upset me being back that some people dare to criticise though they haven’t been anywhere (Natalie).

The lack of open-mindedness of some French people provoked sentiments which manifested in anger for Natalie as for most of her cohort of students who had been abroad on exchange programmes. This element of French mentality frequently mentioned in the data suggested a consensus of opinion that their compatriots were narrow-minded individuals who refused to change because they rarely travelled outside of France. Natalie’s frustration at the attitude toward foreigners of many French people was cause for an angry reaction because it was something she could not change. In Chapter 4, the data

106 I was happy to go home because a year had elapsed and then I told myself when I left Australia: “You made the most of it and you will not regret it. If you want to return, you need to realise that things will be different because you were here as a student and if you want to return to Australia, it will be to look for work.” Well, I had prepared myself because I had seen a French film before leaving on ERASMUS exchanges, a film by Klapisch “The Spanish Inn” … I stayed home in Lyon for 1 ½ weeks and then I came back here [to Strasbourg] because I had to move into my apartment. I didn’t have to worry about that, nor enrolling because I was at the IECS. I had a loan but also 2 scholarships so that was very good. For 2 months, I did not stop travelling … in Strasbourg … in Brittany … and I was called to work as an English teacher in Switzerland (Natalie).
revealed that French people were timid travellers, a factor that contributed to the mentality described above. The quote suggests that even successful adaptation processes can be tarnished because there are elements of one’s culture which contribute to negative emotions, particularly as they remain entirely outside the control of the individual.

Lise is a respondent who also recounted a positive re-entry experience. This was largely due to a boyfriend who was waiting for her return and a holiday at Christmas to break the year’s sojourn. She explains that although she intends to live in France, travelling and working in another country for several years is definitely on her agenda. Her experience of reverse culture shock is perceived in this instance as constraints.

I felt it was like holidays because I came back to France for Christmas and I was here for a month so the second time I got the impression that I was on holidays. But it wasn’t like holidays because I got a really strange feeling of being in a place but you don’t feel home and I was kind of in transit ... I mean when I am in France I get up the morning, going to school or going to work. It means a lot of constraints and I didn’t have this feeling at all in Australia. So coming back was synonymous with constraints ... knowing that now I am different, now I deal with this, now I know that I have evolved. I re-adapted. But I felt frustrated because I couldn’t share this ...I have been living so many things but even if you showed the pictures ... you can’t share the emotions that you had at this place, like watching a sunset or something like that. It was frustrating but you get accustomed to it. The way I dealt with it was to travel again (Lise).

This quote reveals that even when positive factors were present to assist in the process of readjustment, the re-entry was nonetheless difficult in certain respects. The inability to share the experience remains of paramount importance for all respondents in the re-adaptation to life back home. The most effective coping strategy for Lise, as for others, was further travel.

Arlette had been quite prepared to go home after a year of research for her PhD because her boyfriend awaited her in Paris in a new apartment where they would begin a de facto relationship. She admitted to anxiety prior to her return but confessed the readjustment was harder than anticipated. It is not surprising that the process of re-entry resulted in symptoms of reverse culture shock, considering the issues she had to contend with on her return. Her initial apprehension about the various aspects of reintegration were thus confirmed shortly upon re-entry. Where the process should have been easier thanks to a visit back to France and visits by her parents and boyfriend in Australia, extraneous circumstances provoked problems that took much effort to resolve.
En rentrant de l’Australie on allait habiter ensemble. Donc c’est juste ce qui me faisait un peu peur parce que c’est un pont à franchir ... au niveau du travail, j’avais un peu peur de rentrer parce qu’il fallait que je fasse quelque chose avec tout [les recherches]... My first supervisor died so they gave me another one. She pretended she was interested so I explained a bit what I was doing, where it was going, but that’s it ... I wrote to her once but she never replied. I came back to France to see her for a month and she was not interested ... [The welcome] was so good when I got home but it was a bit difficult because I had to build everything again ... I was a bit nervous because I didn’t know if [the relationship] was going to work ... then suddenly I had all these boxes [of papers from Australia] in a tiny flat and nowhere to put them. And I had to adapt! I was stressed and it took a few weeks to get better (Arlette).

In this quote, one can observe that in spite of a willingness to return home, all aspects of the return process are not easily facilitated. They appear to be contingent on many extrinsic factors once again outside of the individual’s control. Arlette has settled back home in France and is finally happily ensconced in her relationship but she has not resumed her life as before because many elements are missing. The apartment she lives in on the outskirts of Paris does not suit her style of living and she is unhappy there. Her position at the Paris university is unsatisfactory because she has found it impossible to implement pedagogical changes she found enriching in Australia. Finally her identity is in crisis. This aspect of her return will be examined in Chapter 6.

Eveline’s positive re-entry experience can be attributed to several factors as she explains below, the most important being her relationship with her boyfriend who accompanied her from Strasbourg.

I think my experience may have been different because we were two. Actually it was much harder for [Parisians] because they are not coming on an exchange and they have huge debts to repay. So there are predictor variables which may make a difference to the study I think ... On s’est réhabituit très vite, on a vite repris nos petites habitudes ... J’ai pas eu de contre choc. On parlait beaucoup de nos souvenirs, ce qui était bien parce qu’on était deux et on pouvait partager ça sans trop embêter les autres quoi. Tout le monde voulait voir nos photos ... There was a new life which started because I had a new job and I had to work a lot to make new friends ... actually it’s an American company. The language in the company is English and we speak French ... but all the conferences, the emails, all the writing ... is in English so it’s good for me (Eveline).

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107 When I arrived home from Australia, we were going to live together. So that’s what scared me a little because it is a bridge that one has to cross ... with regard to work, I was a little scared of going home because I had to do something with all [my research] (Arlette).
108 We re-adapted quickly, we got back to our old habits ... I didn’t experience any reverse culture shock. We spoke often about our memories, which was good because we were a couple and we could share this without boring others. Everyone wanted to see our photos ... (Eveline).
This quote depicts a rare case of readjustment back home in this study. It embodies all the elements of a successful re-adaptation process because the most important factors which contributed to reverse culture shock for the remaining respondents were conspicuous by their absence in Eveline’s situation. The positive constituents concerned a relationship where sharing of experiences was vital for easing the homesickness for Australia; a new situation, an internship in an American company which was carried out concurrently with her studies and allowing her to use English in written form if not in oral communication; no major financial debts to repay; and a positive welcome by family and friends. These factors appear to be paramount for the successful resumption of her life in her homeland. Conversely, Eveline’s situation is not altogether devoid of reverse culture shock as she mentioned a stressful, albeit brief period that caused her concern before she found an internship. Further, she proceeded to list several aspects of French culture which caused her and her partner anxiety until they could become accustomed to French ways once again. These involved frustration caused by the incongruence evident by their relaxed state in comparison with their compatriots. They were often frustrated by behaviour on the roads, where French people drove at break-neck speed, smoking habits, administrative problems at the airport on arrival, among others. This suggests that they may have become “converted” (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) to certain Australian values or practices that they found difficult to relinquish. She explains below.

When we arrived in the airport in Paris we had to wait for maybe one hour in the plane, and we were so bored and we thought: “Ok, welcome back in France, the problems are starting!” ... Everything was completely dirty ... and when you want to go to the toilets, it’s the worst thing that you can do in an airport, ’cause it’s so dirty. The difference with [Sydney] was so obvious. And then the dogs in the street here ... and a girl can walk in the streets in the evening in the middle of the night and you are not afraid at all [in Australia] ... and then everybody smokes here and in Australia you can eat in a restaurant without cigarette smoke. It’s really good, even for my boyfriend it was good because you prefer to have a better life (Eveline).

It is evident from this quote that in spite of acceptance of France as their homeland, this couple could not avoid some effects of reverse culture shock as a result of striking contrasts in cultural habits of both countries. The fact that Eveline admits to having experienced a better life in Australia is indicative of the changes she and her boyfriend had to make in order to re-adapt. It is not surprising that their fervent wish is to live in Quebec when their studies are completed. There, they can benefit from both French and Anglo-Saxon cultures thanks to the addition of English to their linguistic repertoire, with both
languages available for their children to be brought up bilingually. Her comments illustrate that her return was synonymous with problems she had left behind for one year. It is interesting that this respondent and her boyfriend had been psychologically ready to come home but they had already met with disillusionment at the airport, the problems being a precursor for further aggravation. This factor essentially induced sentiments associated with varying degrees of reverse culture shock.

The longitudinal study of six respondents revealed that only two students, one from Paris who found it easier to settle in Strasbourg, and one from Geneva, were content to return home and eventually settled, though not without some degree of difficulty. Interestingly, the initial phase of re-entry, the honeymoon, coincided with successful relationships. Kati moved in with her partner to begin a de facto relationship, which is now over, and Marc returned home with his Australian girlfriend who stayed for eight months. Not unexpectedly, their relationship ended a few months after her departure. Both respondents were also quite prepared emotionally and psychologically to return home, an important feature of the readjustment cycle.

It is intriguing on the other hand, that the Parisian respondent, Kati, should register a most astonishing form of reverse culture shock during her first two weeks in Paris. As a result of her complete disorientation, she was pick-pocketed in the metro, like a tourist. Kati recounts this episode expressing how sickened and shamed she was.

… J’avais l’impression que j’étais sur un nuage, j’avais l’impression de flotter. Ça a duré 10, 15 jours et j’étais complètement comme si j’étais droguée ... j’étais dans un flottement et je marchais dans la rue et en plus forcément j’avais toujours la tête en l’air et j’ai été victime d’un pick-pocket. Moi qui viens de Paris! Et en plus, [c’était] mon argent australien que je voulais changer. J’étais écoeurée ... Je suis née à Paris, j’ai vécu toute ma vie à Paris et ben la première chose qu’on sait c’est qu’on met pas des affaires dans la petite pochette du sac à dos et je l’ai fait parce que en Australie on est tellement inconscients (Kati). 109

Kati’s quote reveals her immense shock at being pick-pocketed in Paris, not only as this was in her home town, a fact she could not easily reconcile, but the perpetrator stole the

109 I got the impression that I was on a cloud, as if I were floating. This lasted ten days, 2 weeks, and it was just as if I were on drugs ... I was floating and I was walking in the street and then worst of all I always had my head up in the air and I was pick-pocketed. I, who am from Paris! And to top it all, [it was] my Australian money that I wanted to change. I was sickened ... I was born in Paris, I have lived all my life in Paris and the first thing everybody knows is that you do not put your things in the pocket of a ruck sack and I did it because in Australia, we do not have to worry about that (Katy).
Australian currency she had been on her way to exchange, from the ruck sack on her back. Her annoyance was augmented as she knew that care with valuables was elementary in the prevention of this kind of crime in the metro. This situation was in stark cultural contrast with life in Australia which she credited for being much safer for visitors and nationals alike. It was in fact the realisation of this distinction between the two countries which precipitated the reverse culture shock, indicating once again, adoption of Australian ways (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

The findings of this project indicate that a positive re-entry process reported by the French sojourners appears to correlate strongly with a new situation, new town, new job/internship or relationship, especially after some degree of preparation prior to re-entry. The preceding examples above substantiate this view. An argument offered for the easier process of adjustment to a different milieu is its resemblance to the sojourn where one has to adjust to a new life situation. Having successfully adapted to Australia, the process of readjustment to new circumstances or new cultures becomes predictably easier the second time around. This factor has also been reported in re-entry literature (eg. P. Adler, 1975; Kim, 2001; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2001a; Ward et al., 2001; Werkman, 1982). A further example from Jacqueline’s interview sheds light on why this situation eases the process of adjustment, particularly as her experience had been quite traumatic.

*I really think [the internship] made a difference, otherwise everything is just the same and it would have depressed me even more. I moved to a new place and I had never worked before and it’s a new city on the opposite of France so it’s kind of abroad for me. It’s five kilometres from Belgium and I’m going there every week to the swimming pool, to buy chocolates, I really think this has made the process [of readjustment] easier (Jacqueline).*

This quote epitomises the nature of new experiences for the returnees. Although Jacqueline experienced a severe case of reverse culture shock, she was able to reconcile the waiting period before leaving again by beginning a new life that was completely different to everything she had known. Alternatively, when sojourners expect to re-immerses themselves easily into recognisable surroundings, it is disconcerting to find significant personal growth and a changed personality preclude smooth re-integration into their society (Martin, 1984; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). However, it is not unusual in the data to encounter a delayed reaction six to seven months later when some form of reverse culture shock manifests for those who maintain the process was quite easy, as was the case for Joachim. This was also marked in students whose friends were returning from Australia
at that stage and were going through the throes of readjustment. This pattern was also
evident with the Franco-Swiss respondent who registered a delayed climatic shock because
of winter.

*In November it rained for every single day and that was hard after the Gold Coast and I
really had to think. That’s the time I started to be homesick, not homesick but Australia
sick (Marc).*

In this quote one can perceive that disenchantment set in for Marc, albeit a delayed
reaction, constituting symptoms of reverse culture shock. He had initially been happy to be
home, settling into his life in Geneva with few apparent difficulties, but after 10 months his
girlfriend left, and his circumstances began to change. This was also a period of
dissatisfaction with his studies and current job. Marc made comparisons with the
educational systems of both countries, giving more credence to his studies in Australia.

There is, on the other hand, an interesting comparison between the readjustment paradigms
of respondents who came from Paris and those who hailed from Strasbourg, Geneva and
elsewhere. Those from Paris largely registered negative re-entry experiences as opposed to
those from other cities. It is important to note at this juncture that although some
respondents may have experienced negligible degrees of reverse culture shock and actually
succeeded in re-immersing themselves in their familiar world, all have indicated the desire
for further intercultural experiences, some seeking opportunities to live overseas for
several years.

Finally, initial reverse culture shock on re-entry to France was commonly felt by all
respondents who had been absent for at least one year or more, in spite of initial claims
made to the contrary by some. The climatic and cultural shocks were not long lasting but
nevertheless created problems with readjustment because the contrast with Australia was
simply too drastic. Robert recounts his first impressions.

*Le décalage culturel, le décalage horaire aussi, mais dans le sens que l’Australie est
quand même un pays que, enfin ya un décalage visuel dans le sens ou c’est un pays
immense, enfin un pays de contraste aussi. Et nous arrivons en France et moi, le ciel m’a
paru très bas, les rues très étroites … et vous vous dites « Ah! Je me sens pas à l’aise, je
vais pas forcément très bien ». Le décalage culturel parce qu’on a pas la même culture
forcément, quoiqu’elles sont relativement proches ... on prend des habitudes différentes ...
On est content de retrouver sa gastronomie française par contre, ça c’est sûr! (Robert).*

\(^{110}\) Cultural differences and jetlag also, but in the sense that Australia is a country that, well, there is a visual
difference in the sense that it is an enormous country, a country of contrasts also. And we arrived in France
This quote embodies the general effects of reverse culture shock precipitated by climatic and geographical distinctions between two cultures, particularly for the Paris subjects. It encapsulates the initial shock brought about by jet lag, changes in temperature and visual contrasts which cannot fail to cause a reaction after a considerable sojourn abroad. However, on a positive note, French gastronomy registered remarkable pleasure on all counts. There was definite consensus on this score with no dissension.

In summary, in section 5.3 it appears no returnee was exempt from the negative effects of reverse culture shock, in spite of claims to the contrary. Excerpts were also provided to illustrate incidences of successful re-adaptation due mostly to new situations which resembled the cross-cultural experience or relationships which eased the transitional process considerably. Findings suggest that some subjects were not consciously aware of the effects of reverse culture shock until this subject was discussed in the interviews.

5.4 Reverse culture shock and interpersonal relationship issues

This section focuses on incidences of reverse culture shock resulting from interpersonal relationship issues. Problematic situations emerged initially from unexpected dramatic changes in circumstances, such as the vicissitudes of identity, transformations in values and behaviours and so forth, which were exacerbated by a lack of comprehension and support from family, friends and professionals upon re-entry. For the majority of French sojourners, this constituted an unwelcome perception of and reaction to their Australian academic sojourn. An example from Brigitte’s interview follows.

... On s’attendait à des difficultés au début ... on était prêts à faire des sacrifices et des efforts en rentrant en France. On aurait souhaiter que les choses se passent bien ... on s’attendait à ce que nos parents et nos amis nous facilitent la tâche, le retour, et ça s’est pas du tout passé pareil. Ça a été complètement le contraire! (Brigitte).

and for me, the sky seemed very low, the streets very narrow … and you say to yourself: “Oh! I don’t feel comfortable, I don’t feel so good”. Cultural differences because we don’t have the same culture obviously, although they may be relatively similar … one adopts different habits … However, re-discovering French gastronomy is great, that’s for sure! (Robert).

111 We expected difficulties initially … we were ready to make sacrifices and make an effort when we returned to France. We would have liked things to go well … we expected our parents and friends to make the transition easy, the readjustment, but that is not at all what happened. It was the complete opposite! (Brigitte).
This quote demonstrates Brigitte’s shock and dismay which were painfully recounted during the interview. This kind of experience was not isolated. Further, Brigitte lucidly compares the warm welcome received from Australians to help her settle in contrast with the French reaction.

Les australiens étaient heureux de nous aider à nous installer, à nous sentir bien. En France c’était l’inverse! C’est à dire, vous vous débrouillez, vous êtes dans un premier temps et ne comptez pas sur nous pour vous accueillir à bras ouverts ... vous avez vécu quelque chose de fantastique, tant mieux pour vous, mais maintenant débrouillez-vous! Il va falloir se réadapter à la France (Brigitte).

This comment shows to what extent the re-entry process was exacerbated by the disappointment Brigitte felt when she had to confront the problems associated with resumption of life back home after a long sojourn. Unfavourable French attitudes as opposed to Australian ways when dealing with the transitional process of adaptation are patently contrasted in this instance as in numerous others. Brigitte’s quote provides an insight into how the types of interactions in the relatively new intercultural context of Australia precipitated changes in their personalities. The evolved sojourners in turn interrelated differently with French society members during the transitional phase of re-entry in France, creating discord in many instances. To illustrate the extent of the problems experienced by Brigitte, like many other respondents, in domains other than the home environment, this lengthy vignette is the epitome of typical responses targeted at the majority of returnees from the society at large. Brigitte recalls her interviewing process with employers.

... During one interview, the employer, the manager was not open-minded about my experience in Australia. He told me: “Ok, why did you come to Australia? Why not England?” and I said: “It was a country I always would like to go before and ... it was good for me to experience something different from Europe or the US ... and I wanted to share my experience in a multicultural environment”. But they didn’t understand that. And so they imagined that I was feeling over-confident in myself ... a bit arrogant ... which was not the case, and also out of my mind, that I didn’t want to go for studying but more for having a good time because there’s the sun. [Australia] seems so exotic for the French that you are more on holidays than working. They think that the truth in Australia is that you don’t study, you don’t study, you don’t study! You study hard in the US and in England. “I am sure you enjoyed much going to the beach instead of studying!” (Brigitte).
The inherent intolerance from members of French society which contributed to reverse culture shock for the respondents is blatant in this quote. Situations such as those encountered by this group of returnees in relation to their choice of destinations for their studies were concentrated in Paris rather than Strasbourg but they were responsible for the manifestation of frustration, anger, depression and self-doubt that characterised their re-entry process. The final comment from the manager culminated in anger for Brigitte, something which could not fail to exacerbate the difficult situation. This was a final affront and was difficult to reconcile for this respondent.

Brigitte’s interviews highlighted the magnitude of interpersonal relationship issues in the context of re-acculturation for this group of sojourners. Dissonance in views between family members and friends which resulted from identity remodelling and intrinsic personality changes and adjustments to the world views from both perspectives (the sojourners’ and that of French society members) were at the root of major restlessness, frustration and depression for the returnees, symptomatic of the adverse effects of reverse culture shock. Brigitte was acutely aware of general expectations from French society before her return, and had tried to prepare herself after the interview for this project in Australia, but she could not hide her disillusionment and hurt when she realised that not even family and friends were willing to help in the transitional process of readjustment in France.

A further quote from Natalie who returned to Strasbourg supports the argument that the attitude of members of French society was difficult to contend with.

[People reacted differently] because of the distance. It was so far away. They ask if I had some problems with my parents. Is there anything you did, anything wrong with you? Why don’t you want to stay? Are you running away? No, it’s strange (Natalie).

Natalie’s comment indicates that French mentality may be different in Paris but it is essentially not so contrastive when it comes to generalities. They equated the distant sojourn as commensurate with evasion of problems back home.

For the French sojourners in the re-entry study, cultural readjustment issues which manifested in a great source of psychological distress for these individuals, was largely caused by expectations that failed to be realised. There was consensus on the variations of
the stressful state experienced by them, with feelings of frustration, disappointment, anger, confusion, melancholy and fear which were registered during the third phase of re-entry commonly known as reverse culture shock. The difficulties in re-acculturating were apparently aggravated, not only as a result of the erroneous expectations of the French sojourners themselves, but also because family, friends and professionals in particular were largely unaware that this process could be problematic (Martin, 1984; Weaver, 1994). Parents in particular expected the young adults to resume their lives and accept the fact that their life abroad had ended. They were less tolerant of mistakes and displayed little empathy for the difficulties being experienced by their children. As the parents had not experienced what the sojourners had done, they had no way of comprehending the extent of changes their children had undergone. Discord in views on many subjects, such as attitudes toward travel, expected traditional roles to be enacted, views on multiculturalism and so forth, was the end result of these changes. Monique explains how her mother reacted to her desire to go abroad again.

[I was expected] to get back to French life. For my mother for example: “Oh, now it’s done, now you are back in France, so you can do your career in France, you can get married and have children”. “No Mum, I don’t want it. I just want to return overseas!” (Monique).

Monique’s re-entry experience further exemplifies what the French parents expected of their children and is reminiscent in particular of Brigitte’s parents’ comments also. This quote clearly shows that as they had not been through analogous experiences, it was difficult for them to empathise with the need for further travel. On the one hand parents expect their children to become independent adults, capable of making their own decisions in life but on the other they have trouble accepting these decisions. This factor was seen to aggravate the negative effects of reverse culture shock for many respondents. This kind of reaction resonates with the findings of other studies carried out on re-entry processes. The sojourners’ experience is seen to represent not only a tangible example of personal growth with acute attitudinal changes and possible cultural identity changes, but most importantly the international sojourn leads to accelerated maturation of the young individual (Martin, 1986). Martin notes however that this view is not widely substantiated as a result of a lack of empirical studies on the subject. It appears that the reason one grows at a faster rate when abroad is because the familiar cultural and environmental cues are missing as well as normal frames of reference with family and friends and so forth. This may result in a more sophisticated, more adult thinking which in turn has an effect on interpersonal relationships.
when they return home (Martin, 1986). However, where Martin’s (1986) study produced positive correlations with an evolved, independent returnee in the context of family relationships, it cannot be said of the French study where more conflicts arose from a dissonance in views on many subjects.

Diane’s comment echoes those expressed above and is again representative of the ‘unexpected’ welcome the returnees received by their family and other members of society.

> What annoyed me was the fact that they all expected me just to get on with it. “What are you going to do now? Will you find a job? Because you speak English every company must want you”. And that’s not the case. I just arrived and they were pressuring me. I didn’t like that. The companies will write you saying they want you. It’s not because you speak English that they are going to take you ... There are not enough jobs for people who speak both [French and English] ... I was really depressed and angry, stressed because I didn’t know what I want to do (Diane).

This quote reveals the frustration and pressure the returnees felt at having to resume their lives once again and many became depressed when the high expectations of having English in their linguistic repertoire made little difference in securing a good position. Having recourse to a psychologist only intensified the situation in Diane’s opinion, adding the exorbitant costs to her frustration.

> I went to see a psychologist last week but I was even more angry after because she didn’t help at all. I wasted a lot of money and I called the person who recommended me to this doctor and told them what I thought (Diane).

The intensity of the stress and anger felt by this respondent are obvious in this quote. Numerous other issues concerned with relationships, work and indecision were however not mirrored to the same extent by the majority of her cohort, except perhaps for one other respondent Clément, who went through such a traumatic re-entry process that he confessed that he would never had agreed to an interview for this project during the year that had transpired since his return.

The following vignette from Arlette sheds light on the problems experienced in interpersonal relationships in spite of the respondent’s desire to resume her life back in France. The inability to remodel her pedagogical language teaching methods based on
Australian methods was a significant source of frustration for Arlette as she explains below.

The students don’t speak a lot and I’m not saying that I teach the Australian way, but I’m trying to … but they are not reacting well to this. It’s different because it takes a while before they can speak, even participate in class discussions … there was something difficult also … Someone [a student] said to me: “Look, you are here to work and we’re not going to do the work for you”. It was with the administration at the university here in France because it’s so different. They don’t care about you even if you’re a teacher. They ignore you. I had trouble coming back and coping with that … I didn’t like it but I don’t complain. I just accept it but I don’t like it (Arlette).

Arlette expresses the exasperation she felt upon re-entry when she tried to implement the culture learning she had adopted in Australia. Although she claimed to have experienced no reverse culture shock initially, just as she had been in denial about the reciprocal phenomenon of culture shock in Australia, she was one of the respondents who enumerated several examples to the contrary on both counts. Her unsettled demeanour during the interview was clearly born out of stress and anger that her learning experience during her year abroad had met with such discouraging reactions, particularly in reference to instigating changes at an administrative level in language teaching. The comment from one of her students represented a more serious affront to her pedagogical practices, being on a more personal level. She was furious that the individual had challenged her authority in trying to apply innovative teaching methodologies in class. That the student had misconstrued her efforts in this as laziness infuriated Arlette and seriously made her wonder why she had bothered. Eventually, like her counterparts she simply had to accept the cultural anomalies she witnessed upon her return as the easiest means of coping with the stress it generated. The severity of the effects of reverse culture shock in this instance is clearly never completely dissipated. When no options exist and changing an educational system alone is impossible, one abandons the idea. The following quote finalises the traumas involved with interpersonal relationships Arlette underwent upon her return.

[My boyfriend] came to the airport to pick me up and we went to our flat … I thought it would be simple because I was so happy to see him again and I was happy to be with him but actually it was quite difficult. [It caused problems in the relationship]. I was stressed and it took a few weeks to get better. I was expecting it all to be perfect so that was a shock (Arlette).
This quote is significant because it epitomises the key reason most returnees experience reverse culture shock upon their return. It is widely accepted in re-entry literature that the common denominator underpinning the difficult process of readjustment for returnees worldwide is the fact that they take the process for granted. They essentially expect no problems and are distressed and frustrated to find this is rarely the case (eg. N. Adler, 1981; NAFSA, 2002; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Ward et al., 2001; Weaver, 1994) As much as Arlette was psychologically prepared to come home, in fact looking forward to a life of co-habitation with her chosen partner, this did not preclude interpersonal relationship problems outside the ordinary transition into a new life. On the one hand, a completely new experience correlated with an easier process of readjustment. On the other, co-habitation with one’s partner can be fraught with difficulties irrespective of whether they have been apart for an extended period of time. One could observe a more complex situation however, when the re-acculturation process is embroiled with relationship issues which generally iron themselves out if the partnership is strong enough to withstand the pressures.

Robert’s comment below with regard to the unexpected welcome of his friends sheds light on the degree of distress caused by a lack of understanding of the sojourn experience for these sojourners by those within the close circle of family and friends.

Je pense que c’était un petit côté de jalousie peut-être. Ils comprennent pas forcément parce qu’ils disent: « Ben, ils sont parti et maintenant c’est normal qu’ils cherchent du boulot, qu’ils soient au chômage etc. » … et même certains ont fait des réflexions du genre: « Alors quand est-ce que vous allez vous marier? » et « Il est peut-être temps de devenir adulte! » … des réflexions complètement stupides et à la rigueur, est-ce qu’il vaut la peine de garder des amis comme ça? (Robert).\(^\text{113}\)

The disappointment Robert felt upon witnessing such attitudes from people he had considered his friends intensified the multiple problems he experienced upon re-entry. His coping strategy for dealing with this negative stance was to systematically remove these friends from his milieu. There appears to be a negative correlation between friendship networks and re-entry (cf. Martin, 1986; NAFSA, 2002; Storti, 2001b; Ward et al., 2001). This is largely due to shifts in interpersonal relationships and changes that have taken place

\(^{113}\) I think it was a little bit of jealousy perhaps. Obviously they don’t understand because they say: “Well, they went away and now it’s only natural that they need to find a job, that they are unemployed etc.” … and some even made comments like: “So, when are you going to get married?” and “Isn’t it time you became adults!” … stupid comments and if need be, is it worth while keeping friends such as these? (Robert).
in all individuals concerned. There is discord among friends because the returnee perceives lack of interest, jealousy and resentment are at the root of the problems. Friends may feel that the returnee is uninterested in the changes that have taken place in their lives during their absence because the perception of returnees is that they are the only ones who have evolved. Where returnees anticipate an easy continuation of existing friendships they are generally disappointed to find that friends have moved on without them, and there are no allowances made for the discrepancies in personal growth experiences. On another note, Robert speaks of the reaction his future father-in-law had on their difficulty in settling down once again.

*He told us that our come back was a failure because in a sense that we couldn’t re-adapt, and because we couldn’t find a job as quickly as he thought and he told us when we were in Australia that we should stay in Australia ... We said: “Ok, come on, you’re saying this is a failure, I don’t see it as a failure. I don’t see the point to say that because we learned a lot, culturally, linguistically”. But he was just looking at the clinical facts and the point was: “You haven’t found a job yet!” (Robert).*

It is not difficult to understand that with an attitude such as this upon their return, Robert has opted for an international post in Hong Kong. It appears that his future father-in-law, like many other parents, gauged a successful readjustment solely on the securing of a job. The psychological pain inflicted on Robert and his fiancée, Brigitte, through this negative attitude was blatant during both interviews, to the point that Brigitte confessed to regretting at one stage, though temporarily, having gone to Australia in the first place. Brigitte’s comment is astute in more ways than one in the next quote.

*My first fear is to admit that the experience I have in Australia was not as good as I was expecting, maybe because they do not value it here. Sometimes I believe that, I think that I failed. I think truly about that because [my fiancé] still does not have a job. He had one before going to Australia. He was employed ... in my life in France nothing much changed and I have ... it’s not better than before ... I was thinking that it would be after going back from Australia. I thought it would be easier to find a good job, to have maybe more money or have more opportunities, travelling more than we have done before ... I did a loan for example. I didn’t pay back. I should have started in January but I haven’t yet because I can’t find a job serious ... it’s not stable so I can’t start. So everything is finally more complicated than before (Brigitte).*

This quote, among others provided by Brigitte, is pivotal because it embodies the sum of factors responsible for the severe effects of reverse culture shock which can and did
manifest in depression, anxiety, anger, self-doubt, fear, frustration and so forth, in fact clearly representing the classic characteristics reported in re-entry literature (cf. N. Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Uehara, 1986; Ward et al., 2001). Firstly, erroneous expectations were just cause for disappointment on many counts; secondly, the anxiety arising from the self-doubt involved with past, present and future decisions of this couple cannot be underestimated; thirdly, the sentiment of failure was destructive because it cast a shadow on an experience this couple had vowed was the most enlightening and productive of their lives, truly *une année entre parenthèses* (a year in parenthesis) until the experience met with derisive reactions from family and friends. The fact that when Robert moved to Hong Kong Brigitte was reticent to join him, is testimony to the damaging effects this phenomenon can have on returned sojourners. This may be particularly pertinent for returned academic sojourners, given their young age because one could expect a married couple with children for instance to experience problems of a different nature. The latter are perhaps faced with greater obligations to resume a position, re-enter the family circle where grand-parents play an important role. As a result, older returnees may have fewer financial problems because presumably the couple may have worked overseas, and grandparents are of assistance to them. Further empirical research would need to be carried out on the different groups of returnees to elucidate this argument.

The following vignette offers a different perspective on the sorts of problems experienced with interpersonal relationships. Clément’s case was perhaps more severe than most as he explains.

> I was angry about people about my experience in Australia and the whole situation I mean, and the difficulties to find a job. At the end you just get a bit angry with people who got better than you. I became impatient because [my friend] was really trying to help me to see me often and support me, but at the end I really didn’t even want to see him you know. I was rejecting him because of my situation (Clément).

It is clear in this quote that other factors influenced Clément’s attitude in his relationship with the person he professed was his best friend. His inability to secure a good job and a good relationship resulted in a situation where he alienated his best friend, refused to see him until he felt he could deal with the friendship on an equal footing. He was deeply depressed and found it hard to take advice from someone who had landed on his feet and ostensibly had fewer difficulties to cope with. The general reaction toward his Australian
experience did nothing to alleviate these difficult moments of his readjustment either. This was examined earlier in reference to the lack of appreciation the returnees observed from their co-nationals. This type of reaction was instrumental in Clément’s reassessment of his sojourn.

*I just wasted my time. I’m a bit useless* (Clément).

The intensity of his emotions leaves little doubt as to the seriousness of the re-entry difficulties this respondent experienced. Many factors contributed to reverse culture shock for him and it was only after one year that he felt able to open his photograph album and reminisce about Australia because he had finally found a job and a girl to share his life. On the question of employment difficulties, Clément’s account of his search for work in Paris is a further example of how employers contributed to the difficult process of readjustment because of their lack of comprehension of the hardships involved.

*Before [my sojourn] everything had been perfect because at university I had really good grades, good internships, two or three before going to Australia. When I went back [to these firms] and said: “Can you take me?” They said: “We’re really sorry, you speak English now, but we really don’t give a shit!” It was that kind of attitude. I was really angry* (Clément).

In this quote the company directors made it difficult for Clément in finding work and it eventually took him a year before he could settle down in a position where he felt secure. His next comment sheds light on the more personal side of this problem.

*[My friends] didn’t really understand my experience in Australia. They were thinking I was on holidays ... It’s difficult for them to understand because they see pictures and they think you travel all the time, you’re having a good time. Even university is kind of nice under the sun ... eventually you stop talking about it. The thing is I was beginning to regret having gone to Australia* (Clément).

The sentiments articulated by Clément in this quote are indicative of the self-doubt expressed by many returnees who began to regret their decision of having gone to Australia because of the traumas they suffered as a result of difficulties in fitting back into French society. French people appeared to be quite intolerant of ambiguity which made it doubly hard for these young returnees who had become partly converted to Australian ways (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). When they found it difficult to secure work, or
were simply tired of justifying their experience abroad as more than a mere holiday, they just gave up and often fell into a depressed state. In support of these arguments, Kramsch (1999) claims some French parents still prefer to send their children to the UK to study English as opposed to the US because of the perception they hold in regard to the variety in versions of English, i.e. UK English is regarded as the most prestigious variety and American English is relegated to a less authoritative version. The English spoken by Australians plays no part in the equation. Although anecdotal evidence suggests Australians are well considered in France, it appears their version of English rates poorly in comparison with the UK version. Further, as study abroad programmes with Australia are relatively new for French students, it is not surprising that as a result of a paucity of knowledge about Australian educational systems, that this destination should be classified as unsatisfactory, especially where the acquisition of English is concerned. On another note, the excerpts in this section highlight how the traditional pedagogy employed in foreign language teaching has distinguished the native speaker of English as someone from the UK. If the approach of foreign language learning (cf. Byram, 1999; Kramsch, 1999; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Zarate, 1999) were to be based instead on the notion of producing ‘intercultural speakers’, learners would be taught the relevant ‘cultural knowledge’ necessary to structure and comprehend the world evoked in examples of linguistic use of the target language (Kramsch, 1999). Given the comments made by the respondents, although they are exposed mostly to UK speakers as native language, they are rarely given the opportunity to emulate the speech patterns as this is not common practice in France.

