OVERSEAS STUDENTS FROM ASIA IN AN
AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY.

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Declaration of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is given in the text.

Signature: [Signature]
Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the assistance and support of the following:

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Abstract

This case study is the result of research, using focus groups and interviews, carried out at Gossamer Grammar, a Melbourne private secondary school for boys. It examines the arrival of significant numbers of students from overseas, particularly Asia, and the consequences for the individuals concerned as well as those for the school and its community. In the examination and analysis of these issues, the comments of members of the school administration and local and overseas students have been used. The observations of accommodation providers and the author (in the role of teacher and pastoral carer at the school) are also included. Conclusions are made as to how to better provide for the needs of overseas students studying in Australian secondary schools. This case study provides research and analysis of an educational and social issue that has attracted little attention in the past: that of the welfare of overseas students of secondary school age.
1. Introduction.

Throughout the last decade there has been a substantial increase in demand for Australian educational services from foreign students, largely originating from within Asia. The concurrent emergence of the Australian education service sector and Asian economies has produced a situation where Australian secondary schools have actively sought and received increasing numbers of students from across Asia. Department of Education, Employment and Training statistics show that prior to the mid-nineteen-eighties there were relatively few overseas students studying in Australia. In 1988 the total was approximately 20,000 and by 1997 this had grown to approximately 150,000; of these 83.4% were from Asia. In 1997 there were 14,260 students who permanently resided in Asia but studied at Australian secondary schools or English Language centres. Many of these students continue on to study in the Australian tertiary sector (Department of Education and Training 1997, pp.9-24).

The social, cultural and academic backgrounds of Asian students vary greatly from their Australian counterparts and this leads to difficulties coping with demands placed on the students while at school and in whatever accommodation situation they find themselves. As the vast majority of Asian students studying in Australia do so at the tertiary level, welfare of students of secondary age attracts less attention. The lack of literature in this area
proves this point. Whilst studying overseas presents many problems for all age-groups, the adolescent years tend to produce significant developmental problems of a personal nature and to concurrently deal with a totally new environment deserves special consideration.

This case study examines issues related to the influx of students from Asia to Gossamer Grammar, a Melbourne private school for boys. In particular, the study is made from two perspectives: that of the school as an organisation and that of the students who have travelled from Asia to study there. It should be noted that overseas students are defined as those who reside permanently in a foreign country but study in Australia. This means that their families pay the equivalent of the Federal Government allowance normally made for Australian students as well as the normal school fees.

Gossamer Grammar is a traditional school with a focus on academic achievement and the arts. It caters to a niche market of families who can afford fees at the top end of the market and value a disciplined environment for their sons where they can focus on their studies. Students also enjoy the opportunity to engage in extra-curricular activities ranging from the arts to sport and outdoor pursuits. The school provides pastoral care for its students through the House system. There are about eighty boys in each of the eight houses with five or six teachers allocated to them. The Houses are organised
vertically (containing equal numbers of students from each year level) with the teachers allocated to small groups and remaining in contact with these students during their entire time at the school. The Heads of House are teachers who are responsible for the effective operation of each house. While this system is very effective in the provision of pastoral care for most students, it is questionable as to whether its personnel and resources effectively cater for the particular demands of the welfare of overseas students.

As an organisation valuing tradition, Gossamer Grammar has retained many features and values reflecting those of the Public School system in the United Kingdom. There is an emphasis on ceremony and symbols and the traditions of the Anglican Church are central to the school. Assemblies involve Bible readings and hymn singing and the teachers (often referred to as masters), many of whom are long serving, wear academic gowns regularly. Senior boys are awarded colours and other awards for excellence in academic, artistic and sporting excellence and success and popularity of students often depends on success in these areas. Discipline is relatively high for an Australian school. For example, students are required to be fastidiously groomed and a full-time school marshal administers a system of detentions.
Significant changes in the profile of the student body have led to anxiety amongst older staff and longer serving members of the school community. The change that attracts most comment is the appearance of a significant number of Asian students at Gossamer Grammar. While resentment appears to be dwindling over time, there is a need for staff and local students to understand and appreciate the nature of the problems experienced by overseas students at the school.

This case study outlines the impact of increased numbers of students from Asia on the life of Gossamer Grammar School as well as the experiences of the students themselves. It presents an opportunity for them to register their ideas, concerns and experiences as newcomers to Australia and Australian schools while identifying strategies that may be useful in enhancing the experience for the students themselves and other members of the school community who work with them. The providers of 'homestay' accommodation for overseas secondary students also relate their experiences and opinions regarding the welfare of the students in their care. It is also hoped that this research will provide an insight into the world of secondary education for overseas students as there are few examples of literature available focusing on this particular issue.
The study consists of six chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The literature review (chapter two) examines related texts and articles providing background information on students from Asia and issues surrounding their education at home and abroad. Chapter three (methodology) outlines the methods used to gather data for this study and gives reasons for utilising them. Chapters four and five examine and analyse the data collected from the perspective of the school and the overseas students respectively.
2. Literature Review

In this review of the literature based on international education, and the experiences of Asian students in particular, the content, findings and views of authors who have examined information and issues on this subject are outlined and discussed. There is an initial overview of publications designed to explain the features and details of Asian culture to outsiders. This provides a context in which to consider and understand more specific literature on areas such as the academic background of Asian students and the difficulties experienced by them when living and studying in a foreign country such as Australia. Examining literature concerning the difficulties faced by those who teach and care for Asian students completes the review.

There has been much literature published over many years raising issues related to students studying overseas. As Kennedy (1995) points out, the phenomenon of international study is not a new one. Students were known to travel large distances across Europe in medieval times to attend a particular university or be taught by a particular scholar. Nor is international education currently only an Asian-Australian relationship because Europe and the United States are also common destinations for Asian students. It appears that Australia is currently a financially attractive place to study since the Asian economic downturn of late 1997. (Tongchaoum, 1998). Statistical
analyses, research papers and books abound describing, discussing and analysing the many issues relating to international study. Although each country of destination for students will present some unique problems, the factors affecting the welfare of international students will be largely the same for an Asian student living and studying in any modern western society.

Within the literature, much has also been written about the education of overseas students in Australia with a number of papers appearing in the 1960s (Benn, 1961 and Adam, 1966) and growing steadily in subsequent decades. While the literature describing the cultural and academic backgrounds of Asian students studying in Australia relates to students of all ages, written description and analysis of experiences and problems of Asian students while studying in Australia focuses entirely on students attending universities. This points to an opportunity to identify problems that are unique to students of a secondary school age.

a. Cultural Background of Students from Asia.

The values and norms in Asian society contribute to many differences in life experiences for Asians to those encountered by Australians. Jean Brick's *China: A Handbook in Intercultural Communication* (1991) is devoted to outlining each of these differences in turn and, briefly suggesting strategies for enhancing communication between Asians and Australians and the
integration of Asians into Australian schools and society in general. History, social hierarchy, education, religion, economy, language, friendships and family relationships contain some of the major differences while more subtle yet still important differences such as use of leisure time, shopping habits and calculation of age add to the contrast. Brick succinctly shows that by the time adolescent Asians meet adolescent Australians at school, each have been subject to a myriad of standards, expectations, conventions, rules and regulations. These are, in most cases, vastly different from one another and, in some, completely foreign or totally unrelated, in that a feature of one culture may have no equivalent in the other.

In most Asian cultures traditional values play a particularly central role in the way society and its members behave. Pratt (1992), Ballard and Clanchy (1991) and Brick (1991) describe the enduring features of Asian societies as a means of putting the learning habits of the people into some sort of context. Families are seen as a long-term entity and an ever-developing group (Caplan, Choy and Whitmore, 1992). Each individual has a prescribed role, with certain expectations and standards going with each particular station in life such as parent, student or teacher. The sense of duty attached to these roles is regarded as more important to the future of the society as a whole rather than for any outcomes of a personal nature (Brick, 1991). These roles and requirements can be traced back to Confucian ethics and tradition.
providing elements of a common influence across Asia. They also outweigh self-determined thoughts and action (Pratt 1992). The teachings of earlier wisdom are used to encourage stability and preservation of standards and acceptance of knowledge built up over the ages is expected without question.

Many Asian cultures place much greater emphasis than ours does on the conserving attitude to knowledge: scholarship is traditionally manifested by an extensive and accurate knowledge of the wisdom contained in authoritative texts or the sayings of earlier scholars and sages. "I do not invent", Confucius explains, "but merely transmit; I believe in and love antiquity".

( BALLARD AND CLANCHY, 1991, p.15)

This does not mean that Asian school curricula contain only historical matter just as Australian schools do not solely rely on experimentation and critical analysis. Latter twentieth century economic and technological growth patterns confirm that Asian schools teach plenty of contemporary thought and practice (Stevenson, 1992). It is, however, the underlying patterns of behaviour, attitudes to learning and the method of acquisition of knowledge that are influenced by long-standing cultural influences.

The socialisation of Asian children, while different in the various countries of the region, contains underlying similar characteristics. Religious beliefs, respect for tradition and elders and the central role of the family lead young people to a characteristic view of the world and their place in it. As a result, students from Asia have particular expectations concerning their education
and the teaching and learning styles they experience at school. As a significant part of the socialisation process occurs at school, the educational background of Asian learners must be examined to gain a better understanding of the emerging international student.

b. Academic Background of Students from Asia.