As can be expected, greater problems were encountered upon re-entry by the French students who had been absent for longer periods. Changes in their values and beliefs may not have been immediately perceptible until thrown into relief by their re-immersion into their cultural milieu. It became clear that the vicissitudes of identity had influenced their readjustment process (cf. Garza-Guerrero, 1974). Their remodelled identity it appears was not readily accepted by their home society members, a factor which clearly exacerbated the problem. The conventional beliefs and mores of French society were dramatically contrasted with their learning experiences and their difficulty in reconciling these conflicting values gave rise to psychological distress (NAFSA, 2002). The ‘glamour’ of being a foreigner abroad (NAFSA, 2002), French in this instance, that most of the respondents claimed put their language and culture on a pedestal, greatly eased their acculturation process. However, once home, the culturally enhanced status they enjoyed in Australia was dramatically reversed when they once again became a normal member of
French society. In addition, they were systematically treated as snobs, cold, rude or standoffish should they deviate from accepted norms. This issue is supported by Weaver’s (1994) argument that this reaction is normal when returnees cannot interact harmoniously with members of their society. In line with Weaver’s research, many French students learned to appreciate their culture to a greater extent as a result of the praise they received from Australians and other international students abroad. However, once home, they criticised their society as parochial especially when placed in harsh contrast with the global perspectives they acquired overseas. Weaver argues returnees are largely unaware that it is the distress they are feeling which provokes the symptoms of reverse culture shock. A vicious circle begins with the breakdown of interpersonal communication and the duration and intensity of the problems can vary dramatically.

In summary, this section has examined the impact of reverse culture shock on the interpersonal relationships of the returned academic sojourners. The data confirmed this was an area with potentially the greatest sources of distress for this group of young people. It appeared that in neither of the important domains, family and friends nor career oriented fields was the process simplified for these returnees. Varying degrees of stress were reported and it took some time for many sojourners to resolve the troublesome issues confronting them upon their return. The next section will discuss another feature of their return that impinged significantly on their readjustment paradigms.

5.5 Reverse culture shock and reactions to culture learning

This section examines important features of readjustment, the implementation of culture learning and language use, which manifested in symptoms of reverse culture shock for the French returnees. The intolerance of the use of English in social situations resulted in major frustration and anger on the part of the respondents toward members of their society. Section 5.6 will examine more closely examples pertaining to the use of English and reverse culture shock. Linguistic readjustment to French language was found to be closely linked with inability to use English in social contexts because the returnees had become accustomed to code-switching and code-mixing in Australia, normal characteristics of bilinguals, (eg. Clyne, 1982; Fishman, 1991; Hamers & Blanc, 1999; Lambert, 1977; Milroy & Muyskens, 1995; Smolicz & Secombe, 1985). The returnees believed they could continue to do so in France without attracting criticism. What actually transpired was that negative reactions in general to culture learning and to the use of English culminated in a
conformist attitude on the part of many returnees, correlating with a smoother readjustment process.

Jacqueline sums up what the majority of respondents experienced in relation to these problems.

... Now I’m just with French people and I feel it. I know them. I could tell this one is French by the way he behaves ... I’m bothered with their behaviour. They are not that open-minded but I think it’s because I’m coming from the country in France ... People don’t understand why I’m going to Strasbourg or to Australia. They just don’t understand that ... A lot of people have this attitude, like they say: “This [France] is the best, this is so good. Why do you go abroad?” ... I can’t really say: “Australia is good, Australia is the best”. I’m not going to tell all the time because I feel that it bothers them (Jacqueline).

Jacqueline’s quote reflects the parochial attitude of many members of society to comments of an unfavourable comparative perception of France. Rural people it appears are less tolerant than their urban counterparts of the notion that other places are just as good as their homeland. Jacqueline’s next quote shows the reaction of French people to her culture learning and linguistic choices upon her return.

You can’t apply anything to this life here. At the beginning I was acting a bit like that but then you feel like people are [saying]: “Ok you’re in France now!” ... So you have to apply again the French way of doing things ... just like finding words in French, some words just wouldn’t come in French ... If I’m doing that with friends at home it’s like: “Huh huh huh, you’re a snob!” ... In Lille, I just speak French, otherwise you are put away (Jacqueline).

This quote illustrates the commonly expressed comment from the French co-nationals in response to the returnees’ attempts to practise the cultural learning they had acquired in Australia. Like the majority of interviews, it confirms the xenophobic attitude of French society to the utterance of other than French language, a factor which was instrumental in exacerbating the effects of reverse culture shock for this group. In addition, French people have a reputation for making no effort to communicate with foreigners whose French is less than perfect (Sullivan, 1981). This kind of attitude toward culture learning is not uncommon, as Adler (1981) confirmed in her study of a corporate and governmental group of employees who returned to Canada after a sojourn of close to two years. Xenophobia, defined as a “fear of foreign things” was evident from managers of the home country in their assessment of the potential and actual effectiveness of the returnees, just as the findings of this study revealed. Klineberg and Hull’s (1979) large scale study of foreign
students sojourning in various countries also substantiates the claims mentioned above by the returnees. Although the majority of subjects in that research project reported a successful experience overall, the cohort who studied in France were vitriolic in their condemnation of French attitudes toward foreigners, among other difficulties during their sojourn. In order to acculturate they learned to accept that “the French are like that” (p.45).

Monique’s comments are tangentially supportive of the above.

*I have not been able to use English* here with anyone. *I can’t. I don’t like to speak English with French people because they are bad with their accent. I don’t like it because they judge me: “Oh your accent is so French!” and I hated that. So I was completely ‘bloquée’ [I had a mental block] (Monique).

In Monique’s quote one can observe how judgemental attitudes can discourage individuals from deviating from accepted norms. In contrast, Monique’s English was praised by her English and Irish friends. Co-nationals criticising each other on their English is interesting considering the fact most respondents attested to poor proficiency levels in the language. This situation was ironically tantamount to the adage ‘the pot calling the kettle black’. In chapter 4, the data revealed the majority of French sojourners confessed to have a pronounced French accent when speaking English, which they found unacceptable and inadequate. Therefore it is objectionable as far as Monique is concerned for them to cast aspersions on her linguistic proficiency. These views on language proficiency and the ability to speak unaccented English like a native reflect the pedagogical approaches employed in foreign language teaching in France like in many other nations.

Diane’s comments offer a different perspective on the effects her culture learning had on her behaviour in Paris. Her efforts to retain the ‘correct’ pronunciation of English words and her French expression also met with derision.

*Sometimes my friends say that I have an English accent when I speak French ... I pronounce the words a bit different. It’s more the intonation. The French is a ‘monocorde’. Sometimes I have some rhythm in some questions or just the way I say some words, for example, Sydney. And now when I speak French I would say it the English way* (Diane).

Among other examples of discord in fitting back into her society, Diane’s French expression and her culture learning generally met with disapproval. If she questioned
anything in administration, she was rebuked for reacting as if she had just stepped off the plane, which she actually acknowledged in a supermarket when she forgot to weigh her fruit and vegetables.

*I said: “Oh, you have to do that?” and [the cashier] said of course, it’s normal, it’s always like that. “Vous débarquez ou quoi?” I said: “Actually yes!” Here the bureaucracy is bad and I’m annoyed, impatient after doing things in Australia (Diane).*

This quote confirms that the society at large was intolerant of deviations in behaviour by the public. When this type of situation was replicated it consistently met with disapproval which only served to exasperate Diane even more. One final example from Clément shows that even in social situations the tensions remained high.

*Santimes you have to look for your words ... at the beginning you have reflexes you know, when I was playing soccer it was really weird: “Yeah, give me the ball” and you’re in France and I was speaking English. I was really used to that when I was playing ... people were a bit impatient when I did that and they said: “You’re a little bit up yourself!” but after a while you just stop ... People are stupid though, and a bit arrogant but in France we don’t really encourage people to speak English basically ... English education in France is bad ... so it was really important for me to go there to improve it ... it was a challenge but here people didn’t value it, they don’t want to do any effort (Clément).*

Clément’s comments summarise the discontent felt by the returnees as a general rule with the less than warm reception they experienced when attempting to implement elements of their cultural learning. Ultimately, the French do not value English sufficiently to embrace bilingualism, something which contributed to a large extent to reverse culture shock for the respondents. Their symptoms became manifest in frustration, anger and depression in many instances. Clément’s experience mirrors Diane’s in intensity for a myriad of reasons ranging from inability to find work, difficulties with interpersonal relationships and value conflicts. The excerpts offered in this section on reactions to culture learning are consonant with Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) arguments about cognitive dissonance. Like Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s study, the French returnees either attempted to reduce the dissonance between their divergent values and those of the existing society by avoiding incongruent role behaviour or withdrawing from the society, thereby becoming an expatriate in their homeland. This situation is also paralleled in the acculturation transition abroad. My study revealed a tendency for the French returnees to evaluate the costs of their actions, ultimately choosing to remain in the cultural context whilst hiding their ambivalent
feelings in order to fit it again, some even refraining from interaction for a while. Although modifying their behaviour, beliefs and expectations is perceived as less salutary, as this may engender antagonistic feelings (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963 p.45) functioning as a member of one’s cultural society was ostensibly more important. Coping mechanisms were a necessary adjunct to this decision however.

In summary, section 5.5 has detailed the general findings of reverse culture shock in the re-entry study arising from the difficulties the returnees experienced in implementing culture learning. A myriad of examples emerged from the data to support the arguments that suggest to what extent this phenomenon was deemed to affect the majority of returnees. They cannot all be included in this thesis. The difficulties were symptomatic of varying degrees of distress, anxiety, withdrawal from society, disillusionment, feelings of helplessness, anger and frustration.

5.6 Use of English and reverse culture shock

Second language acquisition, English in this instance, is an important feature of culture learning. This section deals with the reaction of members of French society to the returnees’ use of English which contributed significantly to reverse culture shock as the negative attitude of their compatriots caused problems in social contexts during the transitional phase of readjustment. There was consensus among the French subjects in regard to the social problems they encountered as a result of being criticised for their use of English in French society. The linguistic difficulties they experienced subsequent to their sojourn can be construed as a form of reverse linguistic shock perhaps precisely because they believed that their second language acquisition would be better tolerated if not readily lauded and appreciated. It seems they were deluded in this. Linguistic problems in French were more evident in oral communication than in the written language, mostly due to demanding secondary educational training in written skills. In light of the fact that the calibre of student who was chosen to study in Australian universities was among the elite, due to stringent pre-requisites on application, no respondent experienced major difficulties in grammatical structures for long upon their return. However, many admitted to a temporary lapse where grammatical errors were made on a regular basis.

The most serious problems occurred with what most students referred to as la tournure de phrase (the turn of phrase) which had become anglicised after a significant sojourn in an
Anglo-Saxon country. Momentarily, they became incapable of expressing themselves in complete and grammatically correct French sentences and they resorted with greater frequency to literal translations of phrases they had acquired in English. This generally met with disapproval or was treated with derision. It appears that a year in Australia, as was the case for the majority of students, concentrating on English expression, affected their linguistic and cognitive processes, even if not permanently.

In the applied linguistics literature, Liddicoat et al. (2003) refer to the appropriate use of language in cultural contexts as norms of interaction, where a shared understanding of context is assumed, with each interlocutor presumably using the suitable registers (e.g. formal - informal), appropriate physical contact, personal space and so forth. Going beyond the sociolinguistic definition of the term communicative competence, which implies a tacit knowledge of language and culture enabling individuals to communicate appropriately within a particular speech community, Liddicoat (2002) proposes the term intercultural (communicative) competence which simplifies the concept by encapsulating “what a speaker needs to know to participate in a speech community” (Liddicoat et al., 2003 p.13). In light of this, on the one hand, the French subjects reported a temporary loss of communicative competence, either because they no longer believed the French expressions conveyed the right meanings because English appeared to say certain things more easily, or they genuinely suffered from a lapse in their use of French language. Conversely, it was not unexpected that respondents report that as all their studies were focused on unfamiliar subjects to their usual curriculum, their fears that they would lack the linguistic skills and lexicon to describe and write correctly about the corresponding topics in French were realised. In these situations, it appears customary for individuals to resort to communicative strategies such as code-switching and code-mixing which are normal characteristics of bilinguals, (e.g. Clyne, 1982; Fishman, 1991; Hamers & Blanc, 1999; Lambert, 1977; Milroy & Muyskens, 1995; Smolicz & Secombe, 1985).

Jacqueline explains why she employed this communicative technique.

*I’ve tried to translate what I now know in English back to French. I just can’t. I have to learn them because it’s a vocabulary, I have had to learn but I just forgot. Like you’re abroad and when I’m writing my report in English the terms I don’t have to look for them in French. I hope to write my ‘mémoire’ (minor thesis) in French. I just don’t know the vocabulary any more until I get it back (Jacqueline).*
Jacqueline worries that her academic experience in Australia will seriously affect her attempts at recovering her usual standard of speech when she returns. There was consensus on this point from the majority of respondents. Each individual predictably took different lengths of time to achieve a complete recovery and most reported that by and large they had done so after several months.

Conversely, Brigitte’s quote illustrates how intensive use of English had become second nature to the sojourners in Australia and how little time it took for them to begin to lose it. It highlights the necessity of continuous practice in a foreign language.

\textit{J’avais appris l’anglais donc je me sentais quand même à la limite déjà fluent}^{114}... Now, we are not exactly fluent as we had been in Australia, we lost a little bit...we think in English but sometimes we don’t know exactly which form to use, or we forgot the slang. We have forgotten the expressions (Brigitte).

Although Brigitte like others in her cohort lamented losing her English rapidly in France through lack of use, her explanation sheds light on the reasons this is problematic for them upon re-entry. Re-focusing on French language took a lot of effort for the majority but eventually they were forced to conform if they wished to fit in or function correctly in their work and social environments. Seeking out Australians in Paris was the only way they could practise their English and in doing so, the respondents claimed they could re-immerses themselves in a small way in Australian culture.

Diane notes an example of how she resorted to literal translations quite often when she returned to Paris.

\textit{I translate literally. Before I would never [do that]. I translate English expressions directly in French, so it sounds French. For example, I said to someone: « Je voulais juste te laisser savoir, or juste te dire » ... instead of: « Juste un petit mot pour te dire » (Diane).}^{115}

Diane reports that the habit of translating literally from English to French resulted in embarrassment when her efforts were found laughable. She felt the need, like her counterparts, to desist from its practice as soon as possible in order to fit into French

\footnotesize{
114 I had learned English so I felt I was almost fluent (Brigitte).
115 “I just wanted to let you know” or “just to tell you”… instead of: “just a little message to let you know”… (Diane).
}
society once again. Along the same lines, Brigitte experienced greater difficulties because she found it onerous to resume not only her French formulaic expressions after one and a half years abroad, but she had problems with the courtesy formulae, adhered to in formal situations in France.

*It was not good French. You don’t start a French sentence saying: “Vue que”, the translation of “like”. You have to say: « Je pense que, étant donné que ... ». You have to be careful how you speak in French. When you start work somewhere you have to be on the reserve, formal, and so you can’t speak with people like with your friends, you can’t be yourself … I am respectful but for example, I “tutoie” … I say “tu” more easily to French people than before. Some people like it but mostly they think I am too ... not confident but too natural ... too forward and too spontaneous (Brigitte).*

This quote illustrates how culture learning of Anglo-Saxon ways was generally perceived negatively in France when the sojourners returned. Their efforts at code-switching and their lack of respect for the courtesy formulae were seen as serious by the host members of their society. Brigitte was quite indignant that an attorney in her firm had advised her to watch her language. Her modified behaviour involved intrinsic enhancements to her personality and identity which were drastically at odds with French codes of conduct. In addition to this, she was berated in France as cultural lessons learned and appreciated abroad were not tolerated in a French context. She explains how transformations to her identity and personality were perceived by her colleagues in the following quote.

*[French people] think I am too forward and too “spontanée”, that’s one thing. I was already a bit like that before but now it’s more. I think it’s the experience in Australia because behaving like you want and behaving like you are is very important, and being spontaneous was important in Australia. I think that the French are sometimes too serious, too formal and not relaxed you know, too arrogant, far too snobby and sometimes I don’t like that ... Now working in this law firm, I want to be relaxed, I am laughing a lot and people don’t like that too much ... when I came back I think it was difficult to lose this new part of me. I changed in a way, and I had to change again (Brigitte).*

Clearly, like her sojourner counterparts returning to Paris or Strasbourg, Brigitte experienced difficulty in coping with the intransigence toward deviations from cultural norms in France she felt was typical of her colleagues as well as people in the society at large. This quote is pivotal as it provides yet another example of reverse culture shock for the returnees, precipitated by the xenophobic attitudes displayed by their co-nationals. They were constantly reminded that their newly acquired relaxed demeanour, the
transformations to their cultural identity and personalities and particularly their use of English in preference to French were simply not to be tolerated. This factor essentially contributed to the transitory state that will be discussed in section 5.7.

As the majority of respondents reported, general negative comments from the society at large, such as, « On nous faisait des remarques » (we were criticised) or « Tu es en France maintenant. Tu parles français! » (You are in France now. You speak French), left them no choice but to stop speaking English. Jacqueline’s quote is representative of these types of comments from the general public.

You are in France now, you do as the French! Ben, ah, là tu fais quoi, t’es snob? Il faut arrêter! (Jacqueline).

This quote demonstrates that if the returnees had any chance of re-integrating fully into French society they had no option but to conform to French cultural mores, in other words, “If you speak English here, you are a snob and you will not be accepted”. French people in general were seen to be intolerant of English expressions and idioms contaminating their language. This respondent became resolute about the direction she needed to take to belong again.

C’est facile de reprendre tes habitudes seulement après avoir réellement intégré que de toutes façons, tu n’en as pas le choix si tu veux rester sociable. Ce qui est difficile à faire, [c’est] de comprendre au fond de soi qu’il faut reprendre les mêmes habitudes qu’avant. C’est dur psychologiquement à ce moment là. Mais le fait en lui-même de reprendre ses habitudes une fois que l’on a compris cela est très facile (Jacqueline).

Jacqueline attested to a difficult psychological period of deliberation, where successful re-integration into French society was contingent upon inherent acceptance of her social mores deep within her psyche. This issue became the key to her readjustment because resuming her usual life did not involve physical constraints or further learning per se. This quote is significant as it highlights the psychological path which the returnees had to traverse before reaching a satisfactory stage of acceptance of their role in society. Presumably, only then, as Matthieu’s case will also clearly illustrate in a later section, were

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116 …Hey! What are you doing? Are you a snob? You must stop [speaking English now] (Jacqueline).
117 It’s easy to pick up where you left off only when you have really integrated the idea that anyhow you do not really have the choice if you wish to remain sociable. What is difficult to do is to understand that deep within you, you have to assume the same habits as before [your sojourn]. That is hard psychologically at that moment. But the fact of re-assuming old habits once you have realised this is in itself very easy (Jacqueline).
the returnees able to reconcile the fact that it was the only means by which they could get on with their lives. This phase of their lives was however transient until they could leave again. The degree of severity of the symptoms of reverse culture shock in the other returnees also appears to correlate with this acceptance of their ascribed role in French society. Only when Jacqueline and others had reached this stage, did the process become easier. Jacqueline’s final resolution of this issue of acceptance of her ascribed role in France is typical of the pressures many returnees experience when they return to their countries of origin and is by no means exclusive of the French. The acceptance factor correlates essentially with a successful re-integration into their home societies, although as the respondent above explained, she still remained in transit.

Studies of student sojourners from the literature reflect these findings (cf. N. Adler, 1981; Kim, 2001; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2001; Ward et al., 2001). It appears essential that returnees recognise the fact that their home country and the country of the sojourn are separate contexts and that newly acquired skills and learning have to be integrated in a manner that is not offensive to their compatriots. It is therefore not surprising that their co-nationals should appear xenophobic in light of their inability to accept that these returnees had changed in significant ways from what they generally perceive as French behaviour. These young people simply wished to practise what they had learned in Australia, trying to incorporate the new with the original societal skills but this appeared to fail. The issue of xenophobia is examined in Adler’s (1981) study. She argues that a xenophobic response denotes a lack of knowledge by members of society to value foreigners or foreign work experience as well as integration of cross-cultural skills in the home organisation. The application of newly gained social, linguistic and practical skills in the home context was found to be unacceptable by society members. The returnees in the current project who persisted in punctuating their French dialogue with English words were perceived as snobs. Although France could be classed as a plurilingual and pluricultural nation, there was definite consensus from the combined studies with Jacqueline’s belief that

*It’s impossible to be bilingual in France. The French are monolingual (Jacqueline).*

There was a marked frequency of this type of comment from the data which accentuates the frustration that the sojourners felt upon their return when they were unable to freely incorporate their culture learning and linguistic skills into their daily conversations. From this situation emerged systematic criticism of French foreign language pedagogy which
engenders individuals totally inadequate in oral proficiency skills when abroad and largely ill-equipped to cope linguistically in a foreign milieu compared to other Europeans. This is despite the years of English study in primary, secondary and tertiary systems of education. The quotes presented in this chapter illustrate that the returnees were constantly subjected to comments from members of society that French is the language of the Republic and all must speak it! This attitude clearly reaffirmed the claims of xenophobia mentioned throughout this chapter.

During the interviews, Diane complained bitterly about the low status of English in Paris, rebuking the society, in particular the business and law firms for the parochial beliefs that French is the only language of importance. Although large French companies appeared to favour the intercultural experience of the sojourners in theory, the respondents reported a discrepancy in practice. They attested to limited use of conversational English in the firms and almost none in the wider society. Diane gives her views on the subject.

*Generally, companies want someone who speaks English, but it’s more about wanting someone who went abroad and lived there for a while because they know then you’re kind of more open-minded and you can adapt more easily to certain situations. It’s not only about the language it’s about the cultural experience. But apart from the job in France, we speak only French (Diane).*

This vignette reveals the paradoxical element of French culture in the work domain in particular, where the French respondents experienced the greatest difficulties in re-adjusting. The companies encouraged the acquisition of English language and culture abroad but negated the experience of the sojourners by curtailing their use of both in contexts other than the confines of the company. Should the respondents have been fortunate enough to utilise English in their firms it was seen to be strictly in the office and more particularly in written form. The following quote from Eveline who lives in Strasbourg indicates that this practice is not restricted to Paris alone.

*[I have an internship] in an American company. So the language is English but we speak French because most of the people are French or German and English but all the conferences, the emails, all the writing emails or anything that must be used by other people is in English ... It’s mostly writing. It’s easier for me to write than speak ... I thought that when I came back I would speak English fluently but actually it’s not fluent. I can understand most of what people say in conversation but I’m not bilingual (Eveline).*

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Eveline was one of the few returnees to secure a position, albeit as intern, in an English speaking firm. Ironically, she, perhaps more than her counterparts, had made less notable progress in English during her sojourn, by her own admission principally because her boyfriend, who had accompanied her to Australia, was not conversant in English. This example essentially confirms the claim that, should one be successful in securing a position requiring the use of English, it was seemingly quite restricted in practice.

In contrast with the xenophobic attitude toward foreign language use in France, the Franco-Swiss respondent, Marc’s situation compares favourably with his French counterparts. He was instantly rewarded for his polyglot status with a pay rise during an internship subsequent to his return to Geneva. His comments reflect the importance of diglossia in Switzerland, a country which has successfully combined several languages in its linguistic repertoire without conflict.

*It’s definitely possible to be [polyglot] in Switzerland. I got a pay rise because I speak English. I would have a really good chance of a job ... I could go high really quickly, I’m not saying that to be arrogant you know, but I got really strong comparative advantage in going there [to Australia] (Marc).*

Marc’s quote illustrates how multilingualism is rewarded in Switzerland compared to France, in spite of their common French heritage. However, Marc argues there are few students who venture as far as Australia as it is a relatively rarer phenomenon for the Swiss. Diane explains below why the demonstrated bigotry of English spoken outside the work environment in France is incomprehensible.

*Even if they [the returnees] find a job they don’t really use it, only for writing or the research but they don’t really have the need to speak English ... If you are a secretary or bilingual in law it’s useful if you need to know specific research or in American law ... but it’s academic and you don’t use it every day ... we speak only French, so it’s typical unless you have American friends. It’s frustrating for me (Diane).*

This quote illustrates that the reason English is rarely used in social contexts has a lot to do with the academic or legal English used in the firms largely for the purposes of research. Conversely, those returnees who are fortunate to have found employment in an American firm would be the select few that practise this language in and outside the work domain, that is, on the presumption they socialise with their American colleagues.
Finally, an excerpt from Arlette’s interview sheds light on a possible reason for the xenophobia that exists among the French in regard to the use of English or indeed bilingualism. As previously mentioned, all respondents found it an indictment that French language education did not prepare them for authentic use of foreign languages in practice. The participants in this research considered the state of language teaching in France as unsatisfactory, and attributed blame to the educational system, language teachers and French mentality itself. Even more remarkable, Arlette who was a university instructor in English attested to the students’ criticism as being justified. However, she defended the pedagogical training of teachers by casting blame more appropriately on the establishment and French consciousness. During the interview, Arlette was embarrassed to admit to being a product of this educational system during her training for her career in English.

*During my five years at university in France, I spoke English only once! ... Even with tertiary education in English the students won’t speak English correctly because there’s no possibility to meet English people and have a conversation in English (Arlette).*

Arlette was adamant that it was impossible to be bilingual in France and the only way to learn English was to go abroad for an extended sojourn. It can be construed from Arlette’s quote that foreign language acquisition does not rate highly in core value for the French in general which serves to explicate somewhat their intolerant attitudes.

In summary, this section has examined the incidence of reverse culture shock visible through negative feelings of frustration, anger and distress as a result of notable xenophobic attitudes characteristic of social interactions with members of French society, particularly in the work domain. The subjects were seen to adopt a combination of rebellious and proactive coping strategies, according to the four constructs proposed by Adler (1981), in order to minimise the depressing effects of reverse culture shock.

### 5.7 Incommunicability of the sojourn and reverse culture shock

This section analyses a factor emerging from the data which contributed significantly to reverse culture shock for the French respondents, an incommunicability of the sojourn experience within the framework of French society. The idea of communicability is important because returnees need to feel that their sojourn experience is validated by family, friends and the society at large. If they are unable to establish this, they may negate
the whole experience as a waste of time, which may have negative consequences on their psychological well being. Students feel the need to justify their exchange experience as more than a holiday and they want parents and friends to be proud of their achievements. This need is rarely satisfied it appears which in turn leads to frustration. This facet of their re-entry, the incommunicability of the experience, exacerbated the process of readjustment for the French sojourners. Contrary to one positive factor, ameliorated modes of communication via the Internet during the sojourn, once home, the incapacity to recount their experience to family and friends in many instances translated unconsciously into another coping strategy to minimise the effects of reverse culture shock. This factor is further discussed in the next section. The returnees escaped to their private world with photographs and memorabilia of Australia when they felt nostalgic, sharing special moments only with individuals who had had experiences in Australia or who could understand what they had lived through.

The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate the argument presented above. Clément’s testimony of his traumatic year of readjustment has many similarities with Diane’s situation. The incommunicability of his experience to those around him arose from serious problems which emerged when he attempted to resume his life where he had interrupted it a year before. Clément had broken up with his French girlfriend two months after arriving in Australia and had acquired an Australian girlfriend. He freely admitted that his sojourn was a form of escapism. Upon his return however, Clément’s anguish was obvious through the symptoms of reverse culture shock, withdrawal from society, rejection of friendships, depression, anger and self doubt (cf. Gaw, 2000), as witnessed in earlier quotes. Finally, after obtaining a secure position and a new relationship, he was able to participate in this interview. His admission that he would never have consented to an interview for this project had he not reached this satisfactory stage of re-adaptation is testimony to the severity of the effects of reverse culture shock. He would have declined because he had no wish to dwell on an experience that had induced traumas upon his return home.

Au bout de à peu près un mois ou deux ... on a rompu ... je savais que j’étais pas assez amoureux personnellement pour me motiver ... pour rester en France, sinon je savais que je ne serais jamais parti. Le fait de partir c’était lui-même significatif ... c’était complètement une évasion , c’était lâche mais c’était ça! ... Quand j’ai pris l’avion [pour la France] j’ai pleuré. Je voulais pas partir ... J’étais un peu déchiré ... Bon j’étais ici [en France] parce que je me sentais obligé d’être là ... je me sentais vraiment bien là-bas [en Australie]. Je savais que ça me correspondait en fait ... Je suis pas Parisien moi, je suis
... I probably would not have said yes to an interview. Because [my friend] told me about you and what you were looking for and at that time I had got the job and I thought: “Yeh it’s ok, I can do it”. ... At the beginning I was really thinking it was a bad experience and kind of useless at the end and now I can see the good sides. I have the job, the relationship and I’m back to normal now (Clément).

Clément’s situation was as tumultuous and painful as Diane’s until he had settled into a good position and found a steady girlfriend. However, not only had he left a girl in France but also one in Australia. He had adapted so well to Australia that he became miserable in Paris. He clearly missed the familiar cues he had become so accustomed to in Australia. Parisian culture left him cold and Australian culture, in stark contrast with his own and initially found to be wanting, ultimately suited him. Therefore, the re-entry process was exacerbated when he could no longer enjoy the life he had appreciated for a year. His inability to secure work and a relationship only clouded his memories of a brilliant year abroad, to the point of regretting it just as some returnees had recounted. Only when he had succeeded in overcoming the initial difficulties was he ready to face the world and resume the friendships he had allowed to fall by the wayside. The two factors, a secure position and a meaningful relationship represent two of the most effective contexts for coping with readjustment back home.

Clément’s case also supports my argument that the year abroad was something that the participants could not, or refused, to share with anyone. In many cases, the data revealed that I had been the first person with whom they had been willing to discuss this experience. They later volunteered it had had a therapeutic effect on them. Their admission that sharing the experience can be salutary is in itself perhaps the most effective strategy for minimising the effects of reverse culture shock but the fact remains that they were largely unwilling to do so. Given the novelty of exchanges in Australia, they believed that no one could appreciate what they had lived through during their time abroad.

Several examples from Brigitte, Matthieu and Angélica substantiate the claim that returnees were unable to share their unique experience abroad with their compatriots.

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118 At the end of 1 or 2 months approximately … we broke up … I knew that I was not personally sufficiently in love to motivate myself … to stay in France, otherwise I knew that I would never have left. Leaving in itself was significant … it was a complete escape, it was cowardly but that was that! … When I got on the plane [for France] I cried. I didn’t want to leave … I was a little torn …well, I was here [in France] because I felt obliged to be here … I really felt great over there [in Australia]. I knew that it suited me in fact … I am not Parisian, I am not really imbued with this cultural side … it a pain in the neck! (Clément).
Brigitte’s quote offers an interesting perception of what can result from this situation. Firstly she speaks of the welcome from family, and then friends.

Passées les histories, parce qu’on avait raconté un peu … une fois que les albums de photos étaient fermés, personne n’a plus posé de questions … c’était fin de chapitre! 119 … It’s a completely new circle of friends. The friends from before, your best friends, are no longer the best friends. So we met new people since we are here … I will say that my friends when I came back to France, I don’t know how to explain … a bit jealous … they didn’t give me the chance to explain my experience … I had to go toward [them] in order to talk to them, to share my experience with them. They didn’t want to know. They were happy to see me, but: “Fine! Ok! I am happy to see you but we have to just continue to live our lives in France”. They got new friends since I left and I was not part of that group anymore. I was a bit disappointed. I can say that (Brigitte).

Brigitte’s quote reveals the commonly reported reaction to the overseas sojourn experienced by the majority of sojourners, albeit more frequently in Paris. This is further indication that the re-entry process was more difficult in Paris than elsewhere for reasons enumerated previously, such as different circumstances of returnees and the pressured lifestyle of Paris in comparison to Strasbourg, as well as other variables. Brigitte explains that once the niceties were over, the family wished them to move on, put away their souvenirs and begin to focus on the serious issues at hand. Friends who changed allegiances during their absence complicated the process of readjustment, compounding the already distressing effects of reverse culture shock. Wilson’s (1993) study of a cross-national perspective on re-entry of exchange students also found communication problems upon re-entry. She argues returnees find communicating with those who have not had similar experiences frustrating because they believe people in general to be uninterested in their accounts of their sojourn. Returned sojourners consider people lack sufficient knowledge to discuss situations with them and worse, they perceive them to be biased, confirming stereotypes about the culture they have left.

Matthieu recounts his attempts during the initial phases of his re-adaptation to resume his life in Paris but his relatives and friends did try to assist him.

Jean considérais l’Australie comme si c’était une parenthèse dans ma vie. J’étais replongé dans ma vie d’avant, dans l’univers familial, des amis. Je retourne dans la même ville, tous ces gens là ont poursuivi le cours normal de leur vie … J’ai vécu tellement de choses

119 Once the anecdotes had been told, because we had spoken a little about them … once the photo albums had been closed, no one asked questions … that was the end of that! (Brigitte).
complètement différentes … Je peux pas le partager parce qu’ils ne l’ont pas vécu avec moi. Ils comprennent pas et je ne veux pas en fait. J’ai essayé parce que les personnes s’intéressent mais leur intérêt dure une semaine. Je comprends … J’étais tellement enthousiaste que bon ils en avaient marre peut-être. Ils étaient déçus de me voir triste … j’étais pas du tout content d’être là. J’ai exprimé aucune joie d’être retourné. J’exprimais vraiment que de la tristesse, que du regret de ne pas être resté là-bas. Alors, bon, ils ont arrêté de me poser des questions (Matthieu).120

This quote reflects the symbiotic nature of the sentiments expressed by the returnees and their family and friends. Matthieu’s comments in fact reveal that it was his own attitude as much that of the close members of his social milieu that contributed to the inability in overcoming the difficulties during the troublesome phase of reverse culture shock. This situation, mirrored in other interviews, implies a vicious circle where the returnees feel alienated and withdraw from the group because they feel misunderstood and do not wish to share their experience. As a result of the distress they show at being home again, family and friends quickly lose interest in the accounts of the sojourn. It is this lack of interest that contributed to these unwelcome symptoms in the first place. One can extrapolate from this situation that family and friends generally preferred to stop asking the returnees about their sojourn to avoid further altercations (cf. Weaver, 1994).

The following vignettes, depicting a consensus of views from the project provide further clarification of the implications of the notion of une année entre parenthèses, inherently because of the incommunicability of the experience. Diane claims that it is impossible to describe the sojourn experience in a few words because she has lived through so much in the space of fifteen months, but a lack of genuine interest from others precludes her even attempting to describe it.