'The Chinese emphasis on education is legendary'

(Stevenson, 1992)

Being at school in Asia has, of course, many general similarities to the Australian experience in that there are classrooms, teachers, timetables, general areas of study and so on. The physical resources will vary greatly, not only within countries, but also between them, with the perception that facilities such as libraries and recreational complexes are more available and plentiful in Australia than in most other countries (Donohoue Clyne, 1993). However, organisational structure in Asian schools leads to the beginnings of a particular schooling experience for Asian students. Brick (1991) reports that class sizes average 40 to 50 and that school is held six days per week. The school day lasts from 8.00am to 5.00pm with a one and a half-hour break in the middle. Stevenson (1992), investigating in China, Taiwan and Japan found that although the days were long, they were ‘broken up by extensive amounts of recess’. This was seen as a strategy to assist learning during a long day for young minds.
It is however, the relationships, attitudes and teaching and learning styles that exist in schools which provide the greatest impact on students and their ability to adapt to, and cope with, new educational environments. Education is seen as paramount by most Asian families, stemming from ancient traditions and teachings and attitude to learning is almost universally positive (Pratt, 1992, Kenyan and Amrapala, 1991). Teachers in Asian schools are deeply respected by their students not only as an individual but as an expert in their particular discipline (Biggs, 1994, Pratt, 1992). It is also widely documented that Asian teachers engage in a lecture-style teaching method where they pass on their accepted knowledge of the subject matter to a receptive student audience (Samuelowicz, 1987, Kenyan and Amrapala, 1993, Ginnsberg, 1992). Much research and literature also suggest that Asians learn via a rote or 'surface' method. This claim appears in almost every text or paper I have read regarding the education of students from Asia. This perception of the existing situation in Asian schools is typified by the following quote:

*Hong Kong students display almost unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher or lecturer. This may be explained in terms of an extension or transfer of the Confucian ethic of filial piety. Coupled with this is an emphasis on strictness and proper behaviour, rather than an expression of opinion, independence, self-mastery, creativity and all-round personal development.*

(Murphy, 1987)
To brand Asians as ‘surface learners’ is somewhat contentious. John Biggs and others delve further into the learning patterns of Asian students with Biggs claiming that a paradox exists between learning style and outcomes. Whereas most reports, or teachers surveyed in them, suggest that ‘surface learning’ leads to a collection of unrelated facts being recalled and reproduced under examination conditions (Samuelowicz, 1987, Burns, 1991), Biggs claims that Asian students learn at least as ‘deeply’ as Westerners. This was supported by further research by Volet and Renshaw (in Watkins and Biggs, 1996) who claim that the adaptability of Asian students to new educational situations has been underestimated in the past.

Having taught many Asian students from a range of different cultures and with different backgrounds and abilities, I have observed this paradox and agree that rote learning, possibly combined with innate academic ability and a strong work ethic, can lead to a deeper understanding for Asian students. I also support the notion of adaptability having observed the success of many Asian families as they begin a new life in Australia after coping with extremely difficult times prior to their arrival. Indeed, the academic achievement and achievement in general of Asian students is commonly the subject of admiration of many Westerners (Caplan, Choy and Whitmore, 1992, Stevenson, 1992)
c. Cultural and social difficulties experienced by students from Asia in Australia.

Culture shock is a well-documented condition. It refers to the presence of stress and tension in an individual who is exposed to the unfamiliar features of a foreign culture (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991). Factors cited as causes of culture shock, apart from underlying language difficulties, include finding suitable accommodation, financial problems, homesickness, loneliness and lack of familiar food. The condition may persist for varying lengths of time depending on the individual (Kenyon and Amrapala, 1991). Apart from general anxiety, (Burns, 1991) found that specific problems such as headaches, memory loss, fatigue and gastric problems were consistently worse for overseas students than local students during the first semester at an Australian university.

Within the broad problem of culture shock exist many day-to-day difficulties and complications that are experienced by Asian students. While each considered on its own may seem insignificant, it is not hard to imagine how minor problems could quickly combine to produce major difficulties. Kenyon and Amrapala (1991) have produced a guide for people working with overseas students and use an ‘imagine you were in their shoes’ approach in helping to understand the problems. They include body language, different eating manners, hygiene habits, social taboos and the social attitudes of
families and friends. At one time or another many other authors touch on these situations e.g. (Nixon, 1993, Donohoue Clyne, 1994). Explanations of these problems are welcome as they tend to remain invisible to locals who remain immersed in their own familiar surroundings with the often-present language barrier adding to the frustration of overseas students.

As far as the students are concerned, explanations of the features and intricacies of Australian culture, especially as they exist in schools, may be interesting if they can be understood. However, inclusion in the culture does not necessarily follow. Burns (1991) reports that few Australian friends were made and that Asians desired more contact or involvement in social events at an Australian university. Donohoue Clyne (1994) explains that the existence of an Anglo-Celtic sporting heritage in many Australian schools may exclude Asian students thus contributing to a lack of interest in these types of activities for foreign students. Schools, especially those retaining traditional extra-curricular structures, have the potential to alienate Asian students through a combination of lack of inclusion on the school’s part and lack of interest on that of the students.

Barker (1990, p.p. 17-19) outlines descriptions in several early studies (1950s and 1960s) of fluctuations in the feelings of overseas students. “The adjustment process is likened to a roller coaster pattern of valleys and peaks
where periods of excitement and interest, especially in early stages, are followed by disorientation, depression or frustration”.

This analysis is acceptable in that changes and cycles in attitudes and perceptions tend to be a natural human experience. The existence of such a phenomenon in overseas students has implications for the collection of data for research in this area of study.

d. Academic difficulties experienced by students from Asia in Australia.

Students arriving from Asia in Australia inevitably experience culture shock and the added stress of the unfamiliarity of a new school undoubtedly compounds the situation. As a pastoral co-ordinator in a secondary school, I regularly observe high levels of anxiety experienced by Australian students who transfer into a new school within their own city. Adjusting to a new school from overseas severely complicates the settling-in process, and the expectations of overseas students tend to be very different to the realities in Australian schools.

As language and culture are inextricably linked, language remains as the most common problem for students from Asia (Kennedy, 1995, Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, Nixon, 1993, Burns, 1991, Samuelowicz, 1987). The Australian accent and use of certain language such a slang, humour or
sarcasm is often confusing to students arriving in Australia having mastered, and expecting to communicate in, the 'Queen's English' as taught at home (Burns, 1991). Of course, reading and writing in English is also a necessity. For example, writing long essays in a foreign language can be difficult, especially when students have little or no exposure to this type of task in their countries of origin (Samuelowicz, 1987).

The teaching style of Australians is also a source of concern for Asian students. Their expectation of Australian teachers relates to the respected position enjoyed by teachers in Asia and not often one afforded to Australian educators. "Overseas students (Asians in particular) tend to look on lecturers as close to gods. Often they are very reluctant to question statements or textbooks" (quoted in Samuelowicz, 1987, p. 124).

While most Australian teachers command respect, they are, in general, relaxed and informal in their teaching style, do not propose to have perfect knowledge of their subject areas and expect greater initiative from their students (Kennedy, 1995, Samuelowicz, 1987). This may also lead to the misconception that Australian teachers are lazy or careless because they do not fulfil their expected role as a provider of the facts required to be successful in a particular subject.
Nixon (1993) and Ballard and Clanchy (1991) refer to the 'shock' experienced by Asian students when their Australian counterparts question the knowledge of a teacher, express doubts about their methods or misbehave on purpose. Ballard and Clanchy (1991) report that the simple task of asking a question about something not understood can be an overwhelming task for Asian students, the possible language barrier and the perceived potential of offending the Australian teacher being too great to overcome. Volunteering answers to questions also presents difficulties. Asian students, from classroom experience in their country of origin, will expect to make a correct response from information already supplied by the teacher. Guessing or giving a wrong answer is not really an option for them. The strategy of encouraging critical analysis of both the spoken and written word is also foreign to Asian students and the problems deepen when methods of analysis such as small discussion groups or addressing the class are used in Australian classrooms.

In my country of origin, we do not have much group discussion or tutorials. We are not supposed to make any argument in class. So, it is quite strange to me to see such a thing in this country and it is hard for me to do so. (Thailand, Ph.D. Science)

(quoted in Samuelowicz, 1987, p. 125)

The impression one gets from reading and analysing the literature relating to student difficulties is that there must be a multiplying effect of this rather alarming range of problems. They are often inter-related and self-reinforcing with the lack of transparency for teachers being perpetuated by language
barriers and a cultural limit on individual requests for help. As Burns (1991) reports and as I have observed, Asian students may begin to withdraw from school and social interaction, placing them in what Governments have labeled an 'at risk' group. Many Asian students get little or no time to simply relax and enjoy the experience of international education – surely one aspect that all parties involved would hope to be an outcome of the exercise. Primary literature sources suggest that expectations from home and high levels of motivation clashing with poor academic results have the potential to make life extremely unpleasant for students from Asia studying in Australia.

e. Difficulties faced by teachers with Asian students in their classes.

The difficulties faced by Australians teaching Asian students, are, of course, linked directly to those of the students themselves. Kennedy (1995), summarises earlier studies and concludes that English language proficiency is, not surprisingly, the most significant problematic factor. Related to this is the inability or reluctance of Asians to actively participate in the dynamics of the classroom. Sameulowicz (1987, p.p. 126-127) identifies the frustration experienced by lecturers who receive little or no feedback from Asian students. Volet and Renshaw (in Watkins and Biggs, 1997, p.215) challenge claims of poor levels of participation. In a short-term longitudinal study of tutorial participation of a group of locals and predominantly Chinese students from Singapore they report:
Overall we found no differences in the total quantity or types of participation of the local and Singaporean students. Both groups of students engaged in tutorial discussions of their own accord, and at the instigation of the tutor.