... C’est indescriptible! ... les gens demandent pas non plus ... c’est juste que, on peut pas raconter. C’est un peu une expérience qu’on garde pour soi. C’est pas possible de la partager! ... Je raconte en des minutes avec qui je vivais, mais c’est irracontable quoi! ... çà a été vexant de me dire qu’untel ne m’a pas demandé plus que ça, un tel ne m’a pas demandé de voir les photos. C’était moi plutôt qui disais: « Bon il faut que tu viennes voir

120 I considered Australia as if it were a parenthesis, an interlude in my life. I was re-immersed in my former life, in the universe of family and friends. I came back to the same town, all these people have continued to live their lives … I experienced so many different things … I can’t share them because they have not lived them with me. They don’t understand and in fact I don’t want to. I tried because people are interested but their interest lasts 1 week. I understand … I was so enthusiastic that they had had enough perhaps … they were disappointed to see me so sad … I was not at all happy to be there. I expressed no joy in being back home. I only really expressed sadness, only regret at not being over there. So they stopped asking me questions (Matthieu).
This quote exemplifies how frustrating the return process became for many respondents who gauged that their family and friends showed little or no interest in their experience. At that point they decided to keep things to themselves. Robert perceives this view as going back to square one.

On revient dans un environnement qu’on connait et on a l’impression de revenir à la case de départ et que en fait l’Australie était une parenthèse dans notre vie (Robert).

Robert’s perception of this phenomenon among the French returnees is notable. The implications are such that the experience abroad was so eventful that the return home represented the start of a new game with presumably different consequences resulting from the choices to be made.

More graphically described, Brigitte’s version is perhaps the most remarkable.

Le pied posé sur le sol français, tout ce que j’avais passé en Australie, c’était comme une parenthèse. C’était quelque chose que j’avais rêvée, c’était dans ma tête, c’était derrière moi, mais c’était pas la réalité. Et ça, ça a été très, très dur à assumer (Brigitte).

Brigitte’s quote reveals the magical element the year abroad represented for this group of sojourners. It comprises the surreal feeling of unreality, the dreamlike state that most respondents alluded to.

Angélica explains why it is so difficult to speak of her sojourn.

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121 ... It’s indescribable! People don’t ask either … it’s only that you can’t talk about it. It’s an experience that you keep to yourself. It’s impossible to talk about it. I talk about the people with whom I lived in minutes, but it’s really impossible to recount. I was angry that someone had not asked more than that, another had not asked to see the photos. I was the one who said: “Well, you must come over to see my photos” … then we look at the photos … but in fact they didn’t give a shit really! Once we had looked at the photos it was over! (Diane).

122 You return to a familiar environment and you get the impression of going back to square one and that in fact Australia was a parenthesis, an interlude in our lives (Robert).

123 One foot on French soil and everything that I had experienced in Australia was like a parenthesis, an interlude in my life. It was something I had dreamed, it was in my head, it was behind me, but it was not reality. And that was very, very hard to accept (Brigitte).
When you come back you feel like no one can understand you at first, because no one has the same experience as you because they went to Germany or something, so it’s not the same. You can’t compare. Thankfully I had one friend from Bond Uni who came back at the same time as me ... For all of us it was quite hard to come back, for everyone ... we want to return to Australia (Angélica).

This quote illustrates perhaps the most common view held by the returnees in regard to their inability to share their experience. According to the sojourners who had been to Australia, even those who were involved with the Strasbourg exchange programmes could not match their experience, hence the difficulty in sharing. Further examples of this feature are derived from Jacques and Clément’s interviews, contributing additional views on which group of people they feel they can share their experience.

I felt like a bit bossy, snobby ... This year was special, unreal. It’s just a sign of life just like life showed me that I could live in that country, I can live abroad. I know I wanna return there and live there ... I should tell you that all my flatmates are Americans, they are living a year abroad (Jacques).

It should come as no surprise that Jacques, who is marking time until he can go on exchange once again to South Africa for his MBA, should only have like-minded friends, exchange students from America, whilst marginalising himself from former friends.

In the next quote, one can observe the degree of anxiety that the inability to share one’s experience can have on a returnee.

[My friends] didn’t care at all. I think it was a bit of jealousy, they didn’t really understand ... They were kind of settled, with girlfriends and married some of them. So I was like on the outside ... I didn’t want to be like them and I didn’t care. I wanted to go to Australia and it was so much fun than having kids and doing that sort of thing (Clément).

Earlier, Clément’s quotes provided evidence of one of the most traumatic readjustment experiences of the whole group. It appears that added to all the traumas he faced upon re-entry caused by difficulty in finding a job, interpersonal relationship issues and financial burdens, the inability to share his experiences with his former friends may have represented the last straw. This ultimately caused him to reassess his successful experience in Australia and regret his decision to go.
Many of the respondents referred to their sojourn as *une année entre parenthèses*. This year in parenthesis involves a complex situation connected to the vulnerability and acceptance as French citizens of these returnees within the fabric of French society when they return. In addition, given the state of French economy and dismal job prospects, the pessimism which is infused in French youth of today becomes interwoven with issues concerning personal career aspirations and selection of life partners (Rapin, 2003). The new intercultural breed of French youth who are open-minded and fluent in at least two languages, appear to be seeking out partners who are of the same ilk, or at least as open-minded and willing to travel with them to distant places. Drawing from early literature on academic returnees, Riegel’s (1953) study on Belgian exchangees to the United States found that almost half of the returnees, from the professional and other elite classes like the French group in this study, desired to emigrate following their sojourn. Riegel contends that the exchange experience stimulates the active or latent desires of many to emigrate, a fact closely matching the argument proposed in this study except for the greater proportions of French students who wished to leave France. He argues that their motivation in emigrating is predicated on unrealised expectations of improved economic, professional and social opportunity with emphasis on the economic. Were these effects of exchange programmes to be publicised by sponsoring agencies, he suggests they would nullify the stated purposes of most exchange programmes, which is ostensibly to “produce international understanding, good will, and mutual assistance” (Riegel, 1953 p. 319).

In summary, this section has argued that an extraordinary event took place for the French sojourners during their cross-cultural experience, something they termed *une année entre parenthèses*, perhaps alternatively described as *a year without parallels*. The unconnectedness of their lives pre- and post-sojourn is essentially the reason why the experience accrued in importance when the French sojourners returned home. For this group, it was impossible to integrate what transpired in Australia into the normal routine of their lives in France, hence they relegated it to the status of a surreal, bracketed experience, outside of real existence. Many students in fact were acutely aware that should they try to emulate the experience, it could never be the same again because they would no longer be academic sojourners. This was an event they chose for the most part to keep private, not only because they found it impossible to share it in some instances because few French people had ventured to Australia for cross-cultural education, but also because it represented for them the ultimate journey of self-discovery, personal growth and cultural awareness. The notion of *une année entre parenthèses* is pivotal to this study because it
correlated with enormous difficulties in settling back home as a result of the incommunicability of the experience to a large extent. The essential problem is that even the limited interest in their experiences by their family and friends was found to be short lived according to the majority of subjects, confirming an element of the re-entry process not unusual in literature in this area (e.g. N. Adler, 1981; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; LaBrack, 1994; Martin, 1986; Storti, 2001b; Ward et al., 2001; Werkman, 1982).

5.8 Being in transit in France

This section examines another finding that is fundamental to this project, that the French respondents viewed their return as temporary for reasons which will be elaborated through selected excerpts. The data showed that 14 out of 19 subjects, who were interviewed after returning to Europe, described their experience as being in transit, biding their time until they could leave France again. Upon examination of the situations of French sojourners from the cross-sectional study on acculturation, who are still in Australia or who have recently left, it is significant to note that of the remaining nine respondents interviewed, only one has settled back into his country of origin with the intention of staying. The remaining eight students have either settled in Australia, the US, Spain, Scotland or New Caledonia as a stepping stone for immigration into Australia. Two of the original longitudinal subjects are in Hong Kong, one is living in Spain and another on a mission with the United Nations in Kyrgyzstan. They have in fact become potential intercultural nomads (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001), equipped linguistically with French and English, and some are polyglot, which affords them the ability to settle in any western culture at the very least. These results are also consonant with Werkman’s (1982 p.185) study on adjustment problems of adolescents who have sojourned abroad. He argues overseas teenagers are “candidates for becoming restless, possibly rootless people who have a constant need to be on the move”. It appears this trend is not restricted to adolescents.

Predictably however, the plans for departure that many respondents have made for the end of their internships or studies are largely contingent on extrinsic factors. A new relationship may alter these plans dramatically, as could family pressures and financial constraints. A secure job offer and difficulties in meeting their financial commitments will no doubt force many to reassess their motives. Finally, the inability to obtain internships or work in a foreign country which is fraught with administrative and immigration problems will most certainly compel some of these young people to delay or reconsider their
departure. Most will be within the range of twenty-three to twenty-seven years of age and some will be seriously contemplating settling down with a good job, partner and children. It would be interesting to discover how many among them will actually succeed in relocating overseas given these circumstances. It is remarkable that those who have remained in Australia or relocated abroad without returning to France are more likely to succeed in immigration than those, particularly on exchange programmes in Strasbourg, who have been obliged to return home before re-evaluating their future plans. This is probably because the options of the former group are greater as they have finished their studies than those who are restricted by various commitments in France. The sojourners from Paris who chose to study in Australia through an independent organisation were autonomous and had generally completed several degrees, a factor which allows them to relocate more easily should they wish to do so.

In the present study, acute cases of reverse culture shock produced a disturbing number of situations where respondents gave the distinct impression of being in transit back in France and Switzerland, only biding their time to complete studies or internships or pay back bank loans before embarking on further overseas ventures for work or study. This can be construed as an effective coping mechanism for the effects of reverse culture shock in returnees who exhibit the most significant degrees of distress in their homecoming. Evidence from the data of financial and educational obligations forcing respondents to return home has been presented thus far. Further illustrations describing the feeling of being in transit are derived from both the longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Diane was perhaps the respondent displaying the most disquieting effects of this phenomenon during her readjustment process in Paris. In the following vignettes, she recounts the painful experience during varying stages of anxiety and stress she endured over the first year. Firstly she discovered that her enhanced expectations and fervent desire to re-unite with her boyfriend were in fact a figment of her imagination and diametrically opposed to the reality of her true feelings.

I think it’s because I went away we maintained the friendship for so long. It was an idealisation because I was with him for just four months before I left. When I left I was a bit annoyed, I thought that’s good that I am going away. I had doubts before I left. But I was really homesick so he was really good support of me. He was really listening. He advised me so it was important. I think I created everything in my head. When I came back it was the same situation than when I left. I thought it’s not going to work. It was helpful for me to hold on to that relationship when I was away and now I have to let go (Diane).
Diane’s quote reveals that upon analysis of her predicament, she was able to reconcile the differences in her relationship with her boyfriend, prior, during and after her sojourn. Acknowledgement of the fact that she had fabricated a more significant relationship in order to mitigate the effects of culture shock in Australia did nothing to assuage the guilt she reported feeling as a result of this during the various interviews I had with her in Paris as well as subsequent emails. Her sojourn in Australia was tantamount to escapism as much as to a furthering of her education. Working from the premise that her relationship with her boyfriend was not completely satisfactory, from a distance, understanding and support were misconstrued for love, and she engaged in the practice of highlighting issues which arose during her sojourn. Therefore, a fictitiously fulfilling relationship emerged which she embellished from a distance. When confronted with the harsh reality after the eagerly awaited reunion, disillusionment set in because there was a wider hiatus in the discrepancy between reality and fiction than she had imagined. In an early email subsequent to her return to Paris, Diane confessed that the homecoming had not met with her expectations and this had resulted in a series of relationship upheavals which culminated in separation. The problems which manifested in varying degrees of distress and depression for Diane were aggravated by other extrinsic factors. Everything appeared to have remained static whilst she had evolved. This was something she could not countenance. In a later email, she had made up with her boyfriend but in yet another the relationship was definitely over.

C’est définitivement fini! Ça va, c’est lui qui souffre, moi je me sens juste déçue (Diane).  

Diane’s state of mind, illustrated in the series of vignettes above, is clearly symptomatic of the immense difficulties she experienced upon re-entry. Five months following her return to Paris, Diane still showed no signs of settling down. The result of these predicaments for Diane meant that due to relationship woes, lack of job satisfaction, inability to resume studies and general feelings of not belonging, she changed her plans dramatically on a regular basis over 10 months in regard to career choices (from law to journalism, preparing for the Bar exam to abandoning law). In an email six months after her return, Diane seriously contemplated moving back to Australia to join a Taiwanese friend who also found it untenable to settle back home.

124 It’s definitely over! It’s ok, it’s he who is suffering, I just feel disappointed (Diane).
Ma copine de Taiwan m’a téléphoné, elle déprime et veut retourner vivre en Australie avec moi. Elle essaye de me convaincre. Donc je me donne jusqu’à décembre pour réfléchir. Je serai donc peut-être de retour en janvier 2005, qui sait? (Diane).

The fact that her Taiwanese friend, who had also experienced difficulties in readjustment after her sojourn in Australia had returned for yet another sojourn, did nothing to ease Diane’s mind. She had resolved to sit the Bar exam before making a decision about returning to Australia with her friend. In the interim, Diane had found a new boyfriend and had delayed making a decision on future career and travels. Finally, in an email 10 months after her return, she admitted to finding the Bar exam less daunting than first imagined.

Le Barreau ne s’est pas trop mal passé mais je ne sais pas trop ce que ça va donner. Les résultats sont mi-octobre. Je commence à aller beaucoup mieux et je ne pense pas retourner en Australie d’ici la fin de l’année. Mon amie me téléphone tous les trois jours, elle essaye de me convaincre de revenir à Noël mais je n’ai pas l’argent pour payer le voyage (Diane).

This quote indicates that finally Diane has reached the final stage of reverse culture shock (cf. Storti, 2001b) - readjustment to life in Paris. Her grave fears of failing the Bar exam did not materialise and her financial situation precluded her from returning to Australia by Christmas. She apparently found her niche in Law and delayed her return to Australia. A new relationship may have had a lot to do with this decision. These developments symbolised her acceptance of her situation in France and her decision to settle down finally. The plans to return to Australia were a useful strategy in minimising the severe difficulties she had experienced in the preceding 10 months and although she had not entirely dismissed the idea, she confessed to being happier at this stage of her life. However, yet another break up with her new boyfriend confirms the indecision of her future plans in spite of a Christmas email advising me of her success in her Bar exam. A further email in September 2005 announced Diane’s intention to return to Australia for one month during the Christmas break. Following this particular trip few re-entry difficulties

\[125\] My Taiwanese friend rang me, she is depressed and wants to return to Australia to live with me. She is trying to convince me. So, I am giving myself until December to think about it. Therefore, I may be back in January 2005, who knows? (Diane).

\[126\] The Bar exam was not so bad but I am not sure of the results. They will come out in October. I am starting to feel a lot better and I don’t think I shall be coming to Australia between now and the end of the year. My friend calls me every 3 days trying to convince me to come back at Christmas but I haven’t got the money for the trip (Diane).

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were recorded as can be expected. Diane is currently attending interviews for prospective jobs in law firms and she appears more content to be home this time, having realised that the long-awaited trip was not quite like her first. It was also the result of inquiries about staying and working in Australia as a lawyer having presented insurmountable difficulties.

If one extrapolates from the problematic situation Diane’s predicament represents, it can be argued that interpersonal problems and long distance relationships have the potential to cause serious concerns upon re-entry. The data shows that this is linked to motives for the sojourn abroad because the opportunity to study in Australia is perceived as an escape, from personal troubling issues, feelings of restlessness, insecure relationships and lack of success in academia and so forth. There appears to exist a correlation with the massive geographical distance between France and Australia and the influence this has on the psychological and physical welfare of the French sojourners. Thanks to globalisation and internet access improving the means of communication, the hiatus in distance was bridged quite appreciably for the subjects in the current study, a factor which may have dramatically affected the re-entry processes of French students who ventured further from home in the 1990s. Affordable rates of telephone cards were also instrumental in assisting effective communication between loved ones on opposite sides of the globe, especially in times of loneliness and homesickness. However, in spite of the improved communicative networks which facilitated at least some contact with people back home, mostly with friends because the older generation were not au fait with advanced technological modes of communication, there appeared to exist another predicament for some French sojourners. Where regular telephone conversations in some instances between partners on opposite sides of the globe should have eased the process of re-entry, a surreal situation evolved between some of them, especially if the relationship was relatively new as in Diane’s case examined earlier. Loneliness and homesickness are sentiments which can create unreal situations in the minds of sojourners, especially those who have been away for an extended period of time.

Another respondent, Monique, who had difficulties in resuming her life back in France had also confessed that her choice of Australia as a destination for her sojourn had been predicated on the fact that she was running away from a relationship.
I had a boyfriend before leaving and one month after I told him: “I dumped you”. I wrote to him by email. That was bad because he was very sad but I didn’t want to have a boyfriend to live such an experience. He was not the good one so I wanted to be free to live this experience (Monique).

Monique had no qualms about removing any obstacles from her desire to enjoy the ultimate experience of a year abroad. Her plans for further travel were prominent on her agenda.

... I didn’t want to think about Australia. It was too painful. I kept it separate. I only shared it with some people because I needed to talk about it. In my mind I was very sad and ... depressed. [My mother] loves me and wants me to stay close to her but now she knows that I will be very sad if I don’t realise my dream to go overseas (Monique).

Although Monique’s travel plans are not eagerly accepted by the family at least this eased her process of re-entry because she knew that she was leaving again. Her mother visited her in Australia and she knew that this would be repeated when she was ready to leave again. This strategy served to reconcile the feelings of guilt she felt about disappointing her mother by not following the traditional plans of marriage, children and career in France.

Robert’s case is perhaps the most poignant and dramatically pertinent to this feature of being in transit back in France. Still dissatisfied with his readjustment in Paris after 9 months, he left France for Hong Kong to start a new life. The consequences of this move are complex because his fiancée had finally succeeded in securing a good position in a law firm. She decided to sit the Bar exam in September after having travelled to Hong Kong to investigate job prospects for the period of three to four years to be with him. Having failed this exam prior to her sojourn in Australia, she confessed that her motives for leaving represented a form of escapism for her. Robert’s case is extraordinary in this study as he was the only respondent to embark on an MBA (Master of Business Administration) which did not hold the same value in France as in the international arena. Robert’s traumatic experience upon re-entry, justifying his desire to leave his homeland will be examined shortly in the context of section 5.10 on employment and academic issues and reverse culture shock.

Robert’s fiancée, Brigitte experienced a difficult readjustment process marked by a dramatic psychological shock because of her unwillingness to leave Australia. She
describes her traumatic journey on leaving Australia, having fallen ill the day before her departure.

*Je ne sais pas si c’est un choc psychologique ou de stress mais ... c’était un voyage absolument abominable! Quand je suis montée [dans l’avion], déjà j’étais courbatue comme si j’avais la grippe, les oreilles au retour horrible et j’avais mal à la gorge et ... 40 de fièvre ... et je me suis évanouie dans l’avion (Brigitte).*

Brigitte readily admitted that she somatised her unwillingness to leave Australia by falling ill, convinced this would delay her departure. She had psychosomatically created the ideal condition that would prevent her from going home. She could not delay the inevitable however. After an eventful plane journey, and a delayed departure of one hour as a result of these events, in spite of her anguish, she went home. Several respondents cried when it was time to go home but only Brigitte experienced physical symptoms as a result of the traumatic effects of departure.

Jacqueline was just marking time until she completed her internship and minor thesis before country hopping to Canada in order to get into Australia with a Canadian passport. She affirmed her conviction to leave after 10 months back home, in no uncertain terms expressing her intent.

*J’étais vraiment très très très dégoûtée, déçue de revenir en France et puis voilà! ...C’est bien clair que je suis en France et que je tarde de repartir ailleurs parce que j’en ai marre!*… I will try for an internship in Australia first, but it’s really hard to get a visa and get a job there. It has to be a proper job there ... Ok this is the project. I want to go to Canada because it’s easy for a French person to live there for three years. Then you can get the commonwealth stuff and then you can go to Australia really easily (Jacqueline).

The intensity of Jacqueline’s denial in going home is indicative of the effects of reverse culture shock. Her way of coping with this was to make immediate plans for further travels subsequent to fulfilling her obligations. Recent information has revealed that Jacqueline has abandoned these plans temporarily because of the protocol involved in expatriation.

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127 I don’t know if it is a psychological shock or caused by stress but ... it was a horrific trip! When I got on board [the plane], I was already bent double as if I were suffering from the flu, I had terribly sore ears and a sore throat and ... 40C fever ... and I fainted in the plane (Brigitte).

128 I was really, really, really disgusted, really disappointed at having to return to France. But there you are! It’s quite clear that I am in France and that I can’t wait to go somewhere else because I have had enough! (Jacqueline).
She has also succeeded in obtaining an internship in Spain, after which she is keen to find a permanent position and remain there for some time.

Kati finally settled into a new relationship with her French boyfriend, after interpersonal difficulties and intermittent false starts, in their new apartment and also into an internship after eight months, so any initial thoughts of leaving were jointly planned. Fortunately for her, the transitory state she experienced was limited to her short sojourn in Paris where she normally resides. One can extrapolate from this situation that a plausible argument exists that moving to another city may facilitate readjustment. According to the data analysis, Strasbourg also symbolised a city with fewer constraints than Paris, another feature which eased the process somewhat. It is clear that those who returned to Paris experienced greater difficulties than those going to Strasbourg. Kati explains why this is so.

I felt odd … a bit too sad … so it’s just like I feel in the middle of nothing. I didn’t want to return [to Australia]. I didn’t want to be there [in France]. I was like in a transition period. Like I’m waiting for the school starting in September in Strasbourg and I have Australia behind me, so I felt in transit. It was like a period of nothing to me … I might have been happier with things before. But I put the level up … how do you say that? Now you want something better so I think this has generated this emptiness feeling. I would put this to the count of Australia … I realised that if I return I would feel at home and I told that to my boyfriend but I don’t want to return alone. I’d like to return to Melbourne because it’s a bit European style. We were thinking … I know what to do, who to call, I can speak English (Kati).

The confusion Kati felt in Paris induced her to withdraw from the society at large, because she felt uncomfortable there. She readily confessed that her perennial problem of boredom with her life in general was exacerbated by her wonderful experience in Australia which raised the bar for future challenges. She added that should she and her boyfriend return to Australia, the experience would not be daunting because of cultural lessons learned in acculturation. A recent email at the end of 2005 revealed Kati has broken up with her boyfriend and is happy working in Strasbourg and living by herself.

The Swiss respondent, Marc has further travel marked on his agenda which comprises living and working abroad. He believes that he has spent sufficient time in both Australia and Switzerland, his home, and it is therefore time to head for further pastures. His hybrid cultural identity, born out of Franco-Swiss and Brazilian parentage from his father and mother’s side respectively, is an interesting one for this project and issues arising from the
Marc feels that it is definitely time to explore new horizons, the job being immaterial because of his trilingual status, with French, English and Portuguese as part of his linguistic repertoire. Coupled with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in International Relations and work experience in his Curriculum Vitae, he considers himself perfectly poised to command an excellent position in diplomacy in third world countries. He would ideally spend several years living in New York, Brazil, Paris and then Turkey and Afghanistan. This respondent, a by-product of diverse cultural heritage, represents the quintessentially evolved, intercultural individual who is the epitome of the way life-changing experiences contribute to personal growth during international sojourns. Garza-Guerrero (1974) argues if a newcomer succeeds in transcending the crises that arise during the phases of culture shock during acculturation, personal growth ensues and this emergent personality is seen as rewarding. Clearly, the vicissitudes of identity have been assessed and re-integrated into the new psyche. The world has become a smaller place thanks to Marc’s intercultural experience in Australia, Brazil and the US and financial constraints do not appear to preclude the fulfilment of his dreams. As a post-script to this, in a 2004 Christmas email, Marc advised me of his future plans, indeed the realisation of his dreams.

129 I am presently in Brazil after having completed my thesis (and consequently my Masters) in October. I am staying here at my grandmother’s place until the end of January. Then I shall spend one month in Geneva whilst I prepare for my departure … to Kyrgyzstan! Yes you read correctly! I have landed a job with the
It is clear from this quote that Marc’s fervent desire for extended international sojourns did not fail to materialise. His job offer in Kyrgyzstan is not altogether surprising because humanitarian work or jobs obtained with non profit organisations had always been part of his agenda. Embarking on a project in a country little known to others presents no impediment to this respondent who embraces the opportunities his international contact experience has afforded him. This is clear substantiation of the experience described by the respondents as being in transit.

The transitory status described in the preceding excerpts directly correlates with the positive impression that the sojourn experience made on the French sojourners, leading them to name their experience as *une année entre parenthèses* (a year in parenthesis). The length of time abroad is naturally a crucial variable. More appropriately, the term refers to an extraordinary experience rivalled by no other. Some additional quotes support this significant finding emanating from the study. Jacques explains why after seven months he is still marking time in France before leaving.

*I’m going to South Africa, to Cape Town next January, for a year for an MBA, why because I want to return to Australia … I want to get an Anglo-Saxon diploma … I know I’m here for a year so you can’t really [settle down]. When I was in Australia, I knew that it was just for a year, but it was different just because I go through learning everyday. Ok, here I’m learning from my internship but I learned stuff about me in Australia. I learned like a voyage of discovery. I know a lot of friends like that in Australia or just abroad and they learned a lot about themselves because you’ve got more time to think about yourself and your behaviour with the others, how you get to meet people. After a year you just grow a lot much more than you would here* (Jacques).

Like many of his counterparts, Jacques has his plans clearly mapped out for his re-entry into Australia. His decision to apply for an exchange with Cape Town is the logical consequence of his inability to afford an MBA in Australia. Similarly also to the majority of returnees, his well thought out plans represent an effective coping strategy for minimising the stressful symptoms of reverse culture shock. Having concrete goals can go a long way in motivating an individual and easing critical situations even if for some, extenuating circumstances may prevent their dreams from being realised.

*United Nations over there and I leave on a mission for one year. I am delighted! There’s a new perspective in my life that I was not expecting* (Marc).
Angélica’s plans to complete her studies and return to Australia were also instrumental in assuaging the difficulties she experienced during the difficult phase of re-adaptation to her homeland. Her quote was analysed previously with relation to a short-lived honeymoon period back in France. Her intent on leaving France after complying with all obligations prior to beginning her new life in Australia was clear.

In summary, the vignettes provided in this section have highlighted the significance of my argument that the French sojourners’ exceptional experience in Australia was a catalyst in their decision to leave their homeland as soon as practicable, after meeting their financial, educational and familial obligations. The motives for their choice of destination correlates firstly with a successful adaptation process in Australia which subsequently heightened the difficulties in readjustment back home. This is consistent with other literature on re-entry studies. The returnees were in transit, a situation that could largely be construed as an effective measure used to mitigate the damaging effects of reverse culture shock. One can only speculate whether these sojourners will finally succeed in emigrating to distant shores as extrinsic circumstances are predicted to affect their goals.

The extraordinary experience of the respondents, which they regarded as *une année entre parenthèses*, had such an impact on this group essentially because studying in an Australian university constituted a new phenomenon for French students. During the re-entry interviews, the participants reiterated the significance of the connotations of this *année entre parenthèses*. This theme therefore underscores the essence of this project firstly because the indescribable experience induced yet another trend among the French respondents, being in transit, which is predicted to have serious implications for French society if returnees are not nurtured and assisted in their readjustment process. This theme is a catalyst for the restlessness that the French sojourners experienced upon re-entry for several reasons. Firstly, they wish to leave their homeland because of a perceived incommunicability of the sojourn upon re-entry, proclaiming an indictment the fact that members of their own culture are monolingual, close-minded and xenophobic toward other languages and cultures. Zarate (1999) argues it is possible to measure the interstices separating Australia, where multiculturalism and multilingualism is an established policy, and France, whose policy for the first time in its history has recognised its multilingual and multicultural past. One must not forget on the other hand that the “French language remains the founding language of the political authority of the state” (p.49). In light of this,
it is not surprising that the returnees are grappling with political rhetoric and perceive the state of affairs to be different from ministerial positions.

Secondly, the crux of the problem appears to originate from an intolerant attitude toward the Australian study trip where the year abroad is devalued, equated to a holiday in the sun. The data revealed that the respondents also found it hypocritical that culture learning and use of English language were apparently valued in the work domain but ridiculed in the social context. Further, English has supposedly become “the indispensable international linguistic passport (the president of the Republic speaks in English to American business leaders!) but, as a member of Europe, it supports deliberate policy of promotion of other community languages” (Zarate, 1999 p.49). In reality, the returning sojourners find a dramatically different scenario. In sum, these factors had a domino effect on interpersonal relationships in the home and professional arenas resulting in a firm desire of the majority to expatriate as soon as practicable. The extent with which the mosaic of testimonies generated these sentiments can be derived from their account of their Australian experience as an exceptional part of their lives that needs to be secreted from external observers, and remains bracketed, outside the reality of their lives in France and Switzerland.

5.9 Cultural stereotypes and reverse culture shock

This section examines the role of cultural stereotyping of one’s own group following an academic sojourn as well as pre-existing negative views the French hold toward Australians. In the context of the re-entry study these pre-existing cultural views were found to affect the interpersonal relationships of the returnees with their co-nationals, translating into a difficult process of readjustment. Stereotypes, as discussed in Chapter 4, are largely responsible for positive or negative influences in interactions between individuals belonging to different cultures. It is the breakdown of pre-conceived ideas which can promote in many instances, excellent and lasting relationships between the two groups. In the first part of this study, it was seen that negative and judgemental views which constituted cultural barriers between the French and the Australians were torn down, as evidenced through integration into Australian society. What transpired however, perhaps as a consequence of a positive acculturation process in Australia, is that value conflicts emerged when the French sojourners returned home and many respondents reported that it became untenable for them to stay home because they could no longer tolerate the close-minded attitude of their co-nationals. They claimed that they simply could not fit in
anymore. In spite of the relatively brief sojourn, they in fact became Australian ambassadors, defending this country from those who criticised Australia’s lack of culture or indeed anything that treated its people and their culture with derision.

Angélica’s comment reflects majority sentiments and supports the above argument.

*Je pense que j’ai changé après l’Australie, je suis devenue plus calme, moins speed, enfin c’est des choses comme ça. A mon retour, ça m’a choquée de voir tous ces gens qui criaient, qui se plaignaient. J’allumais la télé et les infos: grèves, les gens qui sont pas contents, enfin voilà, ça m’a pesée au début ... quand je suis arrivée j’ai trouvé les français hyper agressifs. Je le remarque dans la vie quotidienne quoi ...Maintenant avec le recul, enfin, j’ai tempéré (Angélica).*

This quote is significant because it represents a facet of successful culture learning for the returnees whose difficult transitional phase upon their return home was heightened because of the dissonance in cultures. All respondents claimed to have adopted the calmer, more relaxed aspect of Australian culture. The complaint that the French were *râleurs*, ‘whingers’, occurred frequently. These feelings of dissatisfaction and embarrassment at the perceived deficiencies in their culture provoked more serious feelings of stress and anger. Angélica comments on her shock upon her return due to the aggressive nature of her people and other negative aspects of French mentality and behaviour. An earlier quote from Angélica revealed her agreement with the perception that French people were considered rude, irreverent toward rules and regulations and so forth. Her views are consistent with those of the majority of returnees observing the interactions of their fellow countrymen in everyday situations. One can draw from her analysis of these episodes an understanding that French nationality was indeed deserving of the criticism promulgated through common negative stereotypes. However, after a year, she had tempered her views somewhat, signifying a transitional movement from one phase of re-acculturation to the next. This corresponds to the stage of readjustment where a semblance of normality is re-established by the returnees.

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130 I think that I have changed since Australia, I have become calmer, less hyper, things like that. On my return, I was shocked to find all these people yelling, complaining. I would turn on the TV and the news: strikes, unhappy people, well there you are, it affected me initially ... when I arrived I found French people hyper aggressive. I notice it in daily life ... Now with the passing of time I have finally mellowed (Angélica).
Another example of criticism of French mentality and behaviour from the re-entry study sums up why the returnees find it so difficult to re-integrate into their society. Their ill-feeling begins generally whilst still in Australia, as Natalie explains.

_When I was in Australia and I met some French people I was just: “Oh my God! I feel so ashamed to be French”_ (Natalie).

These types of comments originated from the third or fourth stage of culture shock, i.e. those relating to recovery during the acculturation process in Australia. This quote, like so many others indicate that a change in cultural perceptions occurred for the academic sojourners as a result of culture learning and broadening of their horizons. Whilst this reflection engendered a more positive view of the host culture the French sojourners began to denigrate their own because they became uncomfortable with the stereotypes about their nationality which clearly did not reflect the evolved and intercultural individuals they had become. They professed to be ashamed of their culture but were generally quick to defend selected aspects such as their history, literature, gastronomy and so on, that represented laudable characteristics in their opinion. They were largely selecting the good from both cultures and discarding the less savoury features.

The following quote illustrates how the motives behind the desire to leave can be more complicated than first imagined. The motives are clearly rooted in stereotypical views of French culture juxtaposed with Australian. Angélica’s quote explains the complexities of her particular case. In Australia she found the freedom and acceptance she was seeking to exercise her sexual preference in relationships that she had not experienced in France.

_For all of us [returnees] it was quite hard to come back, for everyone ... we want to return to Australia ... it’s a new country, you can’t expect it to be as old as Europe, it’s centuries old. It’s different and the good thing is it’s multicultural, and you can’t have that in France ... If I could have stayed in Australia I would have stayed more, maybe six months, one year more ... I was single when I went to Australia. Then I went out with my flatmate, this Swedish girl and I think it was well I was in Australia because I didn’t have a homosexual relationship before in France because I didn’t have a homosexual relationship before in France ... [Australia] is far away and there I can do whatever I want and there was no one to judge me. I think that in Australia people don’t look at you like in France they do. It’s much easier ... I was more afraid here. But I’m not behaving the same here as I used to in Australia. Here I’m more careful. In Australia it was easier, and it was far as well, I didn’t care. But here in France, I’m much more careful ... I don’t have to impose that to other people, I don’t want to abuse that. I want to be more respectful to other people. I don’t think the culture is quite as accepting (Angélica)._
This quote from Angélica is exceptional in this study because her situation is different from the other respondents. Nonetheless, it accentuates the perceived disparity in cultural tolerance between the French and Australian cultures which is reflected in many excerpts of the interviews. Disparagement of their home culture upon re-entry may be common in repatriation literature, as mentioned previously, but, although many respondents traverse the stages of reverse culture shock and finally learn to accept that they cannot easily instigate social and political changes in their society, their plans to travel or live overseas do not appear to moderate, if anything, they are heightened. In Angélica’s case, freedom to live the life she chooses in Australia with no restrictions is a definite advantage in comparison with her situation in France.

Further, it appears that if interesting international opportunities become available to these returnees they would not hesitate to embrace the opportunity as evident in Diane’s future plans.

... I want an English-speaking man, doesn’t matter if he is Australian, English or American, just to keep speaking in English. I would like [my children] bilingual. I would like to live in Australia or New Zealand but not Paris or France, because if my partner is English and we are living in France he will probably speak French. It might be possible for my children to be bilingual in France but not for me if I stay here. There are not enough jobs for people who speak both (Diane).