The perceived method of rote learning has also been an area of concern for lecturers. Some are reported to gain little satisfaction in being simply a dealer in facts and figures and the problem becomes a practical one if the acquisition and utilisation of analytical and critical skills are a desired students outcome of the course of study being undertaken.

Burns (1991, p.67), who surveyed 133 first year university students mainly from Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia made an alarming finding.

Students felt that staff were hardly aware of students' social, emotional or health problems and were not particularly interested in helping even if they were aware. Even with regard to academic problems only around a third of the students felt that staff were aware and only around three quarters of the students perceived academic staff as interested enough to help in what would seem to be a fairly central part of any teacher's role, that of helping students with academic problems. It can be argued that social, emotional and health problems are difficult to detect, that staff are not specifically trained to detect such and that problems in these aspects in their life do not fall within their ambit. Yet such problems are the major source of academic failure. However, the general impression held by students is that staff are to some extent uncaring and are not interested in their students.

This observation raises the issue of areas of responsibility of staff for their overseas students. While university lecturers are not usually expected to go beyond the academic needs of their students (and, from the extract above, it appears that even this may be questionable in some cases), secondary
teachers certainly have a pastoral role. There has been little, if any, research carried out on the effectiveness or otherwise of schoolteachers in this regard. There is also a lack of analysis in the literature of the support and professional development required from schools to prepare secondary teachers for coping with the special problem created by Asian students in their classrooms. I have observed a severe lack of knowledge of the cultural background of Asian students by their teachers and I often wonder what percentage of Australian teachers dealing with Asian students have actually read literature of the type reviewed here. I suspect it is quite low.

While all students face a range of problems as they progress through education systems, Asians studying in Australia have the potential to be overwhelmed by further problems created due to relocation, dislocation and disenchantment. Cultural, educational and language differences underpin these difficulties and teachers and pastoral carers face related problems in coping with the demands placed on them to assist in the production of acceptable outcomes for international students and their families.

As there appears to be little research in this field specifically carried out in secondary schools, a need has been identified. With many overseas students continuing on to Australian universities, it would appear that the identification and analysis of problems in the secondary school years may
offer avenues for the solution of longer-term problems for overseas students. The following chapter will discuss how this researcher collected data to rectify this lack of information,
3. Methodology

The methods undertaken and information gathered for use in this case study are almost entirely qualitative in nature as this report is focused on human experience. Data gathered in focus groups and interviews is the main source of information with participant observation resulting from my own experiences in the day-to-day teaching and pastoral care of secondary overseas students providing a useful contextual viewpoint. In addition to this, documentary and statistical analysis of material produced by Gossamer Grammar and Government departments added to the overall evaluation of the experiences of overseas students in an Australian secondary school.

In outlining the methodology of this case study, I will explain the use of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observation with particular reference to the course of events as they occurred during the collection of data for this case study.

a. Semi-Structured Interviews.

Minichiello et. al. (1995) pp. 62-65 describe a continuum on which exist interviews in a variety of forms from structured through to unstructured. In the middle lie 'focused' or semi-structured interviews. These names and interview types describe well the interview technique used in this case study.
with the style being closer to structured interviews given that a set of about five questions (see appendices iv, v & vi) was used to initiate discussion on each facet of the study required. While the interviews were not designed to provide survey style data, questions were set but were open-ended. It was more like unstructured in that the interview for most parts took on the feel of an everyday conversation. Taping these helped. This produced more data and as Minichiello suggests, leads to a cost benefit trade off between richness and expense.

Interviews were held first with key people; two homestay providers, the Registrar and Principal of Gossamer Grammar (see table one). The questions asked in these interviews appear in the appendices. Each homestay provider cared for one of the students who were to participate in the subsequent focus group interviews. The homestay providers did not cater solely for students from Gossamer Grammar.

These interviews served to provide information regarding the conditions under which students live and perspectives on the administrative and educational issues surrounding the emergence of a significant overseas student body at Gossamer Grammar.
Table one: Interview details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Howden</td>
<td>Homestay Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hudson</td>
<td>Registrar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Green</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Grant</td>
<td>Homestay Provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. **Participant Observation.**

My own teaching and pastoral care roles at Gossamer Grammar over a period of five years have allowed me to observe the entire school, its students and community in the context of this case study. This provides useful insight into all facets of the study and allows for data to be supported and strengthened where applicable.

c. **Focus Group Research.**

Focus group research evolved as a qualitative method in the second half of this century with most use being directed towards analysis of marketing procedures however, more recently, their use has increased in the social sciences in areas such as health and education. Focus groups are a method of data collection and may be defined as 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (Krueger, 1994, p. 12).

A typical focus group runs for about one hour and involves four to twelve individuals in a discussion led by a moderator assisted by a person who takes
notes and manages the recording equipment used in the eventual generation of transcripts. The questions are pre-determined and designed to move the discussion in specific directions. The moderator has the opportunity to explore unanticipated ideas and comments as they see fit, probing into areas that offer rich data on the topic, introducing a useful element of flexibility into this method.

The participants should be similar to one another in that they will be able to comment on their experiences linked to the topic of discussion. For the purposes of this report, the participants were all students of senior secondary age from Gossamer Grammar (sixteen to nineteen years – many overseas students are about a year older than their local counterparts due to time spent at language centres). One advantage of the focus group format, which should not be underestimated in this case, is the opportunity it gives for the participants to express their feelings and have their say. As a group of young people whose lives have undergone great change in the pursuit of international education, a chance to talk openly about it and register opinions is certainly a positive step for all parties. In the case of Asian students, the focus group is also a culturally appropriate method for people from collectivist cultures.
A limitation often associated with focus groups is that of group influences on individual thoughts and comments (Gibbs, 1997) as conformity or exhibitionism may come into play in some situations. This may have been present to some extent within the groups I used however, I believe that focus groups, as used in this investigation, provided the best possible environment for the extraction of the real feelings of the participants selected.

A series of at least three separate focus group are usually held (Morgan, 1997) to ensure enough data is generated to identify trends and to detect elements that could be considered extraordinary and thus less useful in developing overall impressions from the observations. Focus groups are a relatively efficient way to collect qualitative data. Compared to an individual interview, the volume of data produced by focus groups is large even when discounting those parts of the discussion that may begin to drift away from the specific areas targeted by the focus questions.

As a teacher and pastoral carer of the participants in these groups, this method offered two distinct advantages. Firstly, for the questioning of students from Asian countries, a group situation suited the collective nature of their cultural backgrounds. I felt that a one-to-one interview situation would have been a threatening prospect for an Asian student of secondary age, producing little, if any, useful or reliable data. Secondly, the focus
groups served to dissipate the power relationship between teachers and students inherent in the academic and pastoral structure at Gossamer Grammar.

Four separate focus groups were held. The first three contained overseas students (see table two) and the fourth local students. This sequence promised to give some balance to the experiences outlined and opinions expressed. The use of local students promised to help identify experiences and problems that are common to most adolescents regardless of background and to gain thoughts and identify attitudes of those who share the classroom and school-ground with the students targeted in this investigation.

The overseas students were selected from years eleven and twelve. There are thirty-six overseas students in these levels at Gossamer Grammar however only thirty were eligible given that I decided not to interview students in my classes or pastoral care group for ethical reasons. Each was handed a letter outlining the nature of this project and containing an obligation-free invitation to participate (see appendix i). A simple questionnaire was attached to provide basic personal backgrounds with the incentive of food ensuring that the program got off the ground. The interviews were held after school in one of the Asian language classrooms situated in a converted house on the school property. This provided a warm, relaxed and familiar
environment for the students. The questions asked in these focus groups appear in appendix ii.

The invitation process was a flexible one with ten students targeted for each interview. After some negotiation and juggling of individuals to accommodate the various extra-curricular time demands placed on students at Gossamer Grammar, a series of three groups were run with five students making themselves available in each session. This process gave a natural random nature to the make-up of the groups within the fixed parameters of the initial selection of overseas students available. Although unintentional, the countries of origin of the participants were the top five countries (except for one Thai student) represented in schools in terms of numbers of overseas students (Overseas Student Statistics 1997, 1998). Table two gives individual profiles of the participants in each group. I have used false names to protect the participants.
Table two: Focus group details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Years in Australia</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
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Morgan (1997) describes ‘more’ and ‘less’ structured focus groups as two possible styles of operation in this method. The more structured group requires the moderator to stick fairly closely to the question schedule and is suited to clearly defined topics. The less structured group is allowed to
generate more spontaneous discussion and will include more probing from the moderator and is useful in situations where little existing information is available on the topic. The groups for this project were run with a fairly structured format as questions were able to be asked that stood a good chance of generating useful responses as my aims for research had been set. This was supported by analysis of transcripts of interviews already held. The structured format was also necessary to overcome the natural shyness of some adolescents and, in particular, to assist the participants, many of which found it difficult to make comprehensive responses due to language difficulties and their cultural and educational backgrounds.

The structured format appeared to work as intended and the outcomes of the groups were particularly encouraging. As moderator, the difficulty lay in having to assist and prompt in the course of conversation due to language difficulties and early nervousness of the students, without influencing the direction of the discussion too much or modifying opinions. This possibility, an inherent limitation of focus groups (Gibbs, 1997), may have weakened the validity of the data in places however in this situation, the strategy was necessary to initiate enough discussion to produce workable amounts of data.