Diane’s quote represents the majority view on their motives for wishing to live anywhere else but in their homeland. Firstly, most respondents are now certain that they would like to be involved in a relationship with someone who has travelled and is open-minded like they are. Their first choice would be with an English speaker in order to facilitate a bilingual upbringing for their children but, if this is not possible, a French person who is also fluent in English would suit. Secondly, an inability to continue to speak English in France is high on their list of complaints upon re-entry, a factor that is instrumental in making plans for a life overseas.

Robert, who left France for Hong Kong primarily because he was unable to secure a good position and because his MBA was not valued as highly as in the international arena, indicated that there was much more about French society that caused discontent, leading him to make plans for a future abroad.
I don’t want to be forever in Asia but somewhere else maybe. If you have a good job and you can live, if you have a good income. I’m not sure I want to live all my life overseas. I want to return to France one time but I don’t know when, but I know that I have to spend a few years overseas ... It could be better for my resumé. I think I see the French in a different way now because of what I had in Australia. I noticed that French is seen differently, like the old country. The French are always complaining ... I’m a bit more intolerant with French bureaucracy ... and with French people ... when we came back [to France] we just behaved like we were in Australia (Robert).

It seems that for Robert, as for several subjects, there are many things at stake in their decision to live overseas for some time. However, disappointment with their way of life in France, with bureaucracy, French mentality and so forth, rates highly in the decisions to leave.

Aside from the important forms of reverse culture shock experienced by French returnees under the categories discussed in this chapter, other varieties of shock resulted from a confirmation that negative stereotypical French behaviour as perceived by foreigners was indeed accurate, a factor which also made its mark on them. Perhaps one of the greatest shocks registered by the respondents was witnessing once again French irreverence for rules in general, from queuing up for cinemas and buses to parking illegally and driving at break-neck speed. The sojourners had become accustomed to abiding by the rules in Australia as speeding infringements in particular were most unwelcome. There was definite agreement on this point. Robert’s observation illustrates a view largely endorsed by the group.

... It was interesting to see how your country is in the global village and how it behaves towards other countries or neighbours and sometimes you are thinking: “Shit, I come from this country!” ... but there are good things and bad things in both countries. I like in Australia the way people follow the rules, which is not the case in France unfortunately (Robert).

In this quote it can be seen that Robert adopted a more objective perspective of his country whilst in Australia, standing back and observing the French as seen through the eyes of foreigners. It is clear that this mentality produced varying degrees of self-professed shame among the respondents, who no longer wanted to associate with the image of the average French national. Like his compatriots however, Robert does not fail to acknowledge and praise the positive aspects of his culture although they are not specifically mentioned in the context of this quote. In an effort to correct the anomaly that Jacqueline witnessed during social interactions of French people and foreigners whilst abroad, she sought to assist in
dismantiling negative stereotypical views about her nationality by making a concerted effort to redirect conversations in mixed company back to English. She did this out of deference to non-speakers of French in the Australian context because of the derogatory image that emerged about French people in general, that is, their disrespect of other nationalities.

… because they see France in our eyes … through the image we give … if more youth went abroad they would change this image. I saw the typical French image [of Parisians], like that people abroad have of French people (Jacqueline).

Jacqueline’s opinion, ten months later during the re-entry interview, was reinforced when she reported being troubled upon witnessing the erroneous image of French people through the eyes of foreigners. The typical view of the French in general was apparently represented by Parisian characteristics, implying that Parisians essentially personified all French people. This was a view she vehemently rejected. Although she had only met Parisians for the first time on the campus of her foreign university, and quite liked them, she was disturbed that foreigners judged the French by the behaviour of Parisians, because this city is the tourist destination par excellence. A glorified view of Parisians is echoed in Turnbull’s (2000) novel “Almost French” which according to Jacqueline, typifies the high standard Parisian, not at all representative of most French people. For similar reasons, Kati’s opinion echoes those expressed above.

… J’ai pas cherché ce contact avec [les Français]. A l’étranger quand on se retrouve avec des français, si ya un étranger, c’est tant pis pour lui malheureusement! (Kati). \(^{131}\)

Kati is highly critical of the habit that French people appear to have, i.e. speaking French in spite of other nationalities being present, especially evident when abroad but strengthened since her return. She reported that they display a lack of respect for the unfortunate foreigner in mixed company, in France, as abroad. She tries to avoid such situations as a result of a personal experience in Australia she recounted where Norwegians also behaved like the French in this respect. Having experienced this first hand, Kati became intolerant of her co-nationals exhibiting the same characteristics, in the Australian

\(^{131}\) … I didn’t look for the company of [French people]. When you are abroad and you end up with French people, if there is a foreigner among them, well it’s too bad for him unfortunately! (Kati).
and French contexts. The next quote depicts how her Australian experience changed her personality and how she implemented her intercultural learning once home.

[Now] I’m taking the initiative and that’s not what I used to do...Now when I see people, when I met someone from abroad I just started to talk to him to find out where he was from. I have this ease now with foreigners because I’m so: “Oh! You remind me of me. Oh! Last year I was the same”. I think people need that when you’re abroad. It’s good that someone from France or Australia can speak to people like that ... and I realise that I’m less closed than before ... I met an Australian guy and he said: “Oh! The French are arrogant!”, and I said: “Not at all”, then I said: “Oh yeah! We are!”, the proof that we are by what I had said. But now I’m like moderated, because lots of things are true. We are direct and impulsive ... but now I’m direct but I’m also kind to people because I’m trying to put myself in their place and it’s important to me (Kati).

As a result of lessons learned abroad, Kati was intent on becoming, to some extent, a bridge between cultures on her university campus in Strasbourg, albeit representing only a small effort to reverse the problematic behaviour of her co-nationals. She had in fact learned to become empathetic toward the foreigner visiting her country, consciously noting her modified behaviour and thinking without intrinsically changing her character. Where she readily defended her co-nationals before against unwarranted criticism, she now confessed that if foreigners cast aspersions on her nationality they deserved it.

The link between value conflicts and critical views of one’s culture such as those described above became manifest in Australia but was bolstered upon re-entry. This contributed to reverse culture shock experienced by the majority of returnees, described in terms of not belonging and a lack of fit into French society. The following quotes from Diane and Angélica reflect their feelings of shame at being French during the sojourn in Australia and upon re-entry. Diane was appalled when she observed in French news, the state of affairs in France in general, the economy, French mentality, the Social Security system, constant protests and strikes and so forth.

... ça m’a énervée! Enfin, j’ai eu honte, surtout là-bas j’avais honte d’être française, quand je voyais tout le bordel qu’il y avait en France, pour rien finalement … des grèves, des manifestations … tout le monde se plaint, les fonctionnaires ne veulent plus travailler … parce qu’il y a des droits acquis, des droits sociaux … alors qu’en Australie ya pas autant de protection social, pas autant d’assistanat, je crois que les français ne se rendent pas compte de la chance qu’ils ont (Diane).132

132 It annoyed me! Well, I was embarrassed. Especially over there I was embarrassed to be French, when I saw the chaos there was there, for no reason … strikes, protests … everyone complains, public servants no
This quote embodies the general feelings of the majority of French sojourners, who had experienced personal growth, becoming fully aware that their counterparts back home had little reason to complain about their lives. It appears that this is in spite of the interaction with the Australians having augmented the degree of positive sentiment because cultural distance between both cultures (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) was somewhat reduced. This is because, for example, Australia and France are western countries, they enjoy a high standard of living, they share western ideals and in spite of existing differences, they have much in common, factors which promoted mutual understanding. However, Diane’s quote confirms the finding that the views held by foreigners about French culture may indeed be justifiable, and this is further illustrated by Angélica’s and Adrienne’s comments below.

... If [foreigners] said the French are rude, I agree with them. I am rude sometimes too ... but I’m complaining less now. I think I’m more tolerant, more cooler and I don’t stress as much now (Angélica).

If I have to return to Paris I will accept it because I have no choice. I will try maybe to meet foreign people. I won’t have the same vision of foreign people in my own country and I’m sure I would like to be more polite with them because a lot of them have told me: “I was in France and French people are arrogant and don’t have time for us because they are too busy”. It’s true that French people don’t make the effort to speak English with foreign people. My parents, my sister, don’t speak English (Adrienne).

Comments such as these abound in the data accentuating the transformation that the intercultural experience had occasioned for the sojourners. The consistent criticism that the French were rude and arrogant irritated them and this contributed to their re-evaluation of their behaviour toward foreigners. Back in France, the perceived maladies of French society, exemplified through the criticisms in the above vignettes, were amplified especially when comparisons they made with Australia contrasted dramatically. The returnees in fact had no intention of being compartmentalised with the rest of the population. This was yet another reason why they had difficulty finding their niche in French society once again and why many became adamant that it was time to leave.

In summary, it can be seen that the pre-conceived stereotypical views held by Australians in regard to the French were cause for concern when the respondents returned home to find longer want to work … because there are entitlements, social rights, whereas in Australia there is not so much social security, not as much social benefits. I think French people don’t realise how lucky they are (Diane).
they may have been justified. These feelings were responsible for more acute cases of reverse culture shock, with ensuing varying degrees of difficulty in coping. There did not appear that the sojourners had any way of minimising the effects of this phenomenon, apart from the desire to leave. The implications of this cannot be underestimated, as was mentioned previously, as it signifies a serious problem for the growing number of dissatisfied youth emerging from cross-cultural exchanges. If they feel powerless to change the status quo in their society then their only solution is to leave.

5.10 Employment and academic issues and reverse culture shock

An equally important contributing factor which intensified the effects of reverse culture shock for this group of sojourners concerns employment issues and to a lesser extent, academic issues. Employment issues concern primarily the respondents from Paris who had organised their sojourn independently from universities and therefore faced readjustment problems of a different kind. Conversely, for those who did take part in exchange programmes, from Strasbourg mostly, they did not all resume their studies immediately as the internship component needed to be completed prior to or concurrently with the semester of study. The problems experienced by the exchangees were primarily in the nature of interpersonal relationships with other than their cohort in fact, primarily because there was a common denominator that linked the members of their university. All students from the Business School spend one year abroad and one year in an internship as part of their tertiary experience. However, there was some degree of conflict attributed to envy and misunderstanding, according to the respondents, between the select few who had been admitted into Australian universities and those who had studied in other countries. The reasons do not differ greatly from those expounded previously about the elitist selection of students bound for Australian universities and general misconceptions on studies in that country. This was driven by the selection process where the criteria for exchanges with Australia were more difficult, requiring a TOEFL entrance as opposed to the IELTS entrance scores accepted widely in Britain (cf. Jochems et al., 1996). This in itself represents a paradox. This type of exchange is greatly sought after by the students who believe it will afford them a better opportunity to secure the best jobs but when the students return they appear to be penalised for having gone to Australia as the educational standard is denigrated by members of their society. Similar criticism was reported from returnees who had secured internships in Strasbourg but by and large, those pertaining to this category had a comparatively easier readjustment process as stated earlier.
In contrast, a disparate scenario emerges from the Parisian sojourners who returned not to study but to find employment. It is in a lamentable economic climate that these respondents attempted to structure their future careers. Robert’s situation is worthy of analysis for it is at the core of the discrepancies evident between French education and society at large and the Australian experience which provoked the drastic measure at least this returnee had to take to secure employment, that is, expatriate to Hong Kong. Robert explains in the next quote why he believes the employers are making unacceptable demands.

Les entreprises veulent un mouton à cinq pattes! C’est un peu différent [de l’Australie]\(^{133}\) ... where you get moving and achieve things. In France, a type of lethargy exists where the service industry is concerned. It is repugnant ... Moi je suis persuadé que d’avoir fait ces études, ce MBA est un plus, un enrichissement personnel ... et culturel. Après j’espère en terme de travail ça se répercuterait, j’aurais du retour sur un investissement à la hauteur de mes attentes. Il y a un challenge qui est différent (Robert).\(^{134}\)

Robert experienced systematic rejection in job applications upon his return and can understand why this attitude is driving talented French graduates abroad. Here, Robert compares the difference in attitudes of French employers with Australian firms who are perceived as more considerate and more oriented towards entrepreneurial pursuits. During the interviews, Robert argued that he believed an overseas experience (an MBA + 5 years of tertiary education, including a Law degree and a Business degree) with the added bonus of English proficiency and reasonable proficiency in Spanish and Russian, would augment his chances of obtaining an excellent position in an international business firm in Paris. The reality is that this did not occur, which led to disenchantment and dejection when his arguments were summarily dismissed and his goals left unrealised. Below, Robert explains how he perceived the situation after failing to secure a position for nine months. He described his ideals and objectives for securing a good position prior to his return to France as an investment that would generate excellent returns. An international MBA in his opinion, obtained in full immersion, was undeniably more valuable. Quite ironically, as illustrated on many occasions, given the derogatory remarks such as “Vous êtes en France, vous parlez français!” reported by returnees in relation to French intolerance of English speakers in Paris, English is considered a pre-requisite by most companies, written and

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\(^{133}\) Companies want a sheep with 5 legs! It’s a little different [in Australia] … (Robert).

\(^{134}\) I am convinced that having done these studies, an MBA is a plus, it’s a personal and cultural enrichment. Afterwards, I hope that where work is concerned this will have a positive effect, that I will have the excellent return on my investment that I am expecting. There is a challenge that is different (Robert).
spoken fluently but only within the confines of the firm of course. This is where the hypocrisy emerges according to the subjects, because as they step outside the confines of their offices, French social intercourse is not expected to include English discourse. Robert’s interview offers substantiation for the arguments elucidated in this section.

Je pense avoir acquis en Australie un enrichissement culturel linguistique important, euh, je pense que le MBA malheureusement n’est pas encore très bien perçu par les entreprises françaises. C’est peut-être plus perçu par les entreprises anglo-saxonnes de dimension internationale. Parfois je pense que les entreprises françaises se disent: « Oh là là, il a un MBA et il a fait beaucoup d’études mais il n’a pas forcément une expérience professionnelle très importante ». Je pense que c’est le cas ... Donc j’ai peut-être fait ce MBA trop tôt, je sais pas. A priori, je pense pas ... Donc, la plus grosse différence c’était effectivement la recherche d’emploi et la non-reconnaissance d’un diplôme de MBA ... J’ai eu pas mal d’entretiens mais ça a pas encore débouché (Robert).

In this quote Robert analyses his perception of the problem in securing a good job. He falls short of blaming his choice to embark on his MBA a little too early, that is, earlier than most people would contemplate doing so. He believes that the lack of professional experience accompanying his degrees may have compounded the problem of a poor economic climate. The disappointment and depression Robert experienced when after nine months he had still found no employment in Paris resembled the feelings of many returnees whose entrepreneurial skills are not recognised and valued by the milieu in which they seek employment. According to Robert, French society did not appear to see the relevance of an internationally acquired MBA degree, in spite of its being of world repute, and this had a great deal to do with his predicament. Given the international arena where this degree is highly regarded, it is only of recent times, Robert claims that the Grandes Ecoles (The prestigious tertiary Business Schools) mostly based in Paris, such as HEC (Hautes Ecoles de Commerce) have begun to consider its insertion in their curriculum. Zarate (1999 p.48) describes these institutions as “dedicated to educating the national élite, and too specifically French to be intelligible outside of France”. In light of this description and the kudos bestowed by French society on those who are accepted into these schools, one can understand the reticence of these institutions of higher education to adopt the

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135 I hope that I have acquired in Australia an important linguistic cultural enrichment, um, I think unfortunately that the MBA is not yet well perceived by French companies. It is perhaps better perceived by the international Anglo-Saxon companies. Sometimes I think that French companies say to themselves: “Oh Dear! He has an MBA and he has done a lot of studies but he does not exactly have much professional experience”. I think that may be the case … Therefore, I may have done my MBA too early, I don’t know. A priori, I don’t think so … So the biggest difference was effectively the job search and the lack of recognition of an MBA … I have had quite a few interviews but nothing has resulted from them as yet (Robert).
MBA. Given this state of affairs, Robert claims in the following quote that some less prominent institutions are using the branding of MBA to enhance their programmes to assist in student recruitment without first doing due diligence on the course requisites. These institutions justify the inclusion of MBA to their programmes he asserts, by adding the component of “International” to their curriculum and the logo: “Your next step to the MBA”.

... Ils utilisent le terme à tout vent, n’importe comment, et donc ma crainte ça appauvrit le terme. C’est dommage! ... parce qu’il y a un risque que ça banalise le MBA en fait, et ça peut [le] galvauder (Robert).136

This practice in Robert’s opinion runs the risk of tarnishing the calibre of the MBA, rendering its status banal. On a more positive note, he goes on to applaud the INSEAD (a world renowned Business School), une top école française for introducing this MBA programme and welcoming international students worldwide. INSEAD’s reputation is similar to the prestigious standing of Harvard and Stanford. Robert reported that finally a good example was being set in Paris where international degrees were valued and respected even if his studies were not appreciated. Research shows that in 2005, many more Business Schools are offering the MBA programme (EduFrance, 2005). It appears that more than 200 Business Schools now offer specialisations and training programmes in order to meet the demands of the changing economic environment and new management practices. However, instruction often involves internships and international exchanges. As was revealed, several factors may have contributed to Robert’s difficulties in finding a rewarding position. In light of the above, it would not be unexpected, according to various French academics, that Robert’s background education in universities and not the Grandes Ecoles, reserved for the elite of society, may have played a part in his quandary (Asselin & Mastron, 2001; MacLeod, 2004; Zarate, 1999). Further, it cannot be discounted that this respondent’s return to his homeland, coinciding with the woeful economic situation in France, may have contributed considerably to his difficulties in obtaining work and influenced his decision to leave after nine months.

136 They use the term willy nilly, in any way they want, so my fear is that this is degrading the term. It’s a pity! ... because there is a risk of in fact rendering the MBA banal, and the degree can be tarnished in the process (Robert).
It is hardly surprising that Robert has accepted the only viable proposition on offer, in Hong Kong, where the eclectic nature of his academic background, his talents and his previous work experience (as information analysis consultant) were taken into account. Robert explains how the employer saw his educational attributes.

In addition to Robert’s entrepreneurial skills which were actually held in high esteem, the employer also valued his extended experience at an Australian university where group work in international teams features prominently. However, the dilemma that he faced in his decision to leave France compounded the stress that grew as each month’s efforts met with disappointment. This generated interpersonal problems with his fiancée, Brigitte, also a returned sojourner, who was finally happy to be employed in a legal position in a reputable law firm. The Hong Kong option was the result of his only real lead in work prospects and he had made use of his international contacts to achieve it. The unfortunate consequence however, was that Brigitte had finally settled into a comfortable life in Paris and did not relish the thought of leaving again. The greatest problem in Robert’s opinion concerned the length of time in Hong Kong because he claims if one stays away from France for too long, one runs the risk of becoming unemployable, simply because company directors will doubt one’s ability to work with French people again.

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137 The economic situation was woeful worldwide and unfortunately France hardly registering 0.9% growth, or 1% last year, this year registered 1.7%, whereas other countries such as the Asian ones achieved 10% growth ... It is important to use one’s network of contacts. [Hong Kong] was my only serious lead and on top of that it is a challenging position in business development (Robert).

138 The person who interviewed me had two types of positions ... He told me: “The marketing position ... I propose the more challenging position of business development in Asia, will be more interesting to you. This takes into account your experience in Australia, having worked with Japanese and Chinese people during 1½ years”. Because it’s true that all projects at Bond University are carried out in cultural teams (Robert).
The concerns expressed by Robert in the above vignettes illustrate how dire he found his circumstances at home after a long sojourn of eighteen months in Australia. Not only was the decision to leave once again problematic for the reasons discussed above, but the thought of having to contend with French employers once again upon his return from Hong Kong was an issue about which he had to give careful consideration. If he were to be judged incapable of interacting with his French co-workers, he would have to consider making a permanent move abroad. This of course would be contingent on his fiancée’s feelings on the subject. The decision was evidently fraught with difficulties and confusion, clearly symptomatic of progressively worsening effects of reverse culture shock.

Robert’s case is indicative of the effect academic choices abroad have on re-entry career possibilities in France, and his testimony is by no means isolated. The choice of a Master of Laws degree which Brigitte and others chose to study in Australia also posed problems, given the incongruity in orientations of studies in each country, civil law in France and common law in Anglo-Saxon countries. Brigitte worried that a move to Hong Kong would create further problems in her career because of this.

Because I was struggling for this job [in Paris], I am afraid to have to struggle again in Hong Kong ... maybe because they are demanding in English ... you can work with the European law for some agreements. It depends where I can find a job and in Hong Kong, it’s common law system like in Australia. I know a bit the common law system but it’s not my background. Mine is civil law (Brigitte).

This quote illustrates the added difficulty in finding work as a result of a study-abroad experience in a culture that is totally foreign to theirs. In her case, Brigitte was concerned that her field of study may not correspond to what she was accustomed to. Diane also discovered this was a major problem when she tried to obtain work in a law firm in Australia in January 2006.

139 I don’t think it is necessarily a good idea to stay abroad for too long, it could scare the [French] businesses when you return. They could say to you: “Ok, you have spent 10 years overseas, are you going to be able to work with French people once again?” (Robert).
Work prospects of other respondents were no easier but perseverance saw them finally ensconced in their field of expertise, though not without traumas or frequent change of companies. Only one Paris returnee from the cross-sectional study, Matthieu, experienced an easy transition into working life in a prestigious law firm five days after his return, due largely to an excellent internship with them prior to his Australian sojourn. His English was a definite advantage. However, this did not preclude a difficult readjustment process or as he puts it crise du retour (re-entry crisis) as a result of various constraints linked with work and life in Paris and his anger at having to return home. The excellent position, and the patience of some understanding colleagues somewhat eased his state of depression he confesses, but only after three to four months when he had reached a state of acceptance, similarly to Jacqueline’s analysis of the situation earlier.

Avec un peu de recul, justement parce que j’ai vécu tout ça en Australie, ya un certain nombre de contraintes, d’habiter à Paris, contraintes de travail, et bon finalement je me dis: « Bon c’est pas l’essentiel » et comme ça j’arrive à me concentrer. Enfin ce qui m’intéresse, ce qui est positif, et ça m’a permis enfin ... c’était l’esprit que j’ai réussi, pour m’en sortir de cette crise de retour ... C’est au bout de trois ou quatre mois que je me suis dit: « Bon, maintenant, t’es à Paris, c’est bien! » [Avant] j’étais pas moi-même; j’étais perdu, c’était lamentable ... j’ai eu des petits moments surtout de déprime quand je regardais des photos (Matthieu).140

This quote exemplifies what in fact transpired for the majority of returnees. Although different factors played a role for each individual, it can be seen that the returnees traversed difficult transitional stages of reverse culture shock. The most dramatic moments correspond to the lowest point of the W-curve Hypothesis (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963), after which the respondents reconciled the difficulties and accepted that they had to remain in France for a significant period of time. Once the recovery stage was reached, the returnees enacted their respective roles in life, whether marking time before they could leave again or remaining at home. The length of time it took for each returnee to re-adjust, their personality traits, their financial situation, the city they lived in and so forth were all factors which affected the process of readjustment back home. In light of the crisis

140 Looking at things objectively, specifically because I have lived this experience in Australia, there are a few constraints that come with living in Paris, work constraints, and finally I said to myself: “Ok, this is not the most important thing” and in this way I can manage to concentrate. Finally what interests me, what is positive, and this allowed me finally to ... it was the thought that I succeeded in extricating myself from this re-entry crisis ... it was at the end of three or four months that I said to myself: “Ok, now you are in Paris, that’s good!” [Before that], I was not myself; I was lost, it was pathetic ... I had bouts of depression particularly when I looked at the photographs (Matthieu).
Matthieu and others experienced during the initial months back home, this important stage corresponded with the fourth phase of the reverse culture shock where recovery takes place. Matthieu has finally re-adjusted to life in Paris despite the multiple constraints he spoke of. It was essential for him and others to put their positive personal growth experience in relief with reality back home and accept that it was a special event in their lives that would not be repeated. Their acceptance that life had to go on was instrumental as a coping mechanism in their ability to finally settle down.

In summary, this section has examined the incidence of reverse culture shock in relation to employment opportunities. The economic crisis these sojourners returned to affected those in Paris to a greater extent than the academic sojourners returning to Strasbourg for their studies or internships. The most severe manifestations of the phenomenon resulted in depression, disillusionment and distress caused largely by the fact that Australian degrees were not valued in the same way in France as in Australia, and the response of employers was unsatisfactory.

5.11 Coping Strategies

This section examines how the returned French sojourners succeeded in reducing the effects of reverse culture shock upon re-entry. The coping mechanisms they employed were not totally dissimilar to those they utilised during the process of acculturation in Australia but there were markedly fewer strategies available to deal with the problematic periods. The threads of commonality between the acculturation and repatriation paradigms appear to be an unconscious acceptance of the status quo in both societies prior to attaining a stage of tolerance of ambiguity. Further, those sojourners who travelled with a partner or formed a meaningful relationship abroad and returned together, or those who were reunited with a partner once home, found the effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock significantly reduced. While establishing such a relationship may be beyond the individual’s control, travellers have been known to travel with a companion precisely because of the mutual support this provides. Another common coping strategy is making connection with loved ones on a regular basis in the context of adjustment to a new cultural milieu, as much as, keeping contact with close friends established there once home (cf. Weaver, 1994). The last common denominator was finding employment which correlated closely with stable relationships in both processes of acculturation and repatriation.
Only one respondent, Natalie, anticipated every facet of her readjustment process as she had for the acculturation in Australia. This was the result of research she had carried out following her witnessing problems experienced by friends who had returned from the US and Canada. She consequently took special note of Klapisch’s film *The Spanish Inn* as mentioned in chapter 4. Anticipation or *decompression* as a coping strategy allows the sojourner time to deliberate on what will transpire upon returning home, easing the process of readjustment as the sojourner prepares for the difficult transition by recognising the symptoms and finding ways of minimising their effects (cf. Weaver, 1994). Further, as an adjunct to her investigations with friends who had experienced difficulties upon returning to France, research on the internet about Australia on work prospects and visas and so forth, Natalie kept a detailed diary of her year abroad. The preparatory measures coupled with the diary proved to be excellent strategies which were largely responsible for smooth processes of acculturation and re-entry. The following comment sums up her reasons for her research.

*... I was prepared and I know how to deal with the problems now ... I had some friends of my brother’s who went away for a year and had so many problems coming back. My cousin was in the US, another friend in Canada and another in the US and all of them had so many problems going back to France that I said I had to get prepared (Natalie).*

This quote further confirms the distinctions between sojourns in European countries and those in Anglo-Saxon countries in particular that were at a great distance.

Apart from this isolated case, upon re-entry, when the remaining respondents found themselves unable or indeed unwilling, firstly, to share their experience, secondly, to change French consciousness and thirdly, incapable of influencing positive changes in the behaviour of their co-nationals, they chose to conceal their experience and view their stay in France as temporary. This was essentially the most effective coping mechanism the majority elected in order to minimise the effects of reverse culture shock. The fact that these returnees were ill-equipped to change French society induced a situation of acceptance but not without recalcitrance, which in turn aggravated their re-acculturation into French society. In the process, the effects of reverse culture shock manifested in symptoms of depression, anger, frustration and other analogous sentiments until they could attain the stage of recovery, if ever. By viewing their stay in France as temporary, they were able to make plans to leave in spite of the problems leaving would pose.
The following quote from Diane’s interview typifies the general reaction of the returnees when they had to resume their lives back home. Diane, like other members of her cohort, chose to accept the situation temporarily as a coping strategy.

Ma vie a changé. J’ai changé. J’ai retrouvé ma vie et je l’accepte pour le moment mais je ne suis pas heureuse. Je suis perdue, je ne sais pas ce qui m’attend dans la vie, je ne veux pas rester ici ... Je ne sais plus ce que je veux ... Quand je suis arrivée à l’aéroport ... [J’ai trouvé] les gens énervés et moi j’avais l’impression d’être étrangère. Je me disais : « Bon c’est cool, c’est Noël et ils vont arriver les bagages, il faut pas s’ennerver » ... mais je n’étais pas impatiente [de revoir ma famille]. Tout le monde fumait, ça m’a énervée. En Australie on a pas le droit de fumer dans des restaus etcétera; ici ça pue la cigarette partout. Ensuite les rues sont sales avec les crottes de chiens (Diane).141

In this quote the state of confusion Diane experienced on arrival in Paris was born of various factors impacting on her re-entry process, from a lack of desire to return home to dissatisfaction with her career orientations and interpersonal relationship problems. It is clear however, that her world view had changed dramatically as a result of her sojourn and although she was unhappy she felt she needed to accept her circumstances and resume a modicum of normality in her life. This temporary solution eased the process of adjustment somewhat because she knew she did not want to stay in France. However, after comparing France unfavourably with Australia, she admitted that it was not possible to leave for quite some time. From the perspective of an observer arriving in Paris she felt like a stranger, which did not augur well for the ensuing readjustment phases awaiting her.

Jacqueline protested that she was forced to remain in France until she had complied with the requirements of her schooling but although her coping strategy was acceptance, the strategy of being in transit for Jacqueline, and the other sojourners who also adopted this strategy, can be considered as the most effective. She made plans to leave again as she explains in an email two months after her arrival.

141 My life has changed. I have changed. I have found my old life again and I accept this for the moment but I am not happy. I am lost, I don’t know what awaits me in life, I don’t want to stay here … I don’t know what I want anymore … When I arrived at the airport … [I found] people were irritated and I had the impression of being a foreigner. I said to myself: “Ok, it’s cool!, it’s Christmas and the luggage will be here, there’s no need to be stressed” … but I wasn’t impatient [about seeing my family]. Everyone was smoking, that irritated me. In Australia one is not allowed to smoke in restaurants etc. here everything stinks of smoke. Then the streets are filthy with dog excrement (Diane).
Another effective strategy adopted by the majority of returnees was to keep their sojourn experience private. The students made a conscious or unconscious decision to safeguard their experience abroad as a result of futile attempts to recount the events of that sojourn as described in the section 5.8. Their quotes will not be repeated in this section.

As illustrated earlier, the euphoric sentiments felt by the returnees during the honeymoon phase at the prospect of a reunion with their family and friends, were short lived as was the case in Weaver’s (1994) studies. An interesting coping strategy utilised by some respondents to alleviate the homesickness they felt for Australia as a result of a rapid transition to the difficult stages of reverse culture shock was to assume some aspects of the cultural identity of the country they had left. Monique’s quote elucidates how this type of reaction eased the process for her as she explains how she had adopted Australian ways and maintained them in a French context.

After one week I completely depressed, it was like: “Oh my God, I’m in France, without the sun”. Well, there was sun but it was a shock. I mean my clothes were different, I was in the Australian way, Australian fashion, everything on me was Australian. And everyone in France tell me: “Oh that’s nice, it’s great, original”, and I said: “I know, I want to return to do my shopping in Australia”. I missed the Australian shops for clothes because it’s original and you can’t find it here (Monique).

It is clear from this excerpt that the individuality of Monique’s fashion sense was in such contrast with French fashion that it generated interest from others which in turn made her feel special and different. In a small way, this assisted her in coping with her readjustment because everything she wore reminded her of Australia. Many others sported their new acquisitions from Australia, such as Marc in Geneva in his border shorts [sic] and others walking in the streets wearing thongs and others still decorating their walls and their apartments with Australian memorabilia.

142 I miss you all in Australia. I would love to return … but for the moment, I have to be in France for some time … but that will change as soon as I get the chance to do so (Jacqueline).
Another way of reducing the effects of reverse culture shock for many participants, caused principally through failure to regain lost ground in relationships, was to gravitate to like-minded people (cf. Weaver, 1994). Their coping strategy in this instance is once again related to the incommunicability of the sojourn experience which was discussed in this chapter. In this way they were able to find mentors who could reassure them that their experience was a normal reaction. The way the sojourners dealt with the problem of not being able to share their experience with loved ones was to seek out people of their own ilk, i.e. they essentially had the following characteristics: they loved travel, had been to Australia or another Anglo-Saxon country, were interested in bilingualism, were open-minded and had further travel on their agenda. In this way they were also able to satisfy their need to practise their English without being rebuffed. Véronique’s example is typical of those living in Paris who try to find avenues to practise.

[I try to speak English] with some friends from Australia and actually during my employment research when I was looking for work I had the opportunity to have an interview in English but that’s all …I’m afraid of losing my English so it’s frustrating …I can’t use my English here (Véronique).

Véronique is lucky to have access to English speakers but it is apparently not easy to do this according to the respondents. Robert’s way of minimising his reverse culture shock was more proactive (cf. N. Adler, 1981). He purposefully set up an alumni chapter for Parisian alumni, academic sojourners returning from Australian universities in order to provide a culturally English ambience where they could practise but admitted this association was plagued with logistical and administrative constraints. He thus directed his energies toward the Australian embassy to seek business and social contact with Australians.

J’ai ce côté d’avoir gardé le contact avec l’Australie, donc j’ai essayé de rechercher des Australiens ici à Paris. Je me suis mis en contact avec l’Ambassade de l’Australie. Je fais partie d’une association plus orientée business entre L’Australie et la France qui … donc en fait, j’ai pensé que ça pourrait m’aider à décrocher des contacts … et pour entretenir mon anglais parce que je le perds quand même relativement vite je pense. Donc, j’ai rencontré pas mal d’Australiens (Robert).143

143 I have this angle that I have kept in contact with Australia, so I tried to look for Australians here in Paris. I contacted the Australian Embassy. I am a member of an association that is more oriented toward business between Australia and France that … therefore in fact I thought that this could help me get hold of some contacts … and to keep up my English because I am losing it quite quickly I think. So I have met a few Australians (Robert).
Robert was enterprising in his quest for work and social activities that were oriented toward business and pleasure with the common denominator being the opportunity to speak English. Undoubtedly, for this reason, given the dearth of avenues opened to him to find employment in internationally based firms in Paris, he chose to work in Hong Kong where his travels currently take him to Australia and New Zealand on a regular basis.

The coping mechanisms employed by this French academic group are consonant with Pollock and Van Reken’s (2001) argument that returnees sometimes choose to emulate the characteristics of a chameleon in their refusal to talk about their past experience. In doing so, they are largely denying an entire side of their existence in order to blend in with their peers once again. In addition to this strategy to attenuate the negative effects of reverse culture shock, these researchers claim repatriates often express their anger at their situation, sometimes vehemently rejecting any allusion to their similarity with their co-nationals. This reaction predominated in this study. In the process of denying they are typical of their co-nationals, they fail to realise how much their cultural identity has been altered during the transitional process of adjustment in a foreign land. They have a tendency to forget that others of their in-group back home have not had the same exposure to other cultures and lifestyles. Consequently, the easiest way to deal with the stress their re-entry process precipitated was to denigrate others of their culture. Returnees become impatient with their co-nationals as a form of unconscious defence against feelings of insecurity or inferiority or indeed alienation and rejection from this group. Through their judgemental attitude upon re-entry, returnees find a way of identifying with other repatriate sojourners taking the stance of “us” and “them”. They appear capable of being culturally tolerant anywhere but in their own cultural milieu (cf. Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

Although these concepts were utilised to analyse the responses of third culture kids, they are clearly appropriate for this French group of returned academic sojourners.