I observed that many of the students found that they were able to talk more freely and honestly in the group environment particularly as their confidence
grew as the session progressed. I was able to contrast this with my daily experiences in the classroom where language and cultural restraints and the presence of local students often minimise participation in discussion by overseas students.

Morgan (1997) also describes a kind of hybrid focus group format where a less structured beginning moves toward a more structured end as specific questions are identified as the session progresses – a so-called ‘funnel’ approach. I can report that my groups appeared to reverse this process with my structured openings leading to less structured discussion as the participants relaxed, became more familiar with the process and offered more spontaneous comment and cross-questioning. As both Morgan (1997) and Krucger (1994) note, ‘rules of thumb’ as applied to focus groups will always be broken, at least in some ways, as each group creates its own special set of circumstances. I cannot see any particular disadvantages created by way in which these groups operated other than those usually associated with this qualitative method. The outcomes, while in places, limited in scope, were probably close to the best possible given the particular dynamics created in this situation. Quotations from the students capture their authentic voice including the expected grammatical errors from a group of students with a non-English speaking background.
A combination of interview and focus groups was decided on to access information about the students from as many aspects of their life and schooling as possible provides opportunities to strengthen conclusions using triangulation of data.

Transcripts of the interviews and focus groups were made from the tapes. To generate an ordered and clear picture from across these sources, the data from the focus groups and homestay interviews were sorted and organised into tables showing common responses to questions and issues of a similar nature (see appendix vii). In the following chapters, data presentation and discussion are presented from two perspectives, the schools' and the students', with the comments and opinions of the homestay providers and local students used as an alternative view related to both domains.
4. The School: Data and Discussion

This chapter draws on information from interviews held with members of the school administration and homestay providers, the focus group containing local students and my own observations as a teacher and pastoral carer at Gossamer Grammar. In discussing the data, the developments in international education at Gossamer Grammar and the impact of these on the school will be covered.

a. Developments in International Education at Gossamer Grammar.

Gossamer Grammar School has long possessed a well-respected Chinese language program and had always attracted a few students from Melbourne's Chinese community. With a number of past students residing in Asia the school was seen as 'Asian friendly'. The Registrar, Mr. Hudson explains:

Gossamer Grammar has a very good name in the Chinese community of Melbourne. We have had long association with those communities and offered Mandarin Chinese here since 1959 and established the language centre here in the seventies. International education was able to take off in the eighties and we were better placed because we had the programs in place. The word got out in the community that we were receptive to overseas students.

The advent of significant numbers of overseas students coming to study in Australia and at Gossamer Grammar can be attributed to a number of factors. As the Australian economic downturn of the late nineteen-eighties led to under-enrolment in many Victorian private schools, the following emergence
of Asian economies helped to remedy the situation. The Principal, Mr. Green explains:

Government factors, the increased difficulty in getting into university in Asia, the [relative ease of] entry into Australian universities and the emerging economies of Asia made it possible. And because we are cheap. Australia is bargain basement education. The wealthy Indonesians, I understand, have traditionally gone to Europe and the U.S. but now with the currency crisis...

However the school itself did not actively seek to attract students from overseas. Mr. Green recalls:

The large numbers, like the 80 or so we have now, that gradually has grown over the years - it's peaked at 80. .... We didn't promote ourselves - we started getting inquiries. It all happened through word of mouth and a lot was related to Hong Kong being handed back to China. Hong Kong families started to send their children here to establish a foothold and then qualify as business migrants ... the universities started marketing in Asia and the best way of getting into an Australian University is to come to a local school. So it was something that happened .... we didn't pursue it .... we virtually got involved because we got inquiries.

While active marketing takes place through private and Government agencies, 'word of mouth' appears to remain a key factor in schools attracting students from overseas. Mr. Hudson says 'government bodies like IDP (International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges) exist and for private schools active marketing in the region is necessary but we would pick up just as many by word of mouth.' This opinion is supported in the 1997 Survey of International Students Studying in Australia carried out by the Australian International Education Foundation.
Forty Eight percent of school age students cited a friend or relative as their main source of information about study in Australia. The next most popular source were independent agencies (twenty seven percent). International student agencies derive income by liaising between schools and prospective students and their families. They provide information, advice and care and operate within Asia and the country of destination.