If one extrapolates from the findings of this study on the effects of reverse culture shock with respect to the xenophobic response evident upon re-entry of the sojourners in Paris more particularly, one can situate the coping style of this French group as largely belonging to what Adler (1981) construed as the rebellious type. From Adler’s research on Americans and Canadians returning home, a matrix evolved defined by two dimensions: optimism or pessimism and passivity or activity. In the French study the subjects found it difficult to continue the process of personal growth when confronted by an apparently negative attitude from the society’s members. The excerpts offered in substantiation of the arguments discussed in this chapter are testimony to the difficulties the returnees
experienced when confronted by a perceived lack of interest in their sojourn as well as an intransigent response to their culture learning.

In sum, the re-entry acceptance process appears to have involved a more complex and dramatic psychological stage for the returnees who saw the need, firstly, to validate their experience abroad and refrain from negating it, to recognise its value as an enriching experience with no rival and finally to place it into relief with reality of life back home. It appears that once they had reached that stage, the process of re-adaptation became easier. Travel was also significant but not always possible due to financial and time constraints.

Conversely, the distinguishing features between the coping strategies used to minimise the effects of culture shock in Australia and reverse culture shock in France and Switzerland were focused on firstly, goal setting in the re-entry component, which translated into being in transit. Plans to leave once their obligations had been met constituted an effective method of diminishing the traumas they experienced during the difficult phases of readjustment. Secondly, although this was largely unplanned, the return to a new situation whether this concerned an internship or job in a new city, corresponded to a coping strategy that alleviated the problematic period of readjustment thanks to the parallels between the overseas experience and the new one back home. Examples of these useful strategies were employed to elucidate this argument throughout this chapter.

5.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, the vignettes provided in this chapter have highlighted the significance of reverse culture shock experienced by the French sojourners upon re-entry into France and Switzerland. Although various forms of shock were perceived by individuals, there should remain little doubt that the readjustment process is never easy, in spite of preparation prior to repatriation. The French returnees had difficulty in returning home. This difficulty was exacerbated by the incommunicability of their sojourn experience once home which induced them to keep their experience private. The poor economic climate they encountered in France upon re-entry clearly also added to their problems. As a result of these difficulties, the sojourners made plans to leave once their various obligations had been met. The struggles of the French individuals were found to be directly attributable to social problems, largely resultant from modified behavioural modes and value conflicts. These were symptomatic of interpersonal communication and relationship problems with
members of their society, whose xenophobic attitudes remained immutable in the face of the remodelled identity of the returnees. These problems manifested in frustration when unable to use their newly acquired English or behave in culturally enhanced ways, factors not uncommon in earlier literature on re-entry, as well as more contemporary studies (eg. N. Adler, 1981; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Storti, 2001b). Other important problems identified by most respondents concerned difficulties in obtaining work or internships and cultural identity issues.

There are many parallels between the dissatisfaction registered in the re-entry of French sojourners and other foreign students in literature. The findings of this project reinforce the notion that the re-entry process is far more difficult than the adjustment overseas, resulting in a situation where they no longer ‘fit in’ their society. Although re-entry research is under-developed, Storti (2001b) provides evidence that studies largely substantiate the claim that this phenomenon is common in most expatriate sojourners, ranging from 50% to 80% of dissatisfaction registered upon their return. Arising from their dissatisfaction, the returnees of this project felt obliged to re-modify their behaviour in order to conform back to their original cultural standards. In doing so, some respondents chose to negate the experience abroad, suffering from the predicament their decision to leave had engendered. This is apparently not the solution although the irritation and distress resulting from an inability to behave and react in a different way may be justification for these negative sentiments. Time and patience seem to be the key to a successful readjustment although this task may appear formidable. Other studies also reflect these findings (cf. LaBrack, 1994; Storti, 2001b).

Sussman (2002) argues that an inverse relationship between adaptation in a foreign milieu and repatriation may have the following outcome: the more successful the adaptation to a host country, the more distressing and problematic the re-entry (cf. Bochner, 1973; Brein & David, 1971; Kim, 2001; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 2002; Weaver, 1994). It appears inaccurate expectations are at the root of the major disappointments experienced by returnees (cf. N. Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Martin, 1984; Rogers & Ward, 1993; Storti, 2001b; Sussman, 1986). The implications of these findings are clearly in need of investigating in further studies. If problems are addressed before they become insurmountable, they can be assimilated into a process of personal growth begun by the sojourners whilst still abroad. They can thus continue to be proactive in the
community. The receiving society on the other hand has much soul searching to do in order to accept the returnees who at times find it impossible to cope.

The data showed that French academic returnees, having become ‘converted’ (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) to Australian and intercultural ways, are becoming equally less forgiving of an attitude they consider arrogant by society members. Even after having settled back home, these young people refuse to adhere completely to expected norms, indicating a dichotomous relationship between Adler’s (1981) coping styles upon re-entry, between the rebellious type and the more positive construct, the proactive type. It appears that the majority of French returnees prefer instead to retain their individuality, incorporating their enhanced personality traits and altered cultural identity, whilst, albeit outwardly, maintaining a modicum of respect for French cultural norms in their interpersonal interactions. In chapter 6 issues concerning the modifications to the cultural identity of these individuals will be examined in detail.
CHAPTER  6

CULTURAL IDENTITY ISSUES

In the preceding two chapters I have investigated the effects of the phenomena of culture shock and reverse culture on French academic sojourners studying in Australia. Chapter 6 focuses on cultural identity issues which have grown out of the data analysis of chapters 4 and 5. The re-negotiation of cultural identity during intercultural transitions, from the perspective of the participants of this study is of paramount importance as the implications of identity remodelling may dramatically affect the future of these young sojourners. This is because their self-concept and self-esteem have been altered to varying degrees, irrevocably in some instances, and the way they perceive their new cultural identity during the difficult re-entry transition back into France may have lasting personal and social consequences.

An important issue has emerged from the preceding chapters. In France, as in many other nations, there appears to exist an innate fear of the hegemonic effects of English for its undesirable influence on the cultural identity of the young generation. Therefore, the link between language, culture and identity increases in significance during the transitional processes of adaptation and readjustment. Language, after all, has been considered a part of humans’ unique cognitive endowment (Erard, 2005). It stands to reason that language is an intrinsic marker of one’s cultural and national identity (Hill, 2002; Liddicoat, 2005; Liddicoat et al., 2003). Liddicoat (2002) argues culture is entrenched in even the simplest language and is perceived as inseparable from the way we live our lives and use our language. The complexity of culture becomes apparent when one considers it in its sociolinguistic context, that is, how it shapes the things we say, when we say it and how we say it, from the simplest utterances to the most eloquent speeches. Liddicoat (2002) argues it is fundamental to the way we speak, write, listen and read. These issues will be discussed in detail presently.

This chapter will analyse how French sojourners represented their cultural identity and to what extent they remodelled it as a result of the various interactions between the multiple groups involved. Further, it will evaluate the impact this transformation has had on their re-entry processes. The foci of this chapter concern first and foremost the perception that the French sojourners had of their cultural identity initially, with special emphasis placed on
the ensuing remodelling of their identity subsequent to their Australian sojourn. These perceptions focused on aspects of their national identity, which appears to have become for them the salient aspect of their identity as the result of their experiences living and studying in a new culture. Secondly, analysis of the identity experiences of this group of sojourners will centre on their interactions in the socio-cultural milieux of Australia and France. Both the acculturation and repatriation processes can be expected to impact significantly on the identity orientations of this French group. This is because identity transformations occur in response to temporal, cultural and situational contexts (Ward et al., 2001). Berry’s (1991) modes of acculturation and Kim’s (2001) communication theory of intercultural adaptation will be employed as templates for assessing the emergent identities of this group in the context of Australia. Sussman’s (2002) conceptualisation of the cultural identity model will assist in determining the resultant identity orientation of the returnees in France and Switzerland based on the cyclical process of adaptation abroad and readjustment to their country of origin.

Whilst identity issues, which are closely tied to self-concept, are more salient during adolescence (Phinney, 1992), one cannot deny the implications of modifications of one’s identity during intercultural exchange situations. When sojourners, like their traveller counterparts, enter a new society with long-standing, distinctive cultural norms and values, identity changes may result from intercultural contact between the visitors and the host society members (Ward et al., 2001). As the cultural identity of the French respondents had rarely been challenged before their sojourn in Australia, the catalyst that precipitated modifications to their cultural identity emerged as a result of the lack of exposure to the Australian culture.

The framework of this chapter will be organised in the following sections. In section 6.1, I shall examine the vicissitudes of identity of the French academic sojourners represented in the re-entry study. Section 6.2 will focus on the impact of the intercultural exchange on the multicultural identities of some of the participants. Section 6.3 scrutinises the cultural identity responses of respondents from the first section of the study, the acculturation in Australia. In section 6.4, I shall discuss the issues arising from the analysis of the interviews. Finally, section 6.5 concludes the discussion on the significance of cultural identity transformations of this discrete group of academic sojourners.
6.1 The vicissitudes of identity of French academic sojourners

For the sojourners, their sense of being French was highlighted in the exchange experience; and their perceptions of what being French meant and how it was valued were effected by the events of the exchange. This section examines vicissitudes of identity (Garza-Guerrero, 1974) in relation to the intercultural exchange situation of the French sojourners. The term vicissitudes of identity signifies variations or changes in circumstance or fortune, where an individual’s identity undergoes transformation as a result of intercultural contact. The concept also involves a potential threat to an individual’s identity. The data revealed all respondents but one placed positive value on their French identity at the start of the sojourn in Australia. The pride these sojourners felt in their identity and in French culture was often mistaken for arrogance and many made no apologies for this view. The following quote from a Parisian respondent, Brigitte, is testimony to this.

On est un peu arrogant quand on parle de la culture française. La fierté peut passer pour l’arrogance (Brigitte).

The significance of this quote becomes apparent when one considers the transformation in Brigitte’s cultural identity that has taken place after eighteen months of sojourning in Australia. Where, on the one hand, Brigitte makes no apologies for the feeling of arrogance when it relates to French culture, she modifies this sentiment by explaining that pride can be misconstrued as arrogance. One can extrapolate from her interviews that where initially she felt no need to qualify her statement about French culture with an apologetic explanation, cultural learning and cognizance of sensitive issues during intercultural interactions in Australia has taught her to moderate her expressions in regard to cultural distinctions. However, it is essentially the contrast with other groups that has reinforced her sense of belonging to French culture (cf. Tajfel, 1978, 1981). The following quote from Brigitte encapsulates the semantic connotations of cultural identity generally perceived by the French respondents not pertaining to the group characterised as multicultural identities.

In Europe, now we have the Euro, not the same money as before. That’s one piece of identity lost. I am a French girl. I am very patriotic, I like France, I like the culture and the history. I am very proud of my country, of being French and that’s another thing when you go in Australia or another country, you feel this identity of French becomes over-important for you, it is … highlighted. Before you didn’t think about that, you didn’t ask yourself

144 One is a little arrogant when speaking about French culture. Pride can be misconstrued as arrogance (Brigitte).
questions or wonder about your identity, you didn’t think about that … Je pense que je suis encore française, peut-être plus qu’avant. Mais d’un autre côté je pense que j’ai cette dualité du fait d’avoir été à l’étranger (Brigitte).  

In this instance, Brigitte shows perspicacity in her comments about the question of identity when she articulates the importance of the transformation that occurred as a result of her Australian sojourn. Brigitte reaffirms her Frenchness whilst reflecting on the duality of her identity following immersion in a multicultural context for eighteen months. This quote further illustrates the philosophy of ‘translation’ and ‘hybridity’ expounded by Bhabha (1996) and the concept of the third place posited by Liddicoat (2003), Kramsch (1993) and Byram (1999) because it shows that this person has successfully integrated language and culture learning through the sojourn experience. The terminology used by Brigitte to describe this feature of her sojourn experience is highly charged, *I am ... more French than before* and *I have this duality*. Clearly, her testimony of the importance of changes that have taken place during the sojourn are intensified in these words.

A degree of cultural integrity is maintained without sacrificing one’s origins within the context of the larger social network, as Brigitte has assumed aspects of Australian cultural identity whilst maintaining firm allegiance to her culture of origin (Berry, 1991). She found her niche in a place between the two cultures, establishing her own identity as a user of English without relinquishing the most important features of her culture, such as her native tongue, her accent, and other French cultural attributes. The quote shows successful second language acquisition because Brigitte developed her own style in this third place, where the focus is on intercultural communicative competence (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat et al., 2003).

In chapters 4 and 5, Brigitte’s views provided testimony to the pride she felt in her French cultural identity, and it became evident that she vigorously embraced her role of ambassador. In those chapters, language was an intrinsic part of her cultural identity and in this instance she perceives the change of currency in France from the franc to the increasingly ubiquitous euro as detracting from French identity. The fact that questions relating to one’s identity are heightened as a consequence of the sojourn accentuates the need for a thorough examination of the concept. The following quote from Brigitte is of fundamental importance as it embodies the changes in cultural identity that became

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145 I think that I am still French, maybe more than before. But on the other hand I think I have this duality for having been overseas (Brigitte).
apparent to the majority of the French participants as a result of the dynamics of their relationships during these exchange situations.

Je me sens pas encore … ce serait encore arrogant de dire que je me sens australienne mais je me sens plus internationale, intégrée d’avoir vu tellement de différentes personnes. On a tenu un journal intime de voyage, et quand on regarde du début à la fin, c’est vrai que l’expérience interjoue un rôle et je pense que ça fait part de notre identité maintenant et c’est ce qui sera le plus difficile à partager à notre retour. C’est bien qu’on se sent plus français qu’avant … on va être plus exigeants parce qu’on a renforcé notre côté français. On est plus sûrs de nous, on a appris tellement et quand on va essayer d’en parler, les gens vont peut-être pas comprendre. Je suis toujours française mais mon cœur restera en Australie parce qu’on a des amis très proches en Australie (Brigitte).  

Brigitte’s enriched intercultural identity orientation, articulated in this substantial quote, results from her international relations during her academic sojourn in Australia. She credited her overseas experience with having enhanced her identity, culminating in her feeling more French than before. This view exemplifies how the process of adjustment in Australia initially confirmed the French cultural identity of the respondents. However, a continual process of hybridity, culminating in a ‘third place’ occurred whilst abroad as a result of the sojourners’ sociological, cultural and linguistic interactions. The ultimate but unconscious goal of the linguistic and cultural experience of this group of sojourners, was to reach a hybrid third place for themselves, achieved through a valuation of the evolving cultural identity as well as that of the target culture (Liddicoat et al., 1999). As Byram (1999) points out, where existing identities are firm, such as was the case with the French group, the development of new identities need not undermine the original. As the data revealed, this French group felt both French and European and, in some instances, a little bit Australian. As Byram argues, the two identities are in essence, not mutually exclusive as their status is represented at different societal levels.

Growing from the data in chapter 4, Brigitte’s feelings are mirrored by the rest of her cohort as they embrace the changes to their personalities because of the sojourn, through awareness of their own cultural identity thrown into relief with the Australian, again

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146 I don’t as yet feel … it would be arrogant to say that I felt Australian but I feel more international, integrated for having seen so many different people. We kept an intimate diary of our trip, and when we look at it from the beginning to the end it’s true to say that the experience interplays a role and I think that it is now a part of our identity and that is what will be the most difficult thing to share when we return. It’s good that we feel more French than before … we are going to be more demanding because we have reinforced this French characteristic. We shall be more self-confident, we have learned so much and when we are going to try to speak about it, people will perhaps not understand. I am still French but my heart will remain in Australia because we have very close friends in Australia (Brigitte).
reminiscent of Tajfel’s (1978; 1981) notions of social comparisons and Sussman’s (2002) arguments on cultural identity awareness. This finally manifested in a transformation of their French identity into a dual or hybrid cultural identity. The significance of the notions of ‘hybridity’, ‘third space’ and ‘third place’ is re-iterated throughout the data of this project, specifically articulated by the respondents who have become aware of their modified identity. The process was not devoid of complications analogous to identity crises for some respondents as witnessed by Brigitte’s testimony above. Clearly, there is a dichotomous relationship evident in the confusion expressed by Brigitte who worries firstly that her feeling a little bit Australian may be perceived as arrogance. After having adopted many facets of Australian lifestyle and culture and having made significant friendships, she opts for the term ‘international’ instead of Franco-Australian perhaps. Secondly, keeping a diary for the duration of the sojourn assisted Brigitte in assessing the vicissitudes of her cultural identity, monitoring the variations in her circumstances. She sees this as being instrumental in determining the person she has become and confesses to a fear that the new persona will not be easily assimilated into French society upon her return. She considers that her re-enforced French identity will exacerbate the critical transitional phase upon re-entry because the new cosmopolitan individual she has become involves a more demanding side to her French character and people will just not understand the changes. The statement that she is still French but her heart remains in Australia is manifestly problematic and may have contributed to the identity crisis Brigitte experienced upon re-entry. These sentiments are also representative of the majority of the French cohort. The complexity of this situation becomes evident upon analysis of Brigitte’s motives for leaving France in the first place.

I was thinking that I was not happy with my life in France. I was not happy about Paris because it was polluted and over-crowded, des grèves, (strikes) the striking people always complaining about something, the administratives, you have always when you want something, you have to wait. C’est la bureaucratie française! Et il est vrai qu’à ce moment-là j’avais envie de partir et de voir comment ça se passait dans un autre pays et de peut-être de trouver quelque chose d’autre, un peu le paradis, l’utopie … et c’est vrai que j’ai trouvé ça [en Australie]. Je pense que je pourrais même vivre ici, mais il faut que je fasse le deuil complet de la France, de ma propre culture et pour ça je me donne quelques mois, j’angoisse beaucoup à ce moment là … J’ai réussi mon challenge, je parle anglais, j’ai réussi mon LLM, mon Master, j’ai rencontré des gens formidables et je sais toujours pas si je peux rester ici en Australie … pour moi c’est un grand pas. J’ai pas encore eu le courage (Brigitte). 147

147 It’s French bureaucracy! And it’s true that at that moment I wanted to leave and see what things were like in another country and perhaps to find something else, perhaps paradise, utopia … and it’s true that I found that [in Australia]. I think that I could even live here, but I have to grieve completely for France, for my own
This quote clearly encapsulates the distress that thoughts of emigration can involve for the French sojourners who contemplate leaving their homeland for Australia. However, the internal conflict between their French consciousness and their newly acquired intercultural identity is critical and worthy of consideration. Brigitte admits to a desire to leave France because of dissatisfaction with the social fabric of her society but a paradox emerged which complicated her life even further. In leaving France, she essentially re-confirmed her French identity rendering the re-entry process even more complex because of her wish to establish herself in Australia also. This further exacerbated the difficulties she envisaged upon re-entry because the anticipated problems did not appear easy to reconcile. The dilemma becomes even more intricate as she contemplates settling in Australia because she feels torn between her French cultural heritage and adopting Australia as home. Her reasons for procrastinating are consequently complex.

The excerpts illustrating Brigitte’s adjustments to her cultural identity have highlighted potential problems that sojourners increasingly face in the context of intercultural exchanges in this age of globalisation. The increased mobility of French youth, in this case facilitated by their Australian experience, has created a third culture where these returned academic sojourners are becoming international nomads (eg. Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Smith, 1996; Stultz, 2002). The following excerpts further substantiate the notions expressed by the above researchers. Diane’s interview conveys aspects of confusion, infused with feelings of pride in regard to her cultural identity. The overseas experience clearly induced her to re-define this crucial part of her self-perception. She explains her notions on national identity and pride.

Pour certaines choses je peux être fière d’être française, par exemple quand on parle du vin français, de l’art de la table ou la littérature française … sinon, bon je suis française, je suis européenne quoi! Je me sens pas limitée à la France, à l’Europe … [Après cette expérience en Australie] je suis plus internationale plus que française … [Avant] j’étais satisfaite de ma vie en France … l’Australie c’est particulier. On vient ici et on découvre le monde entier, l’Asie ou l’Amérique Latine, Canada, des gens d’extra-Europe quoi. Enfin ya pas beaucoup d’Européens quoi. Ici j’ai découvert autre chose que l’Europe (Diane).  

For certain things I can be proud of being French, for example when one speaks of French wine, the art of entertaining or French literature … otherwise, ok, I am French, I am European! I do not feel attached to France, to Europe … [After this experience in Australia] I am more international rather than French … [Before] I was satisfied with my life in France … Australia is distinctive. One arrives here and discovers the entire world, Asia or South America, Canada, people outside of Europe. Well, there are not many Europeans. Here I discovered things other than Europe (Diane).
The transformation of Diane’s cultural identity is easy to trace in this quote as she acknowledges pride in features of French tradition and culture. However, presumably because of the previously mentioned dearth of knowledge and exposure to everything Australian, her cultural identity was challenged when confronted with a whole new world of cultures within the microcosm of one nation, diametrically opposed to any she had come across in Europe. Modifications to her cultural identity were thus accelerated (cf. Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). The pressures to change her existing cultural identity were constant during her fifteen months in Australia, albeit they were not overtly expressed, but they were certainly enduring. She considered her sojourn as an unqualified success and was one of the many respondents who tried to prolong her stay and envisaged returning in the future. Various quotes supporting these arguments were utilised in chapter 5 on reverse culture shock. The transition from French identity to European to international is testimony to the effects of intercultural exchange situations on sojourners but this is also reminiscent of Liddicoat et al.’s (1999) and Bhabha’s (1990) argument that a ‘third place’ was negotiated during the interactions between the self and the other, without compromising all existing parts of one’s original cultural identity. Diane’s sentiments are tantamount to liberation from no longer being limited to France and Europe. This realisation represents the catalytic moment of the conscious conversion of her French cultural identity to that of international status. Diane offers further evidence of the confusion that transformation of her cultural identity had engendered prior to unravelling its complexities, as implied in her description below.

En revenant en France, j’avais honte d’être française quand je voyais tout le bordel qu’il y avait ici. Je crois que les français ne se rendent pas compte de la chance qu’ils ont … quand on est loin on regrette beaucoup de choses de [son pays], de son origine et puis quand on revient on se demande pourquoi ça nous a tant manqués quoi, parce qu’il y avait rien d’extraordinaire … en fait, on revient et c’est chez moi et on voit pas ce côté magique que les autres voient à Paris … Maintenant je me sens plus ouverte, je vais beaucoup plus facilement vers les autres, je parle plus facilement de moi, je pose plus de questions sur les autres … 149 I want to go abroad again to work or to travel. I’m French but I don’t feel French. I feel Australian, I’m a bit of both. I like some Australian ways and some French ways. I fit into Australia really well, I was happy with my integration into Australia. Now back in France I feel different. I don’t feel I fit in here well any more, I feel out of place … I had to adapt to every kind of situation [in Australia]. I think I can go anywhere in the

149 When I returned to France I was ashamed of being French when I saw the chaos here. I think that French people don’t realise how lucky they are … when you are far away you miss many things from your [country], from your origins and then when you return you wonder why you missed them so much because there was nothing extraordinary about it … in fact you return and it’s home and you don’t have that magical perception that people have about Paris … Now I feel I am more frank, I am more extroverted, I speak more easily about myself, I ask more questions about others … (Diane).
world now and adapt. It’s a good life overseas ... You feel it’s a pity to stay here [in France] all your life ... I know that I’m not pure French now. I’m agreeing [with criticism about the French] because I don’t feel the same way anymore (Diane).

It is clear from Diane’s quote that her cultural identity has traversed various stages culminating in a definition of bicultural orientation (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). Biculturation implies acculturation is two dimensional, involving accommodation to the host culture whilst retention of the original culture is maintained. Having a fervent desire to experience further adventures abroad, she believes herself equipped to cope in diverse cultural situations thanks to her Australian sojourn where she, like her cohort, discovered a new aspect of her personality, assumed greater self-confidence and learned to adapt and integrate fully into that society. These are essentially the by-products of successful international exchanges and the reason why they should be carefully orchestrated. Further, it is through this experience that she developed the ability to emerge from her shy demeanour into an outgoing personality. Her admission that she had construed favourable images of home whilst abroad, which resulted in disappointment upon re-entry is endorsement of Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) arguments on the vicissitudes of identity, exemplified during the stages of mourning for lost cultural cues from home. Diane’s new identity emerged after going through the various phases of cultural encounter, firstly through the mourning phase and the threats to her identity and the subsequent recovery. Diane, through the eyes of her international friends, reactivated in fantasy the wonderful aspects of her culture in Paris, which she began to miss considerably. Unable to return home at that stage, she eventually overcame the difficult moments of homesickness and subsequently began to organise her ego identity based on selective identifications with Australian culture. Once she had internalised these, she felt that she had become a little bit Australian, whilst retaining the inherent elements of her French cultural identity. This awareness of the hybrid nature of her identity in fact created the ‘third place’ that she negotiated for herself.

Paradoxically, it is essentially her remodelled identity that impeded a smooth readjustment process for her back in Paris after fifteen months and caused her to feel ashamed of being French when confronted with aspects of her home culture she found deplorable. This transformation, mirrored in many of the respondents, can be construed as the catalyst which is compelling the French returnees to leave their homeland once again when they find it difficult to reconcile their bi-cultural identities with that of their co-nationals. The changes in their value systems can be understood to obstruct their chances of re-
acculturation and they become intolerant of their cultural mores. Even the promise Diane, like many others, made to herself, to re-discover her beloved culture, translated into something which was just too hard to achieve once home. This was identified through the longing for lost cultural cues which characterised the initial stages of the sojourners’ acculturation process in Australia. In her interview, Diane attested to finding it too difficult to organise herself early in the morning to re-visit memorable sites in Paris because of various constraints - the cold weather, lack of time and searching for a job - to name but a few. Whereas the promise to re-discover her culture helped to minimise the effects of culture shock whilst in Australia, realistically, Diane like the rest of her cohort, was not prepared to realise these projects for personal reasons.

Jacqueline’s interview represented perhaps one of the most fervent expressions of a bi-cultural identity at the end of her sojourn which impelled her to make long term projects to return to Australia.

I think I have this role [of ambassador]. I represent France in the way I act, the way I speak … For [the Australians] I am a French person and sometimes when I am with French guys, as an Australian person I am free to speak English but there is always one guy coming back to French and I am going back to English and I don’t like it at all. It gives the image to the Australian that French people don’t want to speak English, are disrespectful. The Australian experience has made me realise that I have become European. I think I was open-minded before but now more. It’s made me understand that I am sure I can live abroad and that I don’t want to be here [in France]. I feel that I have to how do you say: épanouir? … blossom, and that is the way to do it (Jacqueline).

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150 I don’t know how to identify myself. I am French, I am not Australian. That’s the way it is, it’s a fact! I feel I am more an intercultural person, maybe a mix between the two. I am French, this I know, my passport tells me so, it’s my only passport, there you have it. But culturally, I have no problems and I think it is very easy to adapt to Australia, that’s why I feel intercultural. I have no difficulty at all in integrating and besides if I could stay I would … I think that I am me, it’s perhaps more a Spanish culture than French because I already lived on the border [of France and Spain], we all speak Spanish and for example we eat at 3.00 pm or 4.00 pm … if there were a way that I could be Australian and Spanish at the same time I would be very happy (Jacqueline).
This lengthy quote sums up Jacqueline’s quest to establish a cultural identity she can finally embody. In this quote, she systematically analyses the situation, categorising the different aspects of her cultural identity based on her already intercultural personality arising from the fact that she resides on the border of Spain and France. Further, besides the fact that they observe many Spanish customs, she and her family speak Spanish although their origins are firmly rooted in France. This factor set the scene for Jacqueline’s conflict with her identity. She traversed each cultural border that had meaning for her to arrive at the conclusion that she has espoused the best of French, Spanish, European and Australian cultures to finally establish a niche for herself. Although one could surmise that Jacqueline is experiencing an identity crisis in this quote, the end result of her observations indicates her transformation to a multicultural identity orientation. Yet again, this confirms the process of establishing a ‘third place’ for herself, in-between cultural identities, where she feels comfortable in negotiating appropriately in diverse cultural contexts.

Jacqueline’s Australian experience can also be interpreted as a paradox for her. Where it enhanced her intercultural identity by adding yet another cultural dimension to the equation, the experience appeared to impact significantly on her. During the interview she stated how devastated she had been at being obliged to return to France. She vowed to find a way to return, via Canada proving by far the easiest solution. Jacqueline’s analysis of her cultural identity is predicated on the concrete elements which largely identify a person as belonging to a particular culture, a French passport; her French language; her role as French ambassador; and her cultural demeanour. Jacqueline’s reference to her passport as a form of identity represents a political reality, but her experience is similar to Seelye and Wasilewski’s (1996) argument that the possession of a particular passport does not necessarily tackle challenging issues in regard to one’s identity. They suggest this is “a less than satisfying identity metaphor: I am who my passport says I am” (1996 p.26).

Jacqueline makes the distinction with cultural affiliations because she perceives herself as capable of adapting with ease to new cultures. This was evident in her efforts to rectify, albeit on an individual level, the negative stereotypical images the Australians generally have of the French because of a perceived lack of respect for speakers of other languages when in mixed company. Social comparisons are once again relevant in this instance as stereotypes play an important role in determining one’s place in intercultural societies (Tajfel, 1978, 1981). Jacqueline’s comments indicate that she attributes further travels as synonymous with a blossoming of her personality. This is significant in light of the transformation they, the French sojourners in this project, have undergone, as they journey

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towards their evolved identities as intercultural nomads. It appears that French culture no longer suffices when there are possibilities for greater development of one’s cultural repertoire (Kim, 2001). Whilst the intercultural transformation during sojourn experiences is credited with more positive attributes, one cannot deny that at times the results of the changes can be construed in a negative light by the society of the culture of origin when the sojourners return home.

In the next quote, Robert explains how the experience in Australia re-affirmed his French national pride.

*Je suis français, je pense que ça a renforcé ... quand on est à l’étranger on essaie de défendre sa culture, sans la défendre, d’incarner sa culture et son pays parce qu’on l’a apporté à l’étranger. C’est inconscient. Je pense qu’on a envie parce qu’il y a des gens qui sont autour de nous qui sont de cultures différentes ... Pour mon identité française, je pense qu’elle soit accentuée ... j’ai l’impression de plus faire partie d’un global village, plus interculturel. En plus j’ai pas ce sentiment nationaliste, pas du tout. Je suis même maintenant plus critique par rapport à la France après l’avoir vue de l’extérieur. Je défends pas la France pour la défendre, seulement s’il y a une raison de défendre. Je suis fier d’être français (Robert).*

This quote encapsulates once again the journey of discovery of identity. Robert’s French cultural identity has been thrown into relief as a consequence of the sojourn experience, accentuating the pride he feels in being French but without the arrogance emanating from an egocentric standpoint. He is happy to defend his culture, of which he has become incarnate, but not indiscriminately as the intercultural experience triggers comparative opportunities with other cultures in the global village (cf. Tajfel, 1978, 1981). This quote from Robert illustrates how his cultural identity became reinforced through the international sojourn. His comments exemplify the notions expressed by the group of French sojourners who discovered their identity whilst overseas, simply because they had never given it much thought previously. They were in fact observing their culture from an objective stance for the first time, on the outside looking in. Thrown into relief through intercultural contact, social comparison, which serves as a mechanism for group identification is useful in this context to explain how cultural behaviour comes into play.

151 I am French, I think this has reinforced ... when one is abroad one tries to defend one’s culture, without defending it, to embody one’s culture and one’s country because one takes it abroad. It’s an unconscious action. I think that you want to do this because there are people around you who are culturally different ... As far as my French identity is concerned, I think it has become accentuated ... I get the impression of belonging more to a global village, more intercultural. Furthermore, I don’t have this nationalistic sentiment, not at all. I am even now more critical about France after having observed it from the outside looking in. I don’t defend France for the sake of it, only if there is a need to do so. I am proud of being French (Robert).
Out-group derogations can serve to alienate cultural groups but what emerged from the analysis of the data in chapter 4 was significant in that all antagonistic sentiments were dispelled when sojourners moved through the phases of culture shock to emerge as intercultural individuals. With this feature came greater awareness and tolerance for other cultures with the advantage that one’s positive cultural traits were reinforced in the process, with the less savoury aspects discarded.

This view further supports the opening argument of this chapter that there is a strong cultural pride which exudes from this whole group but the bi- or even multicultural enhancement which they underwent in Australia dramatically altered the way they ultimately perceived their original culture. That is to say, they became more discriminating in their judgement of when to defend their culture. If it appeared warranted they defended France and their culture, if they found the criticism justified they generally agreed with the view. One can extrapolate from this situation that although cultural identity increases in value as a result of intercultural exchange situations, there is also a more analytic stance taken where the sojourners are more self-critical and accepting of both the good and bad sides of their cultural traits. It is this acceptance that their culture is not the only one worth praising that contributes to personal growth, dismisses arrogant and xenophobic attitudes towards other cultures and fosters good international relations between cultures in the global village. Support from literature on intercultural relations can be found for this phenomenon of decentring (cf. Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). Social decentring, which plays a fundamental role in intercultural communication essentially signifies empathy for other cultures. This implies registering cultural differences and adapting one’s communicative practices more suitably to the required cultural context. Diametrically opposed to this, one can find egocentric communication which espouses tendencies where messages, only intelligible to oneself, are conveyed to others without any effort made to adapt to cultural differences. In the above quote, Robert exemplifies the notion of decentring by moderating his feelings of pride for his culture with an ability to also criticise it when warranted.

Perhaps the most significant quote expressed by Robert follows.

Ma vision par rapport à auparavant est plus franco-française mais plus européenne et mondiale, mais étrangement, il a fallu que j’aille à l’autre bout du monde pour me rendre compte de ça … I’m not only French. I think I have got part of something but I don’t know what. I know that I’m still French but I’m more in a global village. I fit better in this global village and I’m looking for contacts with people from overseas because I think they

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are easier than here [in France] ... I think I am more intercultural now, not just French. This experience is making it harder to fit back in but I can’t regret it. I think I can fit anywhere now, but you also need that adaptation time. I’m figuring out all this admin stuff in order to leave for Hong Kong. Leaving is one thing but you have all this logistic things so you have to recognise it, but I find it easier now because I’m prepared (Robert).

Robert sums up how his world vision changed as a result of his international exchange situation, re-affirming on the one hand his Frenchness and on the other reflecting his remodelled identity which encompasses the third place he construed for himself, that is, the merging of the European and global identity components. In chapter 4, it was noted that thanks to his role as best man at an Australian friend’s wedding he had concluded: *C’est un témoignage de sympathie ce qui fait que vous vous sentez un petit pourcent australien.* (This is evidence of friendship which serves to make one feel a little bit Australian). Robert’s comments do not denote an identity crisis per se, perhaps because at the end of his sojourn he was thirty years old. Rather, his quote can be interpreted as a natural progression of the identity re-shaping which continually occurs in intercultural contexts. Robert’s view is representative of a significant number of respondents who attested to the beneficial attributes of international exchanges for this and other reasons.

One thing is for certain and that is, the first intercultural exchange situation has prepared Robert for his next enterprising venture in Hong Kong. He is acutely aware that circumstances and the heterogeneously divergent French and Chinese cultures will mean that his Australian experience will not be replicated. He confirms the advantages of cultural learning in the next comment. In his interview, Robert noted that upon his return to Paris, he had tried to initiate a “French chapter” based on the alumni of his Australian university, in order to enact his role in bridging cultures.

*I want to try to give my experience to people who might want to go and live in Australia, or in any part of the world because this is a process that everyone can experience, the process of expatriation in every country (Robert).*

Robert does not anticipate the process of acculturation to Hong Kong to be dramatically different from that in Australia. As a result of his successful adjustment in Australia, he perceives the task will be less daunting the second time around (cf. N. Adler, 1981; Storti, 2001a; Sussman, 2001; Ward et al., 2001). One final quote on the subject of identity shows Robert has gained a pragmatic outlook about issues concerning his role as ambassador for French culture.
I’m still proud of my identity. I think French people are always criticised but it’s true. It depends on what people in front of you tell you. It’s different if it’s stupid or nonsense sentences about France and you will say something like: “I’m sorry it’s not true”. But it’s not a question of being proud or not, it’s more a question of ‘it’s true or it’s false’. It’s either right or wrong (Robert).

This quote epitomises how decentring became an essential feature of the sojourn experience. Robert’s sentiments are mirrored by almost all respondents who took part in this study on questions of their national pride and their cultural identity and how they learned to moderate their stance on divergent cultural traits through social comparisons. They appear to have retained a dichotomous nature to their identity orientation, where on the one hand, they largely retained their pride with respect to the essential attributes of their culture, while on the other hand they endorsed the view that many foreigners were correct in their judgement of French people on many occasions and it was futile to defy it. On the contrary, they concurred with the negative views where logic appeared to dictate that examples of bad cultural behaviour were difficult to justify.

It appears that vicissitudes of identity are a dynamic process beginning with the acculturation experience and continues until such times as sojourners can attest that they have finally settled down once again into their culture of origin, if indeed this occurs. Two points of commonality are derived from the re-entry data concerning important features of French identity which highlight the significance of how testimonies of the respondents, growing from the previous two descriptive chapters, have influenced the cultural identity orientations of the sojourners. The first concerns the self-professed stereotypical image of stressed, highly strung French individuals in contrast with Australians who are perceived as laid back and relaxed in general. The French respondents tended to adopt and value this feature of Australian culture. The second was the change from the franc to the euro, as the currency of a country is arguably an important component of cultural and national identity. Firstly, Véronique was one respondent whose views on the subject of relaxed Australian attitudes were echoed unanimously.

Je dirais pas que je me sentais australienne après un an là-bas mais j’avais réussi à m’adapter au style de vie en Australie, vraiment sans complication. Je trouvais la vie très simple. J’avais réussi à le prendre mais sans forcément penser à être australienne. Toujours rester moi-même dans le sens, avec quand même quelques changements ... j’avais toujours certaines valeurs qui restaient ... En arrivant j’avais vraiment cette sensation de pas se compliquer la vie. En rentrant, j’ai trouvé que les français en général se compliquaient trop la vie, pour des petites choses ils se posaient pleins de questions. Et
This quote demonstrates how positively valued elements of foreign cultures can easily become integrated in one’s cultural repertoire. Véronique, like the rest of her cohort, also managed to negotiate her special place in between cultures, adopting Australian traits, English language and other culture learning without relinquishing essential French attributes that she personified. Not surprisingly, it took six months for these Australian characteristics to fade, as the data in chapter 5 revealed, and this happened largely because of the perceived intransigence of French members of society in regard to culturally diverse behaviour. Véronique explains that it is difficult not to adapt to the easy-going lifestyle of Australia and its people, especially when placed in stark contrast with French people, who have a tendency to needlessly complicate their lives. There was consensus on this issue from all participants and most attempted to integrate this Australian feature into their new cultural identity without dramatically altering their values, as Véronique emphasised.

However, once more, the inability to translate their culture learning into French society saw them conform to French ways in time. According to this group, dealing with the infamous French bureaucracy is one reason why it became difficult to remain calm in the face of constant aggravation during interactions with public servants, clearly contributing to reverse culture shock.

In summary, the preceding excerpts have demonstrated how the vicissitudes of identity have influenced the re-entry processes of the French sojourners. An enriched intercultural identity orientation was recorded by all participants but these modifications did not undermine their original firm identity. Their Frenchness was in fact reaffirmed whilst their cultural integrity was maintained. The sojourners adopted selected aspects of Australian culture whilst maintaining French cultural integrity. They essentially negotiated their third place in Australia, embracing a hybrid cultural identity where they interacted comfortably with the host society members. Social comparisons constituted a mechanism for

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\[153\] I can’t say that I felt Australian after a year there but I had succeeded in adapting to the Australian life style, really with no complications. I found life very easy. I had succeeded in adopting it but without necessarily thinking of myself as Australian. I always managed to remain true to myself in one sense, even with a few changes … I always retained certain values … when I arrived I really had this sensation of not complicating my life. When I returned home I found that French people in general complicated their lives unnecessarily, they made an issue of little things. And I was like that before and I no doubt reverted to this way of being after six months, I can’t deny that. But initially I used to do things easily, without complicating my life (Véronique).
establishing identity in the Australian context as awareness of French cultural identity was thrown into relief by Australian cultural norms. However, a paradox emerged where the sojourners no longer wished to return home as a result of this positive acculturation experience. Upon re-entry in France, the changes apparent in these sojourners, resulting from modifications to their cultural identity, precipitated a difficult readjustment process for the majority of subjects as these changes were not tolerated. A xenophobic attitude was described as responsible for the discontent felt by the French returnees, manifesting in various symptoms of reverse culture shock.

6.1.1 Identity crises correlating with being in transit in France

The data of the preceding chapter indicates a strong correlation between those respondents who professed to being in transit after their return to France and those who attested to experiencing an identity crisis. Monique, one participant whose testimony confirms that she underwent a difficult readjustment experience in France also claimed to have had an identity crisis. Not unexpectedly, her confusion with her identity stems from an excellent acculturation to Australian lifestyle, like so many of her counterparts. Here she demonstrates how the vicissitudes of identity have altered her life and complicated her future.

*Now I got a lot of problems with my identity because for my family and friends, I have to settle in France and I have to have a classical life but after this experience I can’t anymore have this kind of life. I mean I can’t just stay in France, have a job and get married. I can’t do it. I just want to travel and to go as far as possible and to discover other cultures (Monique).*

Monique’s acute identity crisis resonates with many other cases from her cohort who attested to being in transit in chapter 5 until they could expatriate. The dilemma of these returnees originates from the fact that they experienced an excellent adjustment in Australia, a formerly unknown culture which broadened their minds and horizons and transformed them into culturally aware individuals, and culminated in a hybrid cultural identity. This is one of the possible objectives of intercultural exchanges. However, the downside to this process is that many of these sojourners found it untenable to remain in their country of origin when they returned. Faced with difficulties when attempting to
implement their newly acquired cultural learning, this group largely chose to leave, seeking adventure in distant places.

It was argued in the last chapter that French people were perceived by the returnees to be intolerant of the changes they had undergone during the sojourn. This represents an undermining of the positive effects of international sojourns because of the many interpersonal relationship problems resulting from discord between returnees and their families and friends in particular. This intolerance of the changes translated into cultural identity crises where the returnees and their loved ones were at a loss to reconcile their differences. In Monique’s case, as it was for others, the expectations from family, friends and society were ineradicably enforced upon their return. These draconian measures met in most instances with an intractable reaction from the returnees who professed to be adults who could make their own decisions. The close ties known to characterise French family relationships only compounded the problem for Monique, as for the others, because respect for their parents’ wishes are inculcated in French children from a young age. Monique explains her predicament in her search for a job abroad.

I would like to [go back to Australia] but it’s very far and I am very family oriented and I need to see them and my friends and I don’t want to miss them because I missed the birth of my nephew and it was awful. I am completely confused because I don’t know what I want, where I want to live, where I can have a career but I know that I don’t want to be here [in France]. But I am still French and very proud of it ... I am not European. I am international. I could settle anywhere but not in Europe. I am not interested in Europe. It’s not enough different for me. I want to know some other cultures but very different from European culture because when I was in Australia one thing shocked me was that I didn’t know anything about the Asian pacific relationships (Monique).

Monique’s enormous pride in her French cultural identity only exacerabtes the dilemma she is undergoing in her decision to fulfil her dreams whilst attempting to satisfy her need to maintain family ties. It is clear that she is affected by the difficult decisions she has to make but one thing is certain, she is determined to leave. Europe, it appears, is not on her agenda. She is adamant that she is not European and that she must venture much farther than her continent in order to continue the uplifting experience she began in Australia’s multicultural environment. Her new hybrid cultural status, French /International affords her the ability to achieve these goals.
Angélica is a respondent who found her niche in Australia because apart from all the factors that contributed to a successful adaptation to this country, hers was a voyage of self-discovery, which encompassed unquestionable acceptance by Australian culture of her sexual orientation, something she had not experienced freely in France. It stands to reason that she should undergo a difficult re-entry experience a year later when the cultural constraints of her upbringing re-surfaced. Angélica explains her feelings in regard to her cultural identity post-sojourn.

[My cultural identity] is a bit ... I will never say I’m French and I will never be anything else. I consider myself now more a citizen of the world ‘cause I see things much more objective and optimistic now. I think by going that far I realised that I could go anywhere I wanted and I was so lucky that I was French and I didn’t have any worries with visas and passports and I was free to go anywhere and do everything I wanted. That made me realise how lucky I was ... it’s good to be French abroad. I defend French culture if they were wrong, but if [foreigners] said the French are rude, I agree with them. I am rude sometimes too ...When I was in Australia I did feel I was myself but I do feel myself here as well ... but I’m not very attached to France. I’m not forced to live here. It was my country but I didn’t feel like I need to stay in France. When I need to decide where I want to go, I’ll get the world map and choose where I want to go. I can live anywhere I want. It’s freedom to do whatever I want to do, travelling around with people and I like meeting other cultures as well. I’m very open-minded. I don’t think I’ve changed because I didn’t realise this after but I didn’t change totally as such, just precised [clarified] my personality (Angélica).

Angélica’s interview confirmed that the exchange experience was indeed an enriching one, not only for this respondent but also for all the others of her group. She traces the steps that the remodelling of her cultural identity traversed before reaching a comfortable place in the global village. Her case represents the epitome of the quintessential hybrid cultural identity, signifying that she has successfully negotiated her ‘third place’ between cultures. Although she does not attest to an identity crisis per se, her comments clearly show that a transformation of her cultural identity has occurred in spite of her claims to the contrary. The fact that she has become a citizen of the world, free to travel and appreciate the multitude of cultures available to her suggests that perhaps there is no crisis because she has resolved any issues which may have contributed to confusion of identity orientations. She has in fact incorporated aspects of her French cultural identity with additional cultural traits adopted in Australia. In the interview, for reasons she did not elaborate, Angélica claimed to have no familial restrictions placed on her which would prevent her from travelling in the future. In this quote, she claims to act no differently from her behaviour during her sojourn in Australia, but in chapter 5, Angélica offered concrete examples of the contrary, with respect to her behaviour in a homosexual relationship where she perceived
alternative lifestyles were more accepted by the public in Australia. This was in direct contrast with the behaviour she professed she could not emulate in France as the following quote suggests.

*I'm not behaving the same here as I used to in Australia ... here in France I’m much more careful ... I don’t have to impose that to other people, I don’t want to abuse that. I want to be more respectful to other people. I don’t think the culture is quite as accepting* (Angélica).

Clément, one of two respondents who endured the most severe effects of reverse culture shock, which for him lasted fourteen months, is a good example of how a positive acculturation in Australia correlated with a difficult process of readjustment in France. Clément explains how he perceives his cultural identity.

*Je me suis jamais posé la question [sur mon identité culturelle]. Mais j’étais français et j’étais fier de l’être. Il faut dire que, en réalité, c’était super d’être français, super utile. Les gens vous aiment bien, vous avez un petit accent et c’est vous qui êtes pour une fois, exotique, alors que d’habitude c’est souvent l’inverse ... Mais j’aurais très bien pu vivre en Australie, mais tout en restant français. Pour moi c’est pas un problème, sans oublier mes origines ... Je me disais bien australien aussi. J’avais une vie australienne, c’est clair. J’avais des habitudes australiennes mais je restais toujours français aussi. Je faisais tout ce qu’ils faisaient (Clément).*

This quote illustrates yet again the awareness that dawned on the French respondents that their cultural identity was thrown into relief and challenged during the sojourn experience (cf. Sussman, 2002). Clément weighs up the positive and negative sides to the equation during the process of modification of his identity before determining where he in fact stands on that issue. It is clear from Clément’s comments that he has largely embraced an Australian cultural identity whilst maintaining his French origins and all that this represents. It is a clear case of additive or hybrid identity response as, once again, it becomes evident that, like his counterparts in this project, he appreciated the prestige that foreigners attribute to his nationality and clearly used it to his advantage. The contrast upon re-entry was, on the other hand, all the more dramatic when he tried unsuccessfully to re-immers into the life he had left a year previously. As mentioned earlier, he, like his cohort, no longer felt special once they returned to France for a multitude of reasons.

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154 I never questioned [my cultural identity]. But I was French and proud of it. I must say that in reality it was great to be French, very useful. People like you, you have a little accent and for once it is you who are exotic, whereas usually it’s often the opposite … but I could have easily lived in Australia, but all the while remaining French. For me it’s not a problem, without forgetting my origins … I used to call myself Australian also. I clearly had an Australian life style. I had Australian habits but I always remained French at the same time. I did everything they did (Clément).
Further, the immense difficulties he experienced in his search for employment and in his relationships only compounded his problematic readjustment process. His happiness became largely contingent on two salient factors: a good job and a fulfilling relationship, without which he was prepared to leave France. He explains below.

*I didn’t know if I belonged here [in France] anymore. Even with my girlfriend you know I wasn’t belonging in this place at all. I was feeling really rejected. I used to feel really good in Paris before Australia. I had really good internships in a good law firm, I was getting paid, I had a normal life, I could travel, so it was perfect. So when I went back I felt like closed feeling, like I wasn’t belonging here. I know that if I couldn’t find the right job I would have gone away. [My experience in Australia] was beginning to be a bad, painful experience, a bad choice (Clément).

Clément’s feelings are acutely felt in this quote as he examines how the excellent exchange experience in Australia had almost turned out to be a poor career choice. Where a hybrid cultural identity is generally perceived as enriching and broadening, in this instance, there appears to be a negative side to the equation, especially as social comparisons again complicate the issue (cf. Tajfel, 1978). The effect comparisons have on his decisions resulted in negation of the experience he had had in Australia. Clément compares his life prior to the sojourn with his foreign experience in Australia, which was equally satisfying but when contrasted once again with the reality of his current situation back in France, the burden of his choices appears to engulf him. Feelings of no longer belonging in Paris ultimately add to the confusion of his cultural identity. Due to his successful acquisition of characteristics pertaining to Australian culture, he felt he could no longer fit into French society.

There is commonality in feelings of a lack of fit and not belonging among the majority of re-entry interviewees in this project. It is this lack of fit that has contributed to a large extent to a difficult readjustment process for so many. However, in spite of a lengthy re-acculturation process for Clément, he succeeded in reaching the final stage of reverse culture shock, readjustment, thanks to a successful job and relationship. Clearly, the serious consideration he gave to negating his experience in Australia was laid to rest as he was finally able to open his photograph album along with all the memories that overwhelmed him in the process.

Clément’s situation, (examined in chapter 5), was complex but with reference to transformation of his cultural identity, his testimony provides yet another example of the
degree of his pride in his French identity, which remained unchanged whilst he acquired many facets of Australian cultural identity. This essentially created a hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1996), paralleled by other cases depicted in this chapter as demonstrating a state of interculturality and ‘a third place’ (Liddicoat et al., 1999). It appears the French sojourners were reluctant to abandon their identity of origin totally whilst demonstrating through their comments, that they were equally quick to deprecate various negative aspects brought into question by foreigners during their sojourn. If the minority group members reject group membership as a result of discrepancies which emerge between their perception of certain elements of their culture as negative, this can be construed as a mobility strategy. The duality in perception of their cultural identity by these returnees indicates that they had an integrative identity response in Berry’s (1990; 1980) terms.

An acute case of cultural identity crisis may be perceived from the data collected in Martine’s interview. This respondent was also categorised in chapter 5 within the group registering difficulties in readjustment which precipitated a desire to leave France after her educational and family commitments had been satisfied. This sojourner had not only felt a heavy emotional burden when leaving Australia but actually described her feelings as having had a part of herself excised from her being as a result of having to leave. Her quote may enlighten the discussion somewhat.

Ce que j’ai vraiment adoré en Australie c’est ce côté facile, très décontracté des Australiens. J’aime pas le point culturel et historique qu’il y a en France et en Europe de façon général. Enfin je l’apprécie mais c’est pas un truc qui me manque, auquel je tiens énormément … Je suis fière d’être française mais je vais pas non plus le revendiquer. Non, j’ai pas envie qu’on me reconnaisse comme française. J’étais pas en Australie pour revendiquer mon identité. Si on critiquait les français j’essayais de comprendre pourquoi, de le défendre mais disons j’étais plus en fait dans une position d’aller vers la culture australienne que d’apporter ma culture française. J’étais vraiment prête à en faire abstraction, mis à part le fait que j’ai pas mal parlé français … et puis parler anglais, ça m’a vachement manqué quand je suis rentrée en France, de pas pouvoir parler anglais (Martine). 155

155 What I really loved in Australia was the easy life style, very relaxed manner of Australians. I don’t like the cultural and historical side of France and Europe in general. Well, I appreciate it but it’s not something I missed, something to which I am quite attached … I am proud of being French but I don’t want to proclaim it. No, I don’t want to be recognised as French. I was not in Australia to proclaim my French identity. If people criticised the French I tried to understand why, to defend them, but let’s say I found myself more in a position to go toward Australian culture than to bring my French culture to them. I was really ready to disregard it were it not for the fact that I spoke a lot of French … and then speaking English , I really missed that when I returned to France, not being able to speak English (Martine).
This quote is reminiscent of Clément’s situation in its rejection of the very same elements of French cultural identity that the remainder of the participants were adamant they could never relinquish, that is, the cultural and historical aspects. Martine however displays a confused identity response as she claims firstly to be proud of being French but in no way wishes to proclaim this to all and sundry whilst abroad. Her tendencies of decentring are acute in this instance. Critical to my argument is her denial of her French identity in her statement that she does not wish to be recognised as French. As she was in transit in France after her sojourn, one can only assume she will return to Australia if possible or move as far from home as soon as practicable. It is probable that she will adopt a portion of the cultural identity of the country she chooses to live in, just as she did in Australia.

In summary, the above vignettes have confirmed a strong correlation between the participants who professed to be in transit after their return to France and those who claimed to be experiencing an identity crisis. Clément’s situation, along with that of the majority of the respondents in this project, appear to reflect Sussman’s (2002) multidimensional scales of adaptation, the behavioural scale (CA/B) indicative of the degree to which the French sojourners interacted with individuals in the Australian context; the cognitive (CA/C), evidenced by this group’s augmented knowledge about Australia and its culture; and the affective (CA/A), which documents the level of satisfaction, belonging and confidence acquired by the group in the Australian milieu. Further, the strategies employed by the French sojourners in Australia appear to be similar to the various constructs of intercultural adaptation suggested by Kim (2001).

6.1.2 Identity and successful readjustment of returnees

The discussion in chapter 5 revealed only five participants in the re-entry component of this project registered a successful readjustment in France and Switzerland. Although there were firm correlates between those academic sojourners who registered a positive acculturation experience in Australia and who professed to be marking time until they could leave France, the perceived cultural identity of all respondents was ultimately remodelled. This was scaled in various degrees and in spite of the successful readjustment process of a few participants once home. Lise is one of the few academic sojourners who had prepared herself to some degree for the sojourn and was happy to come home to see her boyfriend.
I think I have a more open-minded way of seeing things than most French people. I mean I don’t see things just in a French perspective. I feel very multicultural. Travelling opens your mind. You don’t have all the stereotypes you had before, you try to challenge them more than before. I think I am more tolerant than before. I discovered a lot about myself being overseas. I am more open to change … now I know that I have evolved. But I felt frustrated because I couldn’t share this ... It was not a kind of arrogance but I felt different from the other people because I’d been learning so much. I could see [the French] were closed minded because they don’t travel that much. It was difficult to re-adapt yourself to the way French people are thinking because you feel different from them. I am French because it’s my nationality, it’s my country but I feel so much different from the mainstream French people (Lise).

This quote illustrates to what extent remodelling of one’s cultural identity is pertinent to an individual’s personal growth and the way they view the world as a result of their experience. Once again, Lise, like the majority of her cohort of returnees, is not prepared to reject her nationality. On the contrary, her Frenchness has been reaffirmed. However, her comments isolate her from her nationality because she no longer fits in as she used to. She is unable to share her année entre parenthèses (year in parenthesis) with anyone else, like the rest of the participants, but appears to categorise that secret part of her life along with the cultural lessons learned overseas. This quote demonstrates that an integrative identity response (Berry, 1990) can function equally well upon re-entry as it did whilst abroad, but not without some compromise. However, few respondents appear to embrace this view. Their rejection of many aspects of French behaviour as a result of their sojourn in Australia resulted in a desire to leave France instead of reverting to their former way of life. Their hybrid cultural identity appeared to preclude re-settling back in France. The prospect of living overseas whilst retaining parts of their French identity was far more appealing to the majority of this group of French sojourners. The vicissitudes of identity can be construed as paramount in determining the future cultural identity responses of young French people who sojourn in foreign countries for extended periods of time. How they negotiate and re-negotiate their cultural identities, based on the components of each country’s uniqueness is an intrinsic part of the dynamic nature of culture and identity (Liddicoat, 2002).

Predicated on the testimonies of the participants growing out of chapters 4 and 5, one can surmise that an emergent identity (cf. Kim, 2001) epitomised the end result of the French academic sojourners’ experience in Australia. It is through the effects of the intercultural contact situations on these respondents that a new interculturally enhanced personality was born. More significant however, from a global perspective, the findings appear to substantiate the view that groups and individuals in multilingual settings, such as French
sojourners in the Australian context, re-negotiate their identity as a result of hegemonic language ideologies insisting on homogeneity (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).

Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) argue that these interactions are contingent on power relations comprising gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality and that negotiation and renegotiation of identities in multilingual contexts implies beliefs about, and practices of, language use. If the dominant culture in the society, such as Anglo-Saxon in Australia, considers that the ideal model of society is monolingual for example, despite Australia being recognised as espousing multiculturality, foreigners pose themselves questions about membership in in-groups and out-groups. Convergence to majority norms, where minority groups are expected to learn and use English over their native tongue, is favoured if they are to interact comfortably within the host society. They can thus bridge one gap, among interstices that preclude membership to the dominant group, such as colour and religious affiliations for instance. These authors argue that this is because in an unfamiliar environment, individuals experience identity vulnerability or insecurity because of a perceived threat or fear. They argue satisfactory outcomes as to identity negotiation in conversational interaction imply feelings of being understood, valued, supported and respected, in spite of intercultural distinctions emerging during this process.

Further, based on Bourdieu’s (1991) arguments, they suggest that the official language, English in this instance, becomes the language of hegemonic institutions because the dominant and minority group misrecognise it as a superior language. Bourdieu perceives this misrecognition of the legitimacy of the dominant language and culture as influential in reproducing existing power relations. Subordinated groups however, may not readily accept the symbolic power of the dominant group, resisting by adopting linguistic practices that oppose the dominant group. The means through which negotiation of identity takes place comprise verbal and nonverbal behaviours and also a range of linguistic means frequently used with bilinguals, i.e. code-switching, code-mixing, code-alteration or language choice for example (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). On a broader scale, if sojourners are able to transcend transitional conflicts to arrive at a ‘third place’ where their cultural identity has been negotiated in between cultures, without compromising their original cultural identity, authentic personal growth can take place along with personality development.
Extrapolating from Bakhtinian (1981) philosophy on hybridity as well as the theories of Bhabha (1990; 1996) and Liddicoat et al. (1999) on the notions of hybridity, ‘third space’ and ‘third place’, and finally Hammer et al.’s (1978) conceptualisation of ‘third culture perspective’, I propose an analogous concept has emerged from this study. This is the année entre parenthèses (the year in parenthesis) which is effectively a parallel dimension of experience. This is an experience which appears to be separated from the sojourners’ lives in Europe, and which is neither understood nor appreciated in their home culture. This parallel dimension is complex but pivotal for intercultural exchanges, because the returnees claimed they were marking time until they could leave again as a result of their problematic re-entry experiences which did not allow them to integrate their new experiences into their original cultural frame. Clearly, they had not expected this reaction from their family and friends and society at large. The intransigence of their fellow nationals toward their changed cultural identity, compounded by the negative reaction to their sojourn (acquisition of English, bi-cultural status etc.) cast a shadow on an experience they vowed was the most enlightening and productive of their lives. This was bracketed as une année entre parenthèses because they found few words to convey its significance. Further, they dismissed their co-nationals as incapable of comprehending what they had lived during their absence largely because of the fact that the French knew little about Australia and its culture, to which they had become converted (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) to varying degrees.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001 p.21) have argued the terms third culture or third place were sometimes questioned because changes globally imply expatriates no longer live in defined communities, in communal systems, as they did when Useem and Useem (1963) carried out their research. Useem’s (1993) argument that “no concept is ever locked up permanently” is pertinent to my conceptualisation of parallel dimension because of the claim she makes, that concepts change as knowledge increases and changes occur in concepts because of changes in circumstances. Firstly, due to the incommunicability of the sojourn experience once home, the returnees elected to conceal a very important part of their lives from members of their society, including family and close friends in most instances. This facet of re-entry is by no means original in literature on returnees. Kidder’s (1992) research on Japanese returnees, for instance, revealed some physical, behavioural and paralinguistic changes can be demonstrated or concealed by returnees, with some respondents adopting chameleonlike tendencies to merge with the required context. However, my finding, linked with other associated factors particular to French cultural
mores, such as the embodiment of characteristics of a ‘tight’ society, renders the situation distinctive. For example, failure to observe courtesy formulae such as *tu* and *vous* in appropriate sociolinguistic contexts is not likely to be forgiven. Neither is the lack of respect tolerated when incorrect speech patterns used orally or in written form are used to convey meanings as was noted in chapter 5, nor the use of English or *franglais* (French and English combined). The French returnees were also criticised for obvious behavioural changes in social and business contexts. Brigitte, for instance, was warned to conform by a law colleague who noted she was far too relaxed, happy and spontaneous in the work domain, evidence of having been influenced by Australian ways. Further, successful acculturation in Australia was recorded by all participants largely because of the prestigious status French language and culture enjoys in many countries. This resulted in initial negative stereotypical views between the two cultures being dissipated by the end of the sojourn. Research has shown this is not generally the case for Japanese and Asian sojourners (cf. Liberman, 1994; Lin & Yi, 1997).

Unable to re-negotiate and re-integrate their emergent intercultural identity back into their society, the returnees faced the prospect of accommodating to French cultural norms or leaving. Finally, confronted by a perceived intransigent attitude to the outcome of their Australian sojourn and the use of English language and cultural learning among members of French society, the returnees negotiated a special place for their indescribable experience, establishing a *parallel dimension* to their lives, into which only like minded individuals were permitted access. The *parallel dimension* came into being essentially because the returnees’ evolved intercultural identity was not valued by the society. The data revealed that the French sojourners had successfully established a ‘third place’ for themselves in the Australian context, comfortable with their newly transformed identity which had integrated aspects of both the French and Australian cultures, and in some instances, other international traits derived from their multicultural encounters. However, this ‘third place’ was found to be incongruent in the French context. Therefore, there was an urgent need to create a comfortable space in which to exist back home. The transitory state triggered by this event signified not only a coping mechanism to mitigate the effects of reverse culture shock, but more importantly resulted in a desire among the French returnees to leave their homeland for reasons that could be construed as French cultural and linguistic hegemony, within the microcosm of the nation. The disappointment arising during the interviews in regard to French attitude was unquestionable. Feelings of
dejection and loneliness led to dramatic solutions, with most returnees adopting temporary convergence in order to remain inconspicuous until it was time to leave.

In summary, this section has examined the vicissitudes of cultural identity among the French academic sojourners prior to, during and following their sojourn in Australia, which precipitated a cultural identity crisis in several members of the group. The results emerging from the data on these sojourners are consonant with Garza-Guerrero’s (1974) constructs delineating the phases of culture shock. The French group followed closely the recognised manifestations of this phenomenon. The first phase was typified by mourning and threats to the newcomer’s identity. This occurred where the French sojourners reactivated in fantasy all the positive aspects of their culture that they missed. They subsequently experienced a growing sensation of discontinuity, of consistency and confirmation of identity. During the second phase, the sojourners organised their ego identity on the basis of selective identifications predicated on the new Australian culture which they internalised and integrated. Through this process, their French identity was not only re-confirmed but re-incorporated into the new culture, essentially recovering what was lost and at the same time enriching the self with a new experimental environment. The third phase represented the final consolidation of newly acquired cultural traits, new object relations into the organisation of ego identity, which translated into a gradual feeling of “belonging” to the new culture. The term ego identity encompasses a stable and integrated concept of total objects related with the self. What started as a threat to identity, mourning and low self-esteem culminated in a re-affirmation of both ego identity and self-esteem (cf. Garza-Guerrero, 1974).

6.2 Sojourners with pre-existing multicultural identities

In this section the focus turns to issues relating to individuals from both the longitudinal and cross-sectional groups, with pre-existing multicultural identities, that is, those of dual, or ‘hyphenated’ cultural identities, living in France and Switzerland. These students had already confronted issues of comparison between their various identities, and potentially had different perceptions and values of their various cultural/national identities. I will investigate how this group has experienced remodelling of their cultural identity as a result of the intercultural exchange in Australia. The following quote illustrates how even unconsciously, the experience of the multicultural French sojourners in Australia sets the scene for a quest to re-affirm their cultural identity whilst re-designing selected aspects.
Some respondents in fact admitted to a voyage of discovery in this respect, for the first time truly understanding who they were. This is exemplified by Arlette who also hailed from Paris.

*It was like a discovery of my identity in Australia. At first, when I arrived, everybody was saying: “Where are you from?” And that’s something that you don’t really ask in France. And “Where do your parents come from?” And even people were saying: “Oh your parents are Spanish so you must be Spanish”. I was trying to explain: “No. I’ve always lived in France. I’m French even if my parents are Spanish”. They made me feel French and it was the first time! I had never realised that I was French. I never thought about it, so it was a big discovery. Even if I was not sure if I was French, because I was trying to discover who I was, I was defending French culture (Arlette).*

This quote reveals a deep soul-searching for this respondent as for many others about the question of their identity. Arlette examines the different cultural perspectives affecting her identity orientation, French and Spanish, arising from questions in regard to who she is and where she is from. Arlette’s description of her sojourn experience as a journey of discovery of her identity emphasises the impact her travels had on such an important question in her life. It is precisely because her identity was thrown into relief through the sojourn experience that she was able to reconcile the different allegiances she had to each culture. *They made me feel French and it was the first time! I had never realised that I was French.*

That is, life in France had highlighted her Spanish origins and backg rounded her French identity, while in Australia her French identity became equally salient.

Kati, who constitutes part of the longitudinal section of this project, offers an interesting perspective on the issue of dual nationalities and their corresponding identity orientations. Her Franco-Vietnamese heritage had been cause for concern even whilst residing in Paris and later Strasbourg, but through her intercultural experience she witnessed a re-affirmation of who she was as a result of a conscious analysis of her identity. When asked in the interview whether she embraced the role of French ambassador during her sojourn she had very strong feelings on the subject.

*En général les français sont très fiers de leur pays. Et moi personnellement je m’en fiche! ... parce que moi quand il s’agit de défendre, je défends la France quand ça me paraît justifié ... Je représente la France mais pas du point de vue politique ... c’est plus au niveau culturel ... [Les australiens] sont des gens très accueillants, très ouverts à la culture asiatique, beaucoup plus que les français. En fait je me sens plus à l’aise ici. Et les australiens adorent les français et le français. On se sent à plaisir avec le fait d’être français d’autant plus heureux d’avoir une double identité culturelle ... En France on nous
This quote depicts the effects of Kati’s ‘double cultural identity’ from the comparative perspectives of the French and the Australians. After consideration of both points of view with respect to how these individuals are regarded and treated, Kati claims through the sojourn experience she has discovered where her allegiances lie, re-confirming in the process the duality of her cultural identity. This protracted quote from Kati highlights further the impact the sojourn experience had on the participants, even if more acutely for the multicultural French members as a result of identity crises. In France, Kati’s intercultural status was met by indifference from the society at large but this was dramatically contrasted with the positive reception she witnessed in Australia with its multicultural nature. Her intercultural experience in Australia, followed by her brief immersion in Hong Kong (discussed below) where she visited family, became the subject of serious reflection about who she was and where she fit in. Kati’s identity underwent a period of remodelling until she was able to reconcile her Asian physical appearance with cultural affiliations to France.

Actually, I think this cultural identity issue ... came to my mind more in Australia than in France because in Australia, the thing is, with so many Asian people around me, I was wondering if I felt more Asian than French ... [In Hong Kong I didn’t feel at home] because I don’t speak Chinese and I don’t look like them. They are skinny compared to me, and small and white. I feel a little bit like a giant and it’s not good because I feel a bit fat as well ... so except for Asian things no cultural identity shock. I still feel French ... I mean Australia is very Asian [you] could say that I feel a bit Australian as well but I’m still Asian-French (Kati).

The French are generally very proud of their country. I personally don’t give a damn! ... because when I have to defend France I do so when it seems justified ... I represent France but not at all from a political standpoint ... it’s more on a cultural level ... [Australians] are very friendly people, very open-minded toward Asian culture, much more than French people. In fact, I feel more comfortable here and Australians love the French and their language. You feel happy being French here and even happier because of the dual cultural identity ... In France you are expected to adapt, to integrate, whereas in Australia the bicultural status is an advantage so that’s why I appreciate it here. I was already intercultural but [my experience] has made me more proud of being French and Vietnamese. Where identity is concerned, I have become more proud of French culture, of everything French, everything connected to France ... especially when people perceive me firstly as Asian and then French. Therefore, this made things easier for me (Kati).
The comparison between her physical appearance and that of the Asians in Australia and Chinese in Hong Kong resulted in Kati’s closer identification with being Asian-French. The extensive analytical process Kati negotiated over a year before arriving at the conclusion that she was really Asian-French supports the notion that the French sojourners’ conscious or unconscious quest for a clear definition of their identity emerged as a result of this exchange experience. In chapter 5, Kati’s anguish at being referred to as overweight upon her return to France by well-meaning family and friends had its roots in her brief stopover in Hong Kong on her way home. Issues of self-acceptance are clearly linked to questions of personal identity and the erroneous comparison she made between the ‘skinny’ Chinese and herself (she is in fact quite slim) resulted in difficult moments for her during the early stages of her re-entry process. The psychological problems arising from this period were symptomatic of the possible traumatic effects of reverse culture shock which can manifest at these times. However, Kati finally reconciled the differences between her physical appearance and her inherent Frenchness to conclude that in spite of external attributes she was essentially Asian-French. On the other hand, the hyphenated identity was further complicated by feelings of being a little Australian as well because of her positive acculturation experience. In spite of difficulties during the initial stages of her re-entry, the end result of this process of self-discovery contributed significantly to Kati’s ability to settle down in a relationship in France whilst the greater part of her cohort were marking time in transit before leaving their homeland once again. In this respect at least, the hybrid ‘third place’ Kati found in Australia was successfully re-established in the French context even if she chose to safeguard details of her année entre parenthèses from others.

The testimony of another respondent from Paris, Léah, sheds light on the problem of judgements made on the basis of stereotypically expected cultural behaviour. Her cultural identity is clearly problematic as she has grown up as Cambodian-French in Paris but she refers to herself as being Chinese in spite of the whole family being born in Cambodia. In this quote she talks about her identity crisis in Australia and subsequent to her return.

*I didn’t get along very well with Chinese people [in Australia]. It’s something about their culture ... I wasn’t behaving like a Chinese girl. I have a Chinese face, and I behaved like French and it’s a bit hard for Chinese to understand that. They don’t consider me as Chinese and they don’t consider me as French as well, so I’m not a friend to them. I didn’t get along with them at all. I was very angry ... it’s like I thought they were small-minded. There is something about Chinese culture, it’s quite racist ... you’re not totally Chinese, you have a western culture and they object to that. They are not totally wrong because*
can’t say I’m Chinese and I can’t say I’m French. I’m so proud to be French, to be Chinese yeh, it’s great, it’s a good mixture but because I met these students at Monash and they said “You’re not Chinese, you’re not French”. I was angry ... Now, I don’t feel very happy in Paris, I just want to get out of here ... I can’t say I have my own country. It’s a mixed culture, I don’t feel it’s like some people who if they’re born in France and if they’re French. I can understand some French people who don’t want to leave the country, they don’t speak other languages and they don’t want to move. But for my part I have an international background and if I leave it’s not a big deal for me (Léah).

The confusion Léah’s dual identity has engendered in her life is apparent here. She compares French and Australian perceptions of her nationality as did Kati before. This time however, Léah criticises the Chinese in Australia for their small-mindedness and racism. She analyses the effects their criticism had on her during her sojourn but concludes with a re-affirmation of both her French and Cambodian cultural heritage, although this in no way constrains her to reside in France permanently. Léah’s circumstances vary from the vignettes provided above in that the resultant reflection on the question of her identity led to a firm desire to leave France. She registered a difficult re-entry process and was yet another respondent who was biding her time to finish her degree in Paris before leaving once again. Conversely, although she had altercations with Chinese students in Australia, her adjustment to Australian society was an excellent one. She was not prepared to allow some international students to mar her experience but openly admits to reacting angrily at accusations that she was not Chinese. Clearly, her identity crisis emerged from this incident although during the interview she claimed not to have problems in integrating in Paris. She misses the life in Australia, a factor contributing to her fervent wish to return there. She is proud of her French heritage and claims to enjoy her dual nationality, except when challenged. This suggests confusion and anger arise when core beliefs about one’s identity are challenged.

Matthieu is another respondent who classifies himself as part French and part German and living in Strasbourg affords him the opportunity to use German. He explains how he avoids the issue of his identity following the sojourn.

Je ne me trompe pas trop de nationalité mais comme je parle l’allemand aussi c’est pourquoi je laisse un petit peu le côté de nationalité de côté mais c’est vrai que j’ai considéré que j’étais plus le même après mon retour, qu’avant mon départ ... Je suis
moitié allemand culturellement, je suis trilingue … 157 [After my return] I had the feeling that I did not belong totally to the environment here, and that I was different. All my thoughts were somewhere else, I did not have the same expectations, my daily life was different … I know in my environment, my city, my job there are some constraints, some negative points but I learned to see the positive side. I think that it’s something I learned in Australia … I thought: “I’m gonna be so alone and unhappy in France”. That’s something I was expecting … but now you have to live in Paris, make the best out of it and that’s why I really tried to focus on the positive aspects of my life here (Matthieu).

This quote examines how the question of one’s identity can be avoided. Matthieu evaluates the effects of the sojourn on his life, recounting the difficulties in reconciling his feelings of no longer belonging to his culture of origin because of his evolved cultural identity. He acknowledged the constraints involved with living in Paris and utilised positive thinking to resolve difficult issues. Matthieu’s dual nationality does not appear as problematic to him as to others of his group because he has systematically analysed how to deal with the issues confronting him since his return. He has adopted Australian qualities which he added to his cultural repertoire, a feature that essentially served as a coping mechanism during the most difficult stages of reverse culture shock for him. He avoids questioning his cultural identity but he cannot deny his trilingual status affords him the possibility of residing in other countries apart from France. The significant personal growth evidenced by his articulate dialogue during the interview indicates that although he found culture learning difficult to implement in France, on a personal basis he attempted to put to good use every facet of learning derived from the Australian experience as he explains below.

Even if I can’t use what I learned in Australia at all, the method used, dealing with legal issues, I can use it now in my daily life. I’ve applied it to my methods. It’s about methods we used not the content ... I really integrated into Australian life. I learned to adapt to other cultures but I learned to keep a distance with the things I do, the vision I have. I’ve learned to elevate myself to see from a different perspective, be more objective. There are many things I don’t like [in France]. I don’t defend the French anymore. I see things more their way [the foreigners’] … When people ask me my nationality, I feel more European with French and German background … It never happens that I go to another [French] city to see friends. I go to Brussels, Berlin, London to visit my friends (Matthieu).

In this quote, Matthieu describes the analytic process he used to employ his culture learning to the fullest, claiming it is the methodology used and not the content which ultimately matters. Clearly, he has determined where his cultural identity lies as a result of

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157 I don’t really mistake my nationality but as I speak German also that’s why I leave the question of nationality to one side but it’s true that I considered that I was no longer the same when I returned compared to pre-departure … I am half German culturally, I am trilingual …(Matthieu).

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the sojourn. He has become more European than French and is not prepared to defend the French because he believes the critics are justified in their stance. His focus on method translates into an effective coping strategy which allows him to make full use of cultural lessons learned abroad without actually applying the Australian lifestyle to the French. This in fact avoids negating his valued experience abroad. Matthieu has learned to extrapolate from existing modus operandi so that his strategies comply with French mores which helps him to fit in.

To complete the picture of multicultural identities, Marc, of Franco-Swiss origin, is proud of his intercultural identity, being the product of a Swiss father and a Brazilian mother, but this pride is not nationalistic. His pride originates rather from his ability to share his French culture with foreigners. His definition of culture merits consideration.

Marc explains that his pride in being Swiss is derived more from a desire to promulgate French culture than to espouse notions of patriotism. He then elucidates the importance of culture as forming and playing a key role in one’s identity (cf. Brislin, 1990; Collier, 1997; Kim et al., 1998; Liddicoat, 2002; Storti, 2001a). Marc’s definition typifies the core value that the majority of the respondents professed contributed positively to their French identity. However, Marc also had problems in the multicultural nature of his identity. Since he acquired Portuguese only from his mother and not from Brazilian Portuguese formal education, his version of the language was antiquated. Marc explains his complicated search for his identity.

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Marc’s attempts to discover one side of his cultural and linguistic identity met with confusion when people questioned the source of his origins based on his language use. It clearly constituted a problem for him because people were evidently not readily accepting of cultural differences in travellers who had assumed they would go unnoticed in the crowd. This initial foray into other cultures was replicated when Marc arrived in Australia, a culture he places in between the Swiss and Brazilian. His sojourn experience in Australia appeared to intensify the identity crisis he had acknowledged in Switzerland, at least in the earlier stages. He continues his soul searching for his identity in the next extensive quote.

Avant même de venir en Australie j’avais un problème d’identité avec la nationalité suisse et brésilienne. Et là vraiment j’arrivais pas à dire si j’étais plus brésilien ou plus suisse. En Suisse, j’étais pas tout à fait suisse. Au Brésil, j’étais pas tout à fait brésilien. Ce qui est drôle, c’est qu’en Suisse on me disait: « T’as pas l’air vraiment suisse » et au Brésil: « T’as pas l’air vraiment brésilien ». Donc finalement on se sent un peu de nulle part mais en même temps de partout donc c’est vraiment drôle. En Australie ça m’a permis de définir mieux mon identité je dirais. Je me suis rendu compte que j’étais quand même plus suisse parce que j’ai habité toute ma vie en Suisse. J’y ai fait toutes mes études, primaire, secondaire. Je parle et j’écris beaucoup mieux le français que le portugais ... J’ai pas renié ma culture brésilienne. Ça faisait partie de moi. D’ailleurs j’ai connu beaucoup de brésiliens ici à Bond [University] et j’avais beaucoup de plaisir à les connaître. D’ailleurs de ce côté là je pense que j’ai été un peu plus brésilien en étant ici qu’en Suisse. Mais en même temps quand quelqu’un me disait: « Mais d’où est-ce que tu viens? » j’aurais jamais pensé à dire du Brésil. J’ai toujours dit la Suisse. J’avais une amie norvégienne et brésilienne et elle mentionnait toujours qu’elle était moitié norvégienne et moitié brésilienne. Ça m’énervait un peu qu’elle commence à expliquer tout ça ... parce que les gens, ils veulent une réponse facile. Ils veulent pas l’histoire de votre vie. Mon expérience en Australie m’a permis de redéfinir mon identité parce que j’adore l’Australie et c’est un pays dans lequel j’aurais beaucoup aimé habiter. D’autre part, c’est pas ‘home’. Ya pas un mot pour ça en français ... Ce ne serait pas que je me sens australien (Marc).

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159 I was used to speaking several languages with my parents, French with my father and mother but she is Brazilian so we always speak Portuguese. I have a problem with Portuguese. I have not studied it so my written Portuguese is not as good as the spoken because I have not studied it formally. The problem I have when I go to Brazil is I don’t know all the expressions because my mother speaks Portuguese the way they spoke it 30 years ago. People always ask me from which region in Brazil I am from (Marc).

160 Even before arriving in Australia I had a problem with my Swiss and Brazilian identity. And I really couldn’t tell whether I was more Brazilian or more Swiss. In Switzerland I was not altogether Swiss. In Brazil, I was not altogether Brazilian. The strange thing is in Switzerland people would tell me: “You don’t really look Swiss” and in Brazil “you don’t really look Brazilian”. So in the end you feel like you are from nowhere but at the same time from everywhere, so it’s really strange. In Australia I felt better able to define my identity I would say. I realised that I was really more Swiss because I had lived in Switzerland all my life. I had done all my studies there, primary, secondary. I speak and write in French better than in Portuguese. I have not renounced my Brazilian culture. It was a part of me. Besides, I met a lot of Brazilians here at Bond [University] and I enjoyed knowing them. Besides, as a result of that I think I became more
Marc’s continued search for his identity is heightened in this lengthy quote. He recounts the episodes relating to questions about his identity from Swiss nationals to Brazilians and Australians explaining how they reinforced his identity crisis. That is until he was able to resolve this issue of who he was as a result of his Australian experience. The international contact situations in Australia assisted him in determining that he was finally more Swiss. His automated responses to questions about his identity resulting in Swiss affiliations made him realise that he could not answer to being Brazilian, in spite of speaking Portuguese, although this side to his identity was also reinforced in Australia. This quote from Marc represents the epitome of how an identity crisis experienced by individuals of hyphenated identities can be clarified through intercultural encounters. Marc’s situation is poignant because feelings of a lack of fit in both Switzerland and Brazil could be potentially soul destroying if individuals do not eventually come to terms with identity issues. His travels led him eventually to Australia where he at last discovered who he was. It is interesting to note that it was the multicultural makeup of Australia that assisted him in enriching his dual cultures, the Brazilian thanks to the large contingent of students from that country on his international campus, and the Swiss because the analytic process of discovering his identity led him to re-affirm his Swiss origins. His upbringing and education in French Switzerland, coupled with his family and friends of both nationalities residing there were instrumental in the breakthrough that Switzerland was indeed home to him.

Conversely, unlike the other French returnees who professed to have assumed, albeit in a small way, a small part of the Australian identity, Marc asserts that his experience did not mark his identity to the extent that he could call himself Australian. This is quite a contradiction in fact because in the previous chapter Marc’s interview provided evidence of cultural acquisition when he sported his *boarder shorts* [sic] on Lake Geneva, as well as assuming the relaxed attitude *just chill* he had adopted after two years in Australia.

*[My experience]* made me more relaxed and look at life in a way, like *just chill*, not quite *like the Australians but I’m much more relaxed. I was a very tense person before … It was a heat wave and straight away I was in my boarder shorts at the lake in Geneva. It was good you know. My friends were saying: “Great! Where did you get the shorts?” (Marc).

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Brazilian being here [in Australia] than in Switzerland. But by the same token, when someone asked me: “But where are you from?” it would never have occurred to me to say Brazil. I always answered Switzerland. I had a Norwegian/Brazilian friend and she always mentioned that she was half Brazilian and half Norwegian. It annoyed me a little that she started to explain all of that … because people want a quick answer. They don’t want your life history. My experience [in Australia] allowed me to redefine my identity because I love Australia and it’s a country where I would love to live. On the other hand it’s not home. There is no word for this in French … It’s not that I don’t feel Australian (Marc).
On that occasion he had attracted attention and was very proud to add his newly acquired traits of Australian culture to his mixed heritage. On another note, Marc’s annoyance at his friend, who made a point of giving the history behind her origins at every turn, is worth mention because it highlights his previous experiences in regard to the constant challenging of his identity. Consequently, he found it difficult to tolerate the lengthy discussion which ensued every time someone asked: “Where are you from?” Marc believed that in discussion with people who really cared, they would eventually discover his origins. Although Marc cannot be described as a TCK (Third Culture Kid) or global nomad per se, as these terms characterise individuals who have spent an intrinsic part of their formative years living abroad (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Stultz, 2002), research in this area (eg. Seelye & Wasilewski, 1996; Smith, 1996; Stultz, 2002) suggests that individuals like Marc may experience pain from an inability to categorise their identity in national/cultural terms. Hiding the truth about their origins for whatever reason is not a pleasant experience. Giving a long answer runs the risk of boring the listener, or of being perceived as a snob. Giving a short answer requires that the foreigner being questioned ignore a large part of his/her background.

Marc’s quest for an affirmation of his identity offers further evidence for the argument presented in Chapter 5 that he had become an intercultural nomad.

The international academic sojourn in particular was instrumental in Marc’s making plans for further sojourns in myriad countries. His Christmas 2004 email confirms his success in obtaining a post on a mission in Kyrgyzstan for one year under the auspices of the United Nations. This indeed saw the fulfilment of his dreams. His studies in Australia, the US and his visits to other countries essentially formed the backdrop of his future cultural adventures.

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161 I think that I was very interested in my studies … The reason I studied International Relations was because I was really concerned by this issue and it’s true that I feel I am a very intercultural, cosmopolitan person who could live as much in New York, London, Paris, Geneva as in Sydney. It has opened the door. In Switzerland they are a little uncommunicative, narrow-minded (Marc).
In summary, this section has examined the vicissitudes of identity as a result of the international sojourn in Australia with particular reference to respondents of multicultural identity. The study revealed that identity crises sometimes produce positive results but it is the international exchange situation that serves as the catalyst for this outcome. For these students, contact with Australian culture has led to a focus on their existing perceptions of belonging to a national culture, but in this case led to a re-evaluation of their pre-existing identities and their perceptions of belonging to a national culture of their home countries. The exchange highlighted attachment to the dominant culture as well as reinforcing affiliations to the minority culture. Various participants of this section may just as easily have been included in the previous section highlighting the correlation between cultural identity issues as a result of an excellent acculturation process in Australia with a difficult re-entry process upon returning home. The end result was found to translate into a transitory phenomenon, often exacerbated by unresolved questions about their cultural identity once home. Clearly, analysis of this section confirms issues of identity conflicts appear to be more acute for respondents of multicultural identity.

6.3 Cultural identity responses of the acculturation study group

The preceding sections have examined in detail vicissitudes of identity culminating increasingly in identity crises for the French academic sojourners in the re-entry study. At this point, it seems appropriate to include an analysis of French cultural identity paradigms emerging from the first phase of the study – the first cross-sectional group - as a result of the acculturation process in Australia. These sections are distinguished by the fact that participants from the first group appear to have already re-negotiated their cultural identity, some before returning to France and others making the decision not to go home. It must be remembered that a large number of this group have chosen to immigrate to Australia, via different administrative paths. Alain, who has now immigrated to this country where his family has joined him, is still completing his university degree on the Gold Coast. He appears to have no confusion whatsoever with his identity response. He is clearly French and proud to be recognised as such. Although he left France because of dissatisfaction with many aspects of life already illustrated in the preceding chapters, Alain integrated very well into Australian society but had no intention of relinquishing his cultural traits.
C’est frappant que je suis parti de la France parce que j’avais des choses que j’aimais pas là-bas, mais dès qu’on critique la France, je vais quand même la défendre parce que c’est ma culture pendant 18 ans. Evidemment si [les critiques] sont infondées, je volerais au secours de ma patrie et j’essaierais de rectifier, de montrer que c’est faux. Je suis aussi chauvin que tout le monde je pense. J’aime pas qu’on critique, je suis fier. Voilà! Je suis français, en plus attention, plus basque moitié, moitié. Quand on attaque … notre image je pense que c’est quelque chose que très peu de gens peuvent supporter sans rien faire (Alain).

Alain’s testimony encapsulates successful negotiating of a ‘third place’ for himself in the Australian context. He explains his firm stance on what it means to be French and although he has elected to leave France for various reasons to settle in Australia, he embodies everything French. Alain’s strong national pride is not exceptional in the context of this study, for many examples of this attitude have become apparent throughout the data analysis. His pride extends to his mixed Basque and French heritage also. However, the significance of this quote is that in spite of Alain’s dissatisfaction with his life in France and his subsequent decision to immigrate to Australia, he brought with him, firmly intact, his French cultural identity. His is a good example of a successful integration into Australian life which he prefers to the French but at no stage is he prepared to dismiss his French heritage (Berry, 1997). He explains how he plans to combine the best of both worlds.

Je dirais que comme l’Australie n’a pas vraiment d’ethnie de base, c’est un mélange de races, c’est très facile de devenir australien si on le veut parce que l’australien type c’est un mélange de cultures, donc c’est assez tolérant surtout dans les villes … Je veux retourner en France une fois par an, pour voir la famille et pour apprécier la France … en tant que touriste que en tant qu’habitant, que national qui vit sur le pays, parce que la France est un super pays mais j’en avais marre de vivre là-bas. Le mode de vie australien me plait beaucoup (Alain).

Here, while Alain explains that it is easy to become Australian thanks to the multiculturally tolerant tendencies he has observed, at no stage is he prepared to relinquish his French heritage.

162 It’s striking that I left France because there were things that I didn’t like there but the moment people criticise France I will defend her because it has been my culture for 18 years. Obviously, if [the criticism] is unfounded I would fly to the rescue of my country and I would try to rectify, to show that it was false. I am just as patriotic as everyone else I think. I don’t like being criticised, I am proud. There you are, I am French, and careful, half Basque half French. When people attack … our image, I think it’s something very few people can tolerate without responding (Alain).

163 I would say that as the Australian national has really no ethnic root, it’s a mixture of races, it’s really easy to become Australian if one wants to because the typical Australian is a mixture of cultures, therefore quite tolerant especially in the cities … I want to return to France once a year, to see relatives and to appreciate France … as a tourist rather than as a resident French national who lives there because France is a great country but I had had enough of living there. I like the Australian life style (Alain).
cultural background. He concedes the attractions of living in France are strong but living in Australia ultimately offers him greater advantages. This quote demonstrates how those who enjoy the luxury of residing in two countries can achieve constancy in their lives and succeed in maintaining well defined intercultural identities.

The well defined cultural identity of other respondents, Thierry and Eric for example, resonates with Alain’s to the extent that after at least twenty years growing up in France, they find it hard to reject their culture and all it signifies. However, like Alain, this intense national pride does not preclude them from seeking work in Anglo-Saxon countries. Particularly in Thierry’s case, as he believes the film and television industry is not as well developed in France, thus creating fewer opportunities for him to find work in his chosen field. When asked if he considered himself an ambassador for France he responded:

Un petit peu. On n’a pas trop le choix en fait. C’est pas qu’on veut se considérer … quand on arrive les gens disent: « Oh you’re French, from Paris », et là on est tout de suite ambassadeur. C’est joli. On représente la France … C’est une chouette expérience de partager sa culture. C’est un chouette pays la France …

I’m going back to France on holidays after this semester but not yet to settle, definitely. Even at the end of my degree I don’t know. In Australia you feel fine you know. I like to speak English. I’d like to be able to use all my languages to communicate with people. I would not be able to speak English that much in France. It depends on the job I get. But if I’m at home I will speak French. I would lose some of my English. I lost my Spanish because I don’t use it. And now my writing skills are not as good because I write in English now … [Going from law to film and television] might be the reason I don’t want to go back to France … I’ll probably go to England or maybe stay here in Sydney. France is a great country, it’s my country you know, but I have so many opportunities now, I open up myself to the whole world, to everything (Thierry).

Thierry explains the role that is incumbent on him as a French national to represent his country and his culture abroad. It is also one that he clearly relishes because he is proud of his French identity. However, after weighing up the pros and cons of settling back in France as opposed to living an intercultural experience in other countries after his sojourn, he has opted to return to France only on holidays. Recent information reveals he is living and working in Sydney. Of prime concern is the inability to continue speaking English in France. It appears that Thierry, like Alain, has no qualms about proclaiming his French

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164 A little bit. You don’t really have a choice in fact. It’s not that you want to consider yourself … when you arrive people say: “Oh, you’re French, from Paris”, and you are straight away an ambassador. It’s nice. You represent France … It’s a nice experience when you share your culture. France is a nice country (Thierry).
cultural identity. He enjoys his role of ambassador whilst abroad, a feature that confirms an argument presented in this project, that the French academic sojourners preferred their French status whilst abroad as they were given the feeling that their culture was positively valued. This is also found in other studies of re-entry and is not an uncommon occurrence (eg. NAFSA, 2002; Storti, 2001b; Weaver, 1994). The disillusion that sets in when sojourners return home and resume their original role of ordinary member of their society may augment the degree of reverse culture shock for returnees. The French were no different. More pertinent to readjustment problems for Thierry was the change in orientation of his academic degrees, from law which he did not complete in France, to Film and Television in Australia. He came to Australia because of the lack of availability of courses in this field in France, which he confirms will preclude him from returning because of the difficulties of finding employment in his chosen field.

One can surmise from Thierry’s case, that once again there is evidence that French sojourners may lean toward an integrative identity response when abroad, whether the sojourn is short term or whether they choose to immigrate (Berry, 1997). This may be due to the positive side of the dichotomous world vision of French culture abroad, its prestige among foreigners on the one hand and commonly held negative stereotypical views of the French on the other. The degree of cultural similarity of the two western nations, observed during the Australian sojourn, also contributed to better integration for the French sojourners. Although the respondents were not immune to culture shock upon arrival in Australia, once difficult issues were resolved, the French sojourners experienced an excellent integrative process in this country.

Eric is determined that he will not go back to France and pronounces himself intercultural, boasting about his lack of French accent when he speaks English (although in fact he has a pronounced French-American accent). Although he is quite clear on his allegiances to his cultural identity, his criticism of his fellow countrymen is quite marked and he has no qualms about marginalising them.

I’m very proud of my country. I’m proud to be French. I will never forget France. I’m proud of the gastronomy, the history, the architecture ... but I’m not proud of things like the administration ... It’s painful! It’s so complicated! ... I’m well cultured I would say. I can catch anything. I am intercultural. I can have dinner with Indians, Japanese, I can work with Chinese. It doesn’t really matter ... I’m cooking Asian food, who could believe it? [French people] are fucking narrow-minded ... But I can’t forget my French culture. I think I took the good part of Australian culture and kept the good part of French culture ...
I love the European Union. I’m really for it. I’m not worried about losing my French identity. I lived twenty years in France. I’ll never lose it. I can’t lose my accent (Eric).

This quote encapsulates the pride Eric feels in being French but it is not devoid of warranted criticism. He describes his intellectual attributes and congratulates himself on his emergent intercultural identity thanks to his sojourn in Australia. He has no fear of losing his French identity, even now living in Sydney, for twenty years of life in that culture will ensure this never eventuates. Eric’s quote confirms his unequivocal stance on his cultural identity but, although he is keen to defend his country from criticism, he willingly admits that his co-nationals have a lot to learn to become as open-minded as he has become. In his interview he was adamant that he preferred Australian girls to the French but may yet settle with a French girl outside of France. Once again, it can be observed that the French sojourners greatly appreciated being French away from their homeland, confirming that once they had established their ‘third place’ in the foreign society, they could enjoy the best of both worlds. Returning to France could diminish their chances of enacting their new intercultural role in society. It is through comparisons that social groups and individuals define and re-define their cultural identity and in the context of sojourns, the French students in particular discovered the best of both worlds by adopting only the better aspects of both the French and Australian cultures.

In contrast to the above two cases of clear cultural identity, one participant, Christiane, displays signs of confusion in her identity responses, resulting from her interactions with Australians and internationals during her sojourn. She has elected not to return to France, opting instead to settle temporarily in New Caledonia with her boyfriend who has permanent residency status in Australia. This was subsequent to her inability to obtain a business visa for Australia. Together their goal is to obtain Australian citizenship after due process. Her excerpt illustrates her identity crisis especially with reference to enacting the role of French ambassador.

Je crois que je me suis si bien adaptée ici que je voudrais bien y rester ... Moi qui adore Paris, J’appelle toujours Paris ma ville. Eh bien Sydney pour moi c’est vraiment très très bien. Même pour avoir des enfants par exemple, je me vois plus les avoir à Sydney qu’à Paris 165 ... [An ambassador for France] no way ! I’m not so proud of being French because I learn so much about what people think about French people. They say that we are arrogant, we don’t speak in English. Arrogance, I completely agree ...I don’t wish to

165 I think that I have adapted so well here that I would like to stay ... I who adore Paris. I still call Paris my city. Well for me, Sydney is really really great. Even for having children for instance, I can see myself having children in Sydney rather than in Paris … (Christiane).
lose my French accent. I still think that French people are very nice people but not so
friendly as here … I don’t know I’m maybe losing too much of my culture but ...I will
always be French. I have integrated in Australian society but I’m getting some things from
Australia, this kind of friendliness, happiness, lay back attitude like you know, no worries ...
because you don’t really get stressed for so few things you know, tiny points in your life,
it’s not like a big drama ... I am more intercultural because I used to live with Germans ...
Je suis française mais je ne vais pas me revendiquer que la France est le plus beau pays du
monde ... Oui, le français est une très belle langue, je suis née en France et je parle
français, je trouve que la France est un magnifique pays ... Quand on est avec des
européens, je suis européenne, mais ici, avec les français, je me sens moins française
qu’eux! (Christiane).

In this quote Christiane displays chameleon-like tendencies, adapting to sociolinguistic
situations as warranted, being French, European and intercultural when necessary (cf.
Kidder, 1992). Extrapolating from this idea, Stultz (2002) argues many (global) nomads
describe themselves as chameleons, skilled in adaptive techniques in new cultures. They
observe the cultural mores and values of different cultures and emulate the hosts in order to
fit in. Christiane explains that Paris will always remain close to her heart but the thought of
raising a family in Australia offers far greater advantages. She vehemently rejects the role
of ambassador and defending the French from criticism because negative stereotypical
comments such as *The French are arrogant,* and *They don’t speak English,* have left their
mark on her. She confesses however to a desire to retain her French accent and
acknowledges the better aspects of her culture but this does not deter her from embracing
her emergent intercultural personality in this foreign milieu.

It is clear that negative stereotypical images that surfaced during the early stages of
Christiane’s sojourn have had a lasting effect on her perception of who she perceives
herself to be. Although she has adapted successfully to Australia and has chosen to make
this country her home, she is not prepared to indiscriminately accept all components that
reinforce her French identity. She did not feel the need to act French on all occasions and
during all interactions. It must be said that this respondent has perhaps one of the strongest
French accents when speaking English, a feature she claims does not overly bother her.
However, her cultural pride does not extend to the assumption of the role of French
ambassador. Her physical appearance, blond and blue-eyed, affords her the ability to go
largely unnoticed until she speaks. She at no stage wishes to proclaim her Frenchness

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166 I am French but I am not going to proclaim it, declare that France is the most beautiful city in the world …
Yes, French is a very beautiful language, I was born in France and I speak French, I think that France is a
magnificent country … When we are with Europeans, I am European, but here, with the French, I feel less
French than them! (Christiane).
although she still loves her city, Paris, adores her language as well as the many cultural attributes that being French brings. This in essence describes an acute identity crisis. Her cultural identity has irrevocably been transformed and is in the process of becoming hybrid. She feels European among other Europeans but definitely less French among French people in Australia. It is clear that she wishes to adopt an Australian lifestyle and raise her children in Australia and her relationship with a New Caledonian ensures that selected features of her French cultural identity can remain intact in the process.

Christiane’s identity response is no less integrative than her counterparts, but at twenty-three, there are critical issues that have to be reconciled before she resolves the question of who she really is. It appears she is still seeking to negotiate her ‘third place’ in this intercultural milieu.

Christiane has chosen to partially reject group membership as a result of her perception of certain elements of French culture as negative. The changed cultural identity orientation was responsible for this action. The distinctiveness that became apparent during the sojourn experience of the French students can be construed as precipitating a mobility strategy, where hybridisation becomes possible. This mobility strategy contrasts with Tajfel’s (1978; 1981) arguments that the identity of individuals is derived from the in-group and the choice to retain or reject membership within that group is conditional on existing distinctions between their perception of positive or negative elements. This outcome ultimately depends on reactions to changed cultural identity orientations such as occurred with the French subjects during their sojourn. In the Australian context the French students integrated elements of both French and Australian culture which co-existed harmoniously because the negative comparisons perceived by the French as the minority culture were not perceived as such by the dominant culture. This essentially constitutes a paradox. Tajfel (1978; 1981) assumes that negative comparisons are shared by in-group and out-group, however, in none of the cases in this study is this so. The negativity is perceived by in-group members but the identity still has positive values in the out-group, which facilitates mobility, but with hybridisation rather than assimilation. Clearly, the French group could only envisage being French outside of France because members of French society in France displayed xenophobic tendencies toward their culture learning and intransigence toward changes in their cultural identity. Outside France, they could enjoy being French in a non-French environment.
Along the same lines, Dominique’s case is also interesting because her testimony reinforces the positive side of the French cultural identity of sojourners who enjoy being well-regarded whilst abroad because they are French but have no intention of re-settling back in France. She is also influenced by her dual Franco-Spanish nationality. When in France, Dominique’s words echo majority sentiments.

It’s very good to be like overseas, to meet people in other countries, like you are a French girl in another country, you have something to tell to the people ... and people can talk about them as well. That’s something that you never had in France. You are just another French girl, just one in the middle of them. I really enjoy being French. I’m proud to be French but now I’m really an international student. I’m French but of the south but maybe a little bit Spanish as well, but I’m European definitely more than French ... I can settle in an Anglo-Saxon country easily I think ... Ma mère est née au Maroc, ma grand-mère est espagnole et alors donc j’ai voyagé depuis l’âge de trois ans. Mes parents m’ont emmenée en Thaïlande, au Maroc plusieurs fois, cinq fois. Je suis allée en Espagne tous les ans chez ma grand-mère (Dominique). 167

To summarise this quote, Dominique describes the advantages of being French abroad and like so many of her cohort, does not wish to relinquish this image by re-immersing herself into French culture. Her links with Spain and her extensive travels have provided her the intercultural means to settle anywhere in the world. She has clearly become intercultural, indicating she has successfully negotiated her ‘third place’ in a number of societies. She has not only been to Australia, but unlike most of her cohort, she is well-travelled and has very mixed origins. In follow-up email contact in 2005, Dominique has confirmed a posting in a French company recently established in Malaga, Spain, where she has obtained a marketing position at ground level and is poised to take part in its developmental stages.

Adrienne’s case is dissimilar from Dominique’s in that she is less-travelled and the only respondent who arrived in Australia with no prior preparation for the sojourn and who was completely monolingual. In spite of these disadvantages, she integrated well into Australian culture, fell in love with an American student and followed him to the US to marry him without completing her degree. She at least does not question her cultural identity.

167 My mother was born in Morocco, my grandmother is Spanish and therefore I have travelled since the age of three. My parents took me to Thailand, to Morocco several times, five times. I have been to Spain every year to my grandmother’s (Dominique).
Je me sens complètement française. Je suis super fière de l’être. Je resterai toujours française mais si je peux ajouter une autre nationalité ça serait formidable. Mais il faudrait que je sois parfaitement bilingue, que je sois avec un australien enfin voilà. J’apprécie d’être française en fait parce que c’est super agréable parce que les français ont une bonne réputation en Australie. Enfin les gens sont très gentils envers nous.  

I like to be foreign in another country. I want to be French in another country ... I want my children to be bilingual, it’s the best education you can offer a child but it’s difficult if your partner is the same nationality. It’s impossible (Adrienne).

This quote represents the epitome of French pride in one’s cultural identity. Adrienne lists the advantages of being French abroad as being more desirable, like her other counterparts in this research project, and completes her statement with plans to live as a French person abroad and raise her children bilingually. Adrienne’s interview revealed that in spite of placing more importance on her career and the need to repay loans enabling her to study in Australia, the best laid plans can sometimes be discarded when relationships come into play. The fact that she has married an American and moved to San Diego is manifestation of the vicissitudes of life and how paths may be altered as a result of intercultural contact. Given her desire for additive cultural identity, she will seemingly never doubt who and what she is during her foreign experiences. She has secured her ‘third place’ in the Anglo-Saxon societies of Australia and the US where she can be foreign in another country. However, inability to find work in the US has turned Adrienne into a global nomad. She moved back to Paris alone where she worked for six months and subsequently returned to the US to be with her husband who had by then found a stable job. Still unable to find work, Adrienne is currently in Australia where she is finishing her Masters degree on the Gold Coast before returning to the US. Only time will tell, where Adrienne will eventually settle.

To finalise this section, Gilbert’s case contrasts dramatically to all those examined in this chapter because of his rejection of his French identity and the vehemence of his emotions toward everything France and the French represent. However, although he has no intention of settling back home, his allegiances to his mother ensure frequent visits. Recent information has revealed he now lives in Scotland. Gilbert’s father passed away during his first sojourn which exacerbated existing problems on his first re-entry, fraught with difficulties not uncommon during the early phases of reverse culture shock. Not

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I feel completely French. I am very proud of it. I shall always remain French but if I can add another nationality to that it would be fantastic. But I would have to be completely bilingual, be with an Australian. I appreciate being French in fact because it’s really great because French people have a good reputation in Australia. Well, people are really nice to us (Adrienne).
unexpectedly, he left France once again. For one so determined to forsake his French cultural identity, it must be said that Gilbert’s oral proficiency in English would rate as the least capable within the group, and was a contributing factor to his culture shock in Australia. I felt the need to revert back to French during the interview because Gilbert experienced difficulties in expressing himself fluently in English at that stage, utilising stilted language with a very strong accent in spite of professing to be very good at it. His identity crisis is the result of not only his sojourn in Australia but his childhood experiences where his mother had to deal with racism in the south of France because of her Spanish origins. It must also be noted that his blond, blue-eyed appearance indicates that he probably did not experience this racism as a child.

Moi en tous cas, je me suis jamais senti français. J’ai pas du tout une culture française très très forte. C’est pour ça que j’ai quitté la France. Je n’aime pas la France quoi. D’ailleurs, mes parents, mon père a vécu son enfance à l’étranger. Ma mère s’est sentie étrangère au début parce qu’il y avait le problème de racisme contre les espagnols au début. Je suis né dans un système ... enfin j’ai été élevé avec cette idée ... pas le rejet de la France mais surtout le rejet de la culture française ... Je suis pas à l’aise avec les français d’ailleurs. C’est pas du tout ma mentalité. Les français sont très individualistes, mais un individualisme comment dirais-je ... égoïste. C’est-à-dire, dans leur propre intérêt ... [Mon identité?] Européenne, ça c’est sur. Française, je peux pas la rejeter parce que forcément, j’ai été élevé en France mais je la rejette consciemment oui, culturellement. J’essaie surtout de me détacher de la mentalité française. En classe par exemple, au collège, au lycée, j’ai toujours été à part, j’ai jamais été habillé comme eux. J’ai jamais écouté la musique française. [J’ai gardé] la langue française sans doute par facilité, c’est ma langue. Mais je suis surtout allé vers l’anglais assez vite parce que c’est la langue que j’écouvais le plus ... Je suis pas un bon ambassadeur pour France. Je défends la France si on l’attaque mais je défends aussi l’Amérique si les français l’attaquent. Je pense que je suis très américanisé (Gilbert). 169

This quote represents a very strong cognitive denial of one’s cultural identity, at least on a conscious level. Gilbert explains he is incapable of completely denying his origins because of his French language and accent, but on an intellectual level, he firmly dissociates

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169 In any case I have never felt French. I don’t have a strong French culture at all. That’s why I left France. I don’t like France in fact. Besides, my parents, my father lived abroad during his childhood. My mother felt like a foreigner initially because there was a problem with racism against Spanish people initially. I was born in a system ... well, I was raised with this idea of ... not rejection of France but rather of French culture ... besides I am not comfortable with French people. It’s not at all my mentality. French people are very individualistic, but individualism how shall I say ... selfishness. That is, everything for themselves ... [My identity?] European, that’s for sure. French, I can’t reject because evidently I was raised there, but I reject France consciously, culturally. I try in particular to detach myself from French mentality. In class for example, in primary school, in secondary school, I was always marginalised, I was never dressed like they were. I have never listened to French music. [I have maintained] French language no doubt because it’s easy, it’s my language. But I went especially toward English quite quickly because that was the language I listened to the most ... I am not a good ambassador for France. I don’t like France ... I defend France if she is attacked but I also defend America if French people attack her. I think I am very Americanised (Gilbert).
himself from everything French, through his fashion sense, his choice of music, his previous demeanour in school and so forth. He ends his interview with a re-affirmation that he dislikes his country. This quote illustrates an exceptional case of almost total rejection of an individual’s cultural identity. His academic sojourn in Australia exacerbated his identity crisis as he confesses that he had gravitated toward English language and culture from an early age. He believes that he has succeeded in detaching himself from French people and their mentality because he has made the conscious decision to do so. Gilbert contradicts himself however when he professes to be a bad ambassador for France as he still defends his country, just as he does America when this nation is criticised. Confusion over his cultural identity is therefore acute as he directs all his energies toward Anglo-Saxon countries and everything these nations represent but he must maintain contact with France at least because of his mother and brother.

In summary, this section has examined the cultural identity paradigms of the participants from the first phase of this study, acculturation in Australia. Once again, the arguments presented here have grown out of the descriptive data analysis of chapter 4 on culture shock. As the members of the group included those characterised as French nationals and those who could be classified as multicultural identities, the findings were predictably similar to those from the re-entry study except for the issue that the group in this section had already re-negotiated their identity before returning home or had decided not to return. The subjects in this group completed their Australian sojourn experience with an emergent integrative intercultural identity response (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001). Further, like their counterparts from the re-entry study, they negotiated their ‘third place’ in the foreign milieu, electing to maintain select parts of their French cultural identity whilst rejecting the aspects of their culture that attracted criticism from foreigners. They also acquired parts of Australian cultural identity whilst rejecting other characteristics.

This section has revealed successful negotiation of a ‘third place’ in the foreign milieu did not preclude cases of identity crises. This outcome can be seen to be beneficial if sojourners are able to immerse themselves in foreign cultures and enhance their cultural repertoires with positive additive elements. However, the negative side to this scenario emerging from this study is a growing resentment toward their French compatriots whom they report to be closed-minded and xenophobic in their attitudes. The fact remains that, apart from Charles, all other respondents from this cross-sectional component of the study have not, or do not intend to return home permanently. With a new intercultural status,
they have elected to reject their homeland in favour of more accepting and tolerant societies that embrace multiculturalism and multilingualism. Where efforts to remain in Australia have met with disappointment, some respondents are now in the process of complying with immigration protocols seeking permanent residency status. In support of the view that a lack of adherence to principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism prevails in France, Seelye and Wasilewski (1996 p.14) argue the social order of a country can deprive individuals of their dignity or personhood, if they do not conform to ‘existing socially acceptable verbally labelled categories’. They cite France as an example where all persons, irrespective of religion or national origin, must select a first name for their French-born children from an approved government list of names, primarily those of saints or classical names. This list constrains a particular identity and a particular conception of what it means to be French.

Paradoxically, in light of French concerns for the hegemonic influence of English on French youth, at least with this group that has largely chosen to remain overseas, members of French society can be assured that embracing Anglo-Saxon culture and all that this entails, need not eradicate French cultural values of these sojourners or indeed immigrants. On the contrary, it seems they embrace the better aspects of their French cultural identity when it is placed in relief with other cultures (cf. Sussman, 2002). Those who return to France on the other hand, appear to reject more readily the measures imposed on them to converge back to French ways, which only re-affirms their resolve to embrace everything English with more fervour. Clearly, those who have returned home have espoused the concept of the ‘parallel dimension’ as an escape mechanism whilst those who have remained abroad personify the ‘third place’.

6.4 Discussion

National cultural identity was a significant issue in the ways the sojourners in this study understood themselves and their inter-cultural experiences. Firstly, the identity conflicts experienced by the French students were brought into sharp focus as a result of the intercultural experience as they professed to having never before posed themselves questions on their cultural identity. The background information on this point is significant if one recalls that very few students had any prior knowledge about Australia and its culture. Their sojourn experience was found to be tantamount to a voyage of self-discovery, personal growth and cultural awareness as much as geographical adventure.
The fact that the re-entry study produced heightened experiences of reverse culture shock is testimony to the identity crises many traversed during their studies in a land they came to embrace significantly. The negative reaction to their Australian sojourn by French society members precipitated soul-searching on the question of their emergent intercultural identity precisely because of the attitudes toward culture learning and the acquisition of English language they witnessed upon re-entry. This in turn made them reassess what being French meant to them, many choosing to reject various facets of French behaviour and cultural mores in the process. Thus, they began to focus on questions such as: “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?”

The common denominator linking the resultant identity responses of the group in general can be construed as follows - intercultural personality, (Kim, 2001; Kim et al., 1998); integrative identity response (Berry, 1980, 1997); or additive identity orientation, (Sussman, 2000, 2002). How the results of this study matched the above paradigms will be explained presently. In brief, the French returnees have essentially retained their French cultural identity but have assumed the additive component of European distinctiveness mixed with selected characteristics of Australian identity. No respondent appeared to have a separatist or marginalist orientation. There were however, several participants who displayed an assimilative tendency while on sojourn, evidenced in their partial rejection of their own culture whilst adapting to Australian ways. Their efforts to remain in Australia can also be seen as a contributing factor. However, as long as they enjoy various facets of French culture, such as the literature, history, fashion and gastronomy, and maintain their native French language, they are not likely to assimilate to such an extent that they will lose these key components of their French cultural identity. This is presumably because of the pride they demonstrated with regard to French culture throughout the interviews. Juxtaposed with this is their acknowledgement during the sojourn of the prestige French language and culture appear to enjoy worldwide. Enhanced appreciation for their cultural status was observed during the interactions with host nationals as well as international students on their campuses in Australia.

Similarly to Kim’s (1995; Kim et al., 1998) theory of intercultural adaptation, this project focused on the communicative interaction between the minority individuals (the French academic sojourners) and their dominant environment (the make up of host nationals and international students on the Australian campuses) which engendered intercultural adaptation in the former group. It is through these interactions with both networks in
Australia, as well as the general community, that these sojourners underwent what Kim calls a “gradual internal transformation in their functional fitness and psychological health, vis-à-vis the dominant milieu, as well as their identity experience” (Kim et al., 1998 p.4). Through this process, the cultural identity of the French students was remodelled as a result of the various interactions between the multiple groups involved in Australia. The French sojourners were forced to review their perception of themselves in relation to French and Australian identities and deal with potential identity conflicts as they crossed identity barriers not apparent whilst they lived at home. Given the heterogeneous makeup of the population of Australian educational institutions, the cultural identity responses of the sojourners were impacted not only by Australian identities but by many cultures represented by the international body on their campuses.

Using the four types of post-adjustment identity identified by Sussman (2002): affirmative, subtractive, additive and global, each with a distinct repatriation outcome, the French academic sojourners have adopted an additive identity orientation, related to Australia as well as to the international cultures existing within the microcosm of the Australian campuses. By the end of the sojourn, the participants possessed elements of the Australian cultural identity in conjunction with components of their original identity, and this culminated in high repatriation distress synonymous with a negative repatriation. Similarly to Sussman’s (2002) arguments, this additive shift is not to be conceived as identity loss, as the result of acquisition of many aspects of the foreign culture including its values, customs, mentality and emotion and so forth is better construed as an identity gain, as cultural identities have been heightened. However, this remodelling engendered a negative outcome upon re-entry because of the attitudes of members of French society toward dramatic changes which contributed considerably to the negative repatriation. The returnees found their transformed cultural identity was out of place in their home culture. Clearly, the examination of the whole transition cycle in this project, instead of discrete sections, as suggested by Sussman (2002), supports a more holistic approach to intercultural studies, thus far not widely carried out.

Finally, based on Berry’s (1980; 1997) paradigms for determining the identity responses of sojourners, on the whole, the French sojourners succeeded in integrating into the Australian context, registering what Berry (1997) termed an integrationist approach. This was achieved as a result of the permeable group boundaries found in a multicultural context which facilitated this process that supported this acculturation strategy. A system
of cooperation was established in the foreign context where mutual acceptance engendered
empathy for the visitors as well as interest in the foreign culture, and the sojourners were
able to maintain their cultural identity, their behavioural norms and values whilst adopting
many aspects of the host culture. This group of students were allowed to continue to evolve
and positive relations existed between French visitors and Australian hosts after resolution
of initial conflicts generated by stereotypical bias. This situation was possible because, as
Berry (1997) argues, integration can only be “freely” chosen and successfully desired by
non-dominant groups when the host-society is open to cultural diversity. The positive
relations and the interest Australians showed in French language and culture created the
appropriate ambience for the French students to maintain their cultural identity, their
behavioural norms and values whilst adopting many aspects of Australian culture. They
essentially established their ‘third place’ in the process (cf. Liddicoat et al., 1999).

The French respondents attested to a dynamic process of awareness of their changing
cultural identity which came into focus precisely because of the intercultural exchange
situation in Australia. Prior to this, all participants claimed to have given little or no
thought to the issue of cultural identity. When this was thrown into relief by the sojourn,
the French sojourners assumed an objective stance, realising the prestige that being French
had in the perceptions of foreigners. Through the process of decentring, the end result of
the remodelling of their identity was that they negotiated a ‘third place’ for themselves in
the Australian context and emerged as intercultural individuals. In doing so, they espoused
notions of hybridity because they chose to retain their own French cultural identity whilst
integrating the more favoured elements of Australian culture (cf. Bhabha, 1990; Liddicoat
et al., 1999).

The data illustrated the importance of the international contingent of students in particular,
in fostering good relations between the French sojourners and other cultures. Many
discovered Asian cultures for the first time and this had interesting implications for their
additive cultural identity orientation. Many returnees made plans to pursue further studies
or work for several years abroad, in Asian or Anglo-Saxon countries whose nationals had
presented hitherto unknown horizons for them. Their establishment of ‘a third place’ in the
foreign milieu coupled with their conversion into potential intercultural nomads saw them
retain the positive aspects of their French cultural identity which they will professedly
carry with them wherever they go whilst they integrate parts of various other cultures
during their sojourns (cf. Kim, 2001).
6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the successful cultural adaptation of the French academic sojourners in an Australian context, with ensuing implications for their perceptions of their cultural identity. Analysis of data on participants who were not classified as having pre-existing multicultural identities showed consensus on the fact the issues pertaining to cultural identity had not surfaced prior to their international sojourn in Australia. Cultural identity transformations were found to occur in response to temporal, cultural and situational contexts (cf. Ward et al., 2001). There was a positive adjustment by the French sojourners who became more tolerant and open-minded, intercultural individuals. As a result of this, the cultural identity of the majority of the group was remodelled to varying degrees and this negatively affected their re-entry processes (cf. Sussman, 2001, 2002).

The data has revealed an essential point, that the sojourn experience has thrown identity into relief. Through Tajfel’s (1981) notions of social comparisons which act as a mechanism for group identification one comes to understand that cultures are relative and not absolute. Through intercultural exposure, comparisons with other cultures are consciously or unconsciously made with re-modification of cultural identity contingent on the resolution of eventual conflict situations. The sense of belonging to French and/or European groups was highlighted through the sojourn experience as a result of the contrast between groups (cf. Tajfel, 1978). This study has shown that where the existing identities of the French sojourners proved to be firm, the addition of further social identities did not create conflict for this group as the two were not mutually exclusive (cf. Byram, 1999). Language was found to play a significant role in the maintenance of French identity of these sojourners (cf. Edwards, 1993). This study showed that the French individuals who employed a given ethnic label, i.e. French/European, varied significantly in their sense of belonging to the group, in their attitudes toward the group, their behaviour and how they perceived and understood their ethnicity. Variables used in measures of ethnic identity have traditionally focused on ethnic behaviours and practices pertaining to particular groups but two aspects of ethnic practices are commonly included. Of these, involvement in social activities with members of the in-group and participation in cultural traditions were salient for the French group (cf. Phinney, 1992).
This study has highlighted the importance of the view that “groups and individuals in multilingual settings (re)negotiate their identity in response to hegemonic language ideologies demanding homogeneity” (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001 p.248). This is particularly pertinent to both the acculturation and repatriation studies which underpin this project as problematic situations emerged initially in Australia when multilingualism was not always endorsed in the context of mixed groups, and subsequently for the returnees who could not fit back into French society. This was largely the result of perceived intransigence of members of both societies who discriminate against those who do not adhere to the dominant language in their social interactions.

The intercultural exchange in Australia was instrumental in bridging the gap between cultures whilst affirming the cultural identity for the French sojourners. During the first part of the cyclical process, negative stereotypical views were reported to dissipate at least in the Australian context when mutual acceptance had been attained. However, the data showed this situation of eventual mutual tolerance was not replicated in France. Through their interactions in Australia, with nationals and internationals alike, many French sojourners have in fact become intercultural nomads, capable of settling and functioning efficiently, culturally and linguistically in very diverse cultures from their own.

The additive identity response of the French sojourners recorded in my study is also consonant with other findings that suggest that sojourners, as opposed to their immigrant counterparts, retain a stronger identity with their culture of origin and a weaker identity with the culture of contact (Mendoza, 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1993c). This is through negotiation of a ‘third place’ where sojourners are comfortable in intercultural interactions without compromising their cultural identity. This view is relevant because my findings confirm this theory of ‘third place’, related to notions of hybridity (Bhabha, 1990; Liddicoat et al., 1999). Almost all respondents from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of this research project were found to embrace the notion of ‘a third place’ in the foreign setting. On the other hand, this paradigm translated into a notion I proposed as a parallel dimension when re-immersion into French culture took place. This term was born out of the incommunicability of the sojourn experience to those back home. Unable to transfer this newly found identity from the Australian context to the French, the returnees felt the need to establish a parallel dimension that constituted a coping mechanism for the difficult transitional process.
The parallel dimension was conceptualised to explicate a strategy the French returnees utilised to cope with the negative effects of reverse culture shock upon re-entry. Where the scenario of the third place assisted them in Australia to interact comfortably as bilingual individuals within a multicultural milieu, the unexpected negative reaction to the remodelling of their cultural identity back home shocked them into a defensive mode. The third place paradigm could not function equally well within the context of a ‘tight’ French society as the sojourners were confronted with inflexibility toward their use of English and any digression from acceptable social norms of behaviour. A parallel dimension allowed the returnees to reminisce about their Australian experience with like-minded intercultural individuals, identify with their new self and interact freely within the microcosm of their French culture.

The parallel dimension, depicting the coping mechanism utilised by the returnees, underscores the essence of this project because it in fact translates into a form of marginalisation, thereby increasing the potential for expatriation when talented French bilingual individuals find the xenophobic attitudes of their compatriots untenable. The returnees had largely expected to be respected for their cultural learning but French society was reported to be uninterested in the linguistic and cultural additions to their repertoire. The parallel dimension may represent a temporary solution, because even where some returnees successfully reached the stage of full recovery (adjustment), they nonetheless planned to leave when they had fulfilled their financial, educational and/or familial obligations because staying home was tantamount to negating their intercultural experience. This is presumably the reason the indescribable experience - une année entre parenthèses, which the returnees concealed within the parallel dimension, became the catalyst for the restlessness reported by the French respondents, triggering a view of the return home as a temporary phase.

In Chapter 7, I shall examine the implications of the impact of culture shock, reverse culture shock and identity issues on this group of academic sojourners. In addition I shall suggest measures that can be employed in order to minimise the effects of these phenomena on, not only this group of French students, but on future contingents of university students from France who undertake intercultural studies to unfamiliar destinations. Parallels can thus be drawn from this study so that academic sojourners from all cultures can benefit from the findings on this discrete French group.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This thesis emerged from close observation of a group of French students who were experiencing difficulties during their academic sojourn in Australia and were concerned about their re-entry. This was because once they had traversed the difficult stages of culture shock and reached the stage of full recovery (adjustment), they no longer wished to go home. For this reason, the cyclical journey of these sojourners was of great interest to this project. This dissertation was based on three significant themes: culture shock, reverse culture shock and cultural identity issues. Of significance was the notion of perceived identity because the issues in this study revolved around the way the respondents think about themselves rather than developing an external view of others’ identities. Therefore the discourse of the respondents about their own culture has been respected and their views have been taken as evidence of what they wished to project rather than as information about their original culture (cf. Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004). From a non-essentialist perspective of the dynamic nature of culture, Holliday et al. (2004 p. 5) argue cultures “flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through one another regardless of national frontiers and have blurred boundaries”. Given these parameters, the French respondents in this study belonged to and traversed a complex multiplicity of cultures both within and across societies. The end result was a dynamic move away from stereotypical national cultural perceptions toward a newly created identity (cf. Holliday et al., 2004). However, cultural identity, seen in terms of national identity, remains important for these sojourners, even though they have rejected aspects of what this identity represents. Even having chosen to live outside France, they still understand themselves in terms of ‘Frenchness’.

The real issue for sojourners is not an academic construct of identity, but rather their own understandings of how identity is enhanced or modified by their experience and how they enact their new perceptions in the original contexts. Although a successful adjustment was recorded by this group in the Australian context, upon re-entry, problems emerged in interpersonal relationships, with ensuing degrees of distress, feelings of alienation and loneliness as well as cultural identity remodelling as a result of this academic sojourn. The outcome was a desire to leave their homeland because of the negative perception of their sojourn by French society members.
The characteristics of sojourners’ intercultural transformation proposed by Kim (2001), the acquisition of increased proficiency in self-expression, in the foreign language also, and greater social competency are directly related to the transitory experience of the French academic sojourners appearing in this study. Although my study was conceived on a qualitative methodology, the results were similar to those of Kim’s quantitative study, as the majority of the respondents no longer wished to go home after successful integration into Australian society. Many of the French sojourners even professed that their native tongue had atrophied in the process of acquiring English. This was found to be an exaggeration through analysis of the re-entry study as the majority of subjects regained full use of their written and oral skills in French language in the space of three to six months. What is clear from my study is that although many French students professed to have become intercultural, they nonetheless remained faithful to the more favourable aspects of their French culture. This, it appears, was carried out with systematic rejection of the less savoury characteristics, as perceived through the eyes of foreigners. The respondents consequently perceived their co-nationals to be less evolved and close minded and they deliberately distanced themselves. The end result is that they felt capable of settling in most first world countries as a result of a transformed cultural identity.

The data revealed an essential point, that the sojourn experience has thrown identity into relief. The presumed nuances in dealing with the multifaceted concept of cultural identity were not immediately detected by the French respondents in this research project as they appeared completely secure in their cultural identity orientation. This implies issues relating to their identity only emerged during the intercultural exchange situation when challenged in the multicultural context of Australia (cf. Sussman, 2000). It appears the emergence of one’s cultural identity is heightened at the beginning of the cultural transition, presumably as a result of social comparisons (cf. Tajfel, 1978) between the diverse cultures in contact situations. As a result of the challenge to cultural identity, according to Sussman, “a new social identity status emerges - that of out-group member, an expatriate in a new cultural environment” (Sussman, 2000 p.10). The salience of cultural identity issues is thus intensified if one considers the non-essentialist views on this subject, such as the argument that essentialism in the way we see people is the same essentialism that drives sexism and racism. Culturalism, where members of a group are reduced to the pre-defined characteristics of a cultural label, is further argued as otherising the individual (cf. Holliday et al., 2004).
Through Tajfel’s (1981) notions of social comparisons which act as a mechanism for group identification as well as other variations on this theme expounded by Liddicoat et al. (1999), one understands that cultures are relative and not absolute. Through intercultural exposure, comparisons with other cultures are consciously or unconsciously made with re-modification of cultural identity contingent on the resolution of eventual conflict situations. The sense of belonging to French and/or European groups was highlighted through the sojourn experience as a result of the contrast between groups (cf. Tajfel, 1978). This study has shown that where the existing identities of the French sojourners proved to be firm, the addition of further social identities did not create conflict for this group as the two were not mutually exclusive (cf. Byram, 1999). Language clearly played a significant role in the maintenance of French identity of these sojourners (cf. Edwards, 1985).

Other studies recording an additive identity response are consonant with the findings of my study, suggesting that sojourners retain a relatively strong sense of belonging to their culture of origin and a weaker sense of belonging to the culture of contact (cf. Mendoza, 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1993c). This outcome can be understood as negotiation of a ‘third place’ where sojourners interrelate comfortably in intercultural interactions without compromising their cultural identity (cf. Bhabha, 1990; Liddicoat et al., 1999). Almost all respondents from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of this research project embraced the notion of ‘a third place’ in the foreign milieu. Conversely, this paradigm translated into a notion I conceptualised as a parallel dimension when re-immersion into French culture took place. This dimension resulted from the incommunicability of the sojourn experience to those back home, precipitating what became a transitory phenomenon. When the remodelled cultural identity of the returnees, resulting from the sojourn experience in Australia, was found to be at odds with expectations of French nationals in the French context, the returnees felt the need to establish a parallel dimension that constituted a coping mechanism for the difficult transitional process.

The concept of a parallel dimension is critical to understandings of the process of academic sojourns. The parallel dimension signifies a lack of social, familial and professional support, empathy and understanding for the difficulties experienced by returning students. The incommunicability of the sojourn experiences is at the root of these problems as their tentative explanations were denigrated and their academic sojourn relegated to the status of a holiday in the sun. The parallel dimension was conceived to describe the state reached by the French returnees as they experienced the negative effects
of reverse culture shock upon re-entry. Where the scenario of the *third place* had assisted them in Australia to interact comfortably as bilingual individuals with the diverse populations in the host society, the unexpected reaction to the remodelling of their cultural identity back home shocked them into a defensive mode. The *third place* could not function in the context of a ‘tight’ French society as the sojourners were confronted with intransigence toward their use of English and any display of Australian life style changes in their demeanour. A *parallel dimension* was thus established where the returnees could reminisce about their Australian experience with like-minded individuals, interact freely in English and express themselves through the evolved personality. Their experience became private because they could not draw on it during re-entry; they did not believe anyone could comprehend their experience. Therefore, they kept it parallel to their real existence once home.

The indescribable experience of *une année entre parenthèses* (a year in parenthesis) became the catalyst for the restlessness reported by the French respondents and a transitory trend was set in motion, eventually leading to temporary or permanent expatriation. The sojourners concealed their *année entre parenthèses*, a subject they discussed only with those they believed could comprehend their experience. This concept must be understood within the context of academic sojourns in France in particular, as studies have not been carried out by French academics on the phenomena of culture shock and reverse culture shock and cultural identity remodelling during cultural exchanges and even less on implications of study abroad on young French returnees. The reason for this may lie in the fact that exchanges have taken place primarily in traditional European countries which academics have considered did not warrant investigation, probably due to the proximity of and cultural similarity between France and other European nations.

The *parallel dimension* underscores the essence of this project because of the real risk of expatriation of talented French bilingual individuals who find the xenophobic attitudes of their compatriots untenable. They had largely expected to be lauded for their cultural learning but French society was reported to be uninterested in the linguistic and cultural additions to their repertoire. The age of globalisation has facilitated and encouraged the rebellious reaction of returned academic sojourners by fostering further international forays to cultures where interculturality is endorsed.
The findings of this study in the Australian and French contexts appear to substantiate the view that “groups and individuals in multilingual settings (re)negotiate their identity in response to hegemonic language ideologies demanding homogeneity” (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001 p.248). Both the acculturation and repatriation studies of this project were influenced by this view, although to a lesser degree in Switzerland because of the polyglot status of the nationals. Difficulties arose initially in Australia when multilingualism was not always endorsed in the context of their university campuses and the society at large, and subsequently for the returned academic sojourners who could not fit back into French society. This was largely the result of perceived intransigence of members of both societies who discriminate against those who do not adhere to the dominant language in their social interactions. Hegemonic language ideologies are of concern in this era of globalisation particularly because the language of a nation is a crucial component of its cultural heritage. The data has demonstrated that these principles are clearly pertinent to the French academic sojourners who expressed pride in their language as much as other components of their cultural heritage. The motivation for their sojourn was primarily instrumental, i.e., to complement their native tongue, thereby enhancing their opportunities in the workforce and secondly to contribute to the promotion of international goodwill, tolerance and harmony between cultures. Although this secondary motivation may have been unconscious, they succeeded in adding English to their linguistic repertoire and broadening their cultural identity. However, the reception they initially received in Australia, when speaking French with co-nationals, coupled by the xenophobic attitudes they witnessed upon their return to France when trying to enact their new cultural understandings, both posed challenges for realising their goals.

The extraordinary experience in Australia had an immense impact on the French sojourners because as the data revealed the French know little about this country and its culture. Consequently, the effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock on these sojourners increased in significance when remodelling of their cultural identity was factored into the equation. The young returnees considered their co-nationals incapable of comprehending what they have lived through because, upon arrival in Australia, they themselves had been totally ill-equipped to cope linguistically and culturally with the multiculturality of Australian people.
A pivotal finding has emerged from this study. Many French sojourners have chosen to partially reject group membership as a result of discrepancies which emerged between their perception of certain elements of French culture as negative, in accordance with Tajfel’s (1981) arguments. This appeared to be a direct result of changed cultural identity orientations. The distinctiveness that became apparent during the sojourn experience can be construed as precipitating a mobility strategy, where hybridisation became possible. This is a notion which contrasts with Tajfel’s arguments and can be offered as a contribution to social identity theories. According to Tajfel, the identity of individuals is derived from the in-group and the choice to retain or reject membership within that group is contingent on discrepancies that exist between their perception of positive or negative elements. This ultimately depends on reactions to changed cultural identity orientations such as occurred with the French students during their sojourn. In the Australian setting, the French students ultimately integrated elements of both French and Australian culture which co-existed harmoniously because the internal negativity perceived by the minority French culture was not perceived as such by the dominant culture. This essentially constitutes a paradox. Tajfel (1981) assumes that negative comparisons are shared by in-group and out-group, however, in none of the cases of this study is this so. The negativity is perceived by in-group members but the identity still has positive values in the out-group which facilitates mobility, but with hybridisation rather than assimilation.

Clearly, the French group could only envisage being French outside of France because members of French society in France displayed xenophobic tendencies toward their culture learning. Outside France, they could enjoy being quintessentially French in a non-French environment. This can also be paralleled with notions of essentialism and otherisation. The vicissitudes of identity can be construed as paramount in determining the future cultural identity responses of young French people who sojourn in foreign countries for extended periods of time. How they negotiate and re-negotiate their cultural identities, based on the components of each country’s uniqueness is an intrinsic part of the dynamic nature of culture and identity (Liddicoat, 2002).

The lack of preparation for both processes of acculturation and repatriation is a significant element among the factors that led to the creation of the parallel dimension, highlighting the need for further investigation into potentially negative effects of the phenomena in question. The xenophobic attitudes of their co-nationals toward the Australian cultural experience, that the returnees witnessed upon re-entry, was largely responsible for their
desire to leave France after fulfilling their various obligations. This situation arose from the
dissatisfaction with their lives. The overt and covert intolerance to changes in their
personality, their cultural learning and their desire to speak English met with such
disappointment that the returnees embraced their irrevocably transformed cultural identity
with even greater fervour. They preferred to leave France because they knew that they
were powerless to change existing French mores and cultural behaviour toward everything
foreign. The returnees essentially felt they no longer fit into French society because their
remodelled intercultural identity was misconstrued as snobbery. If the intransigence of
French members of society remains consistent with regard to the desire of returnees to
practice their cultural learning, particularly when speaking English, and if they are
unwilling to accept modifications to their cultural identity, in this age of increased mobility
it will not be difficult for them to leave. A situation of ‘brain drain’ (Adams, 1968) may
thus become a reality. The complexity of this issue must be examined in light of the
existing threat of the hegemony of English and Americanisation to a large extent.

Preparation and education in the growing industry of intercultural exchanges are clearly
indicated if successful outcomes are to be achieved during both adaptation and re-entry
transitions. The largely problematic re-entry process has been found to be of fundamental
importance for future directions of research. In this study, equal denigration of each other’s
cultures by both the French sojourners and their Australian hosts occurred when perceived
threat was apparent but this was essentially during the early phase of adaptation.
Antagonistic sentiments were dissipated when mutual acceptance and empathy were
established between the groups. It was argued that acceptance and tolerance of differences,
evident in both cultural groups, engendered the fostering of good intercultural relations
between the French and the Australians. Paradoxically, it is this resultant understanding
and friendship between cultures that exacerbated the re-entry identity conflicts for the
French students because they no longer wished to leave Australia. Firstly, given the
reluctance to return home of the majority of the group, it is not surprising that difficulties
arose during the re-entry transition. Secondly, the process was further exacerbated by the
inability of the returnees to reconcile their new intercultural identity with rigid or ‘tight’
social norms in France. Some returnees professed they felt they belonged in Australia and
no longer in France, whilst others seriously questioned where they ultimately belonged as a
result of their exchange experience. Issues of cultural identity are therefore of crucial
importance to this study and to further research.
The lack of pre-departure preparation, both on a linguistic and psychological level impacted significantly on the adaptation experience of the French sojourners. The vicissitudes of identity, influenced by hegemonic language ideologies, were the catalyst for the emergent cultural identity of the group. However, findings of my study are consistent with Kim’s (1995) theory that sojourners emerge from the troublesome phases of culture shock with greater psychological health. The literature on culture shock shows us that the process of acculturation may be fraught with difficulties but the resultant personal growth far outweighs the problematic periods endured by sojourners. Its significance therefore is unmistakable, especially as globalisation has created a global village where good intercultural relations are of paramount importance between nations. The intercultural exchange in Australia was instrumental in bridging the gap between cultures whilst affirming the cultural identity for the French sojourners. Should the humanistic benefits of such ventures be negated as a result of negative attitudes from both sides of the globe, the objectives of cross-cultural education would need to be re-examined.

What is patently obvious through the analysis of the data is that the cultural identity transformation of the French sojourners returning from their overseas venture in Australia impacts significantly on their future lives and career orientations in their home country. As increased interest in Australian exchanges intensifies in France, the impact on the emergent intercultural identity of French young people is predicted to play an important role in the structuring of their society. This of course clearly remains conjecture as re-structuring of social norms is contingent on a multitude of factors, least of which concerns a tolerant attitude. If cultural barriers can be dismantled, harmony can be achieved and the process of adjustment may be expedited. It is hoped that the findings of this study may contribute to enhanced international relations between countries with divergent cultures through seminars and workshops established by administrative bodies of educational institutions in both the home and host countries, consulates and tourist bureaux. These strategic measures are imperative prior to departure in order to adequately prepare international students for their sojourn as well as their re-entry processes. Increased intercultural education may thus promote personal growth and more tolerant and indulgent attitudes to foreign cultures by respective exchange students. The implications of a negative re-entry process for academic sojourners in this instance cannot be underestimated as they may have negative effects on the future prospects of a nation’s youth contingent.
Although culture shock was temporarily perceived as a form of alienation in the new culture, it cannot be denied that the positive aspect of this phenomenon was of immense benefit to the French sojourners. This became evident when attitudes of both visitors and hosts changed. The negative effects of reverse culture shock on the other hand, are clearly in need of investigating for future successful intercultural exchanges. As this study has revealed, during the early stages of the re-entry process in France, much discontent was registered by the respondents. They are disgruntled with the fabric of French society, with politicians, educational institutions and unemployment, to such an extent that an inability to settle back home is precipitating moves for expatriation. The dissatisfaction felt by the majority of returnees may have significant repercussions for French society because of the likelihood of brain drain (Adams, 1968). There was consensus in this project in views on the re-entry component of the research concerning the ‘therapeutic’ nature of the interviewing process for the informants. Further developments on this aspect of this type of research could make an important contribution to re-entry research.

In conclusion, when one succeeds in transcending the transitional conflicts that are a natural part of adaptation in immersion situations, the experience offers the potential for authentic personal growth and personality development (cf. P. Adler, 1975). The successful integration of this discrete group of sojourners clearly supports this principle. On a broader scale it must eventually assist on a global dimension where the need to restructure national paradigms has never been greater.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX

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