In this sense, providing a productive and enjoyable educational experience for overseas students coupled with effective communication with parents, guardians and agents should remain a priority for schools such as Gossamer Grammar who wish to remain competitive in the international student marketplace by enjoying a good reputation overseas. This however, requires consistent commitment to the provision of an excellent educational service by the school. Communication between staff and parents requires extra effort to be successful on an international level where language barriers and the transfer of information via agents, guardians and homestay providers come into play. Mrs. Grant, homestay parent of Jimmy in year eleven, has some concerns:

Students can suffer greatly if it wasn’t for a very good relationship between myself, his parents and the educational consultant we brought in to assess [him] when we realised there was something wrong. If it wasn’t for that set up, the parents would have been very disillusioned with the Australian system and it only takes one bad customer for thousands of people to hear about it. I think it would be a very positive move if schools, homestays and
agents made a move to embrace one another on an equal footing and that's where I see a big missed opportunity for Australia to offer a far better quality of service and earn a fantastic reputation if everyone came together in a cooperative way.

While good communication remains an educational imperative, this constructive criticism contains useful ideas and timely warnings for schools such as Gossamer Grammar and entire school systems operating with a view of maintaining or increasing market share in an internationally competitive environment. On the other hand, my own experience in schools suggests that difficulty in communication to parents regarding an individual student's progress is something that will always occur, hopefully in isolated incidents. The teaching and pastoral staff at Gossamer Grammar are regularly reminded that incidents of lack of communication with parents may seem insignificant and yet can prove costly to the school both locally and internationally.


In 1998 the Senior School at Gossamer Grammar catered for 650 boys in years nine to twelve with 60 of these being classed as full-fee paying overseas students (twenty others are in lower year levels). That is, they reside permanently in another country and therefore do not attract the Australian Federal Government allowance available for private school students. In addition to this there are also a number of students of Asian origin attending the school, who live in Australia with their parents or relatives, some having
emigrated. There are also students from Asian families who were the first, second or third generation born in Australia. As a result there is a range of Asian students at the school from the newly arrived, who have little or no experience in language and culture, to those whose only link with Asia is in their appearance and a relatively distant family connection.

This leads to confusion in the school community over the levels of overseas students attending the school. On first impressions to the non-Asian members of the school community, it appears that Gossamer Grammar contains around one in four to one in three students from Asia. As outlined, this is not the case and far deeper research on backgrounds needs to be made than a simple visual count or tally of Asian names on the school roll. The longer serving members of the teaching staff and established school families tend to suffer from the ‘swamped by Asians’ syndrome without looking at the real data.

From the middle to upper class suburbs surrounding Gossamer Grammar, it is easy to be unaware of the rise of multi-culturalism in metropolitan Australia and the emergence of significant numbers of students from a range of ethnic backgrounds in private and government schools alike. To this end, Mr. Green makes a salient point:

There will always be boys who will reflect the old Australian attitudes to Asia – the yellow peril and all that but there are also alarmists – one of our top students some years ago; he told me in 1990 we were going to have race riots in the school. Now I never believed him. I’ve been brought up in
Manchester when the place was filling up with people from Pakistan and Trinidad and it just didn’t happen. Because I had experienced living in a multicultural society it didn’t mean much to me. I see the acceptance of what has been a very dramatic change in the ethnic make up of the school as a wonderful example of Australia’s capacity to absorb change.

We should, at this stage, be reminded that residual levels of racism will always remain in society. Desmond, the year eleven student who was born in Vietnam and raised in Melbourne, leaves us in no doubt:

I hate living in Melbourne … the people are so racist. In Melbourne, if I walk down the street guys just call out ‘you fuckin’ gook’ so I would prefer to live somewhere in Asia like Japan …

How then, did the Principal of Gossamer Grammar go about managing such a period of change within the school?

It’s not so much management as perception. I think that it took time for people to come to terms with it. I think it’s now just an accepted part of the school. It’s odd but one of the plusses of One Nation is that our boys don’t want to own up to any sort of racial disharmony.

(The term ‘One Nation’ refers to the political party led by Pauline Hanson. One Nation’s rise to notoriety was largely due to its leader’s comments and proposed policies suggesting that immigration quotas be introduced in Australia.) Mr. Green’s comment is supported by Brett, a local student in year eleven, who has been at the school since he was in year seven:

I was probably about year eight or early year nine. It was shocking when I think of it. I was such a racist back then and everyone was. It was really bad. We were immature and it was stupid when you were pretending to hate other people. Racism was based on peer group things as well and then I was a little angry at people who apparently didn’t seem to be trying – just sit there and wouldn’t speak English … I’m actually happy I think that – seriously –
having lots of overseas students really helps me. Especially you know- with Pauline Hanson and things like that - I actually experienced it all and gone through that (sic.) and I guess not to the level some people have but I'm actually a better person for it. I can work with people. Last year our class had two people who could not speak English at all and it was really good. Our class got behind them. At the end of it they were really friendly and speaking English. So I was pretty happy with that.

For the current day overseas students, it appears that there are increasing levels of tolerance and acceptance by local students. Contributing to this welcome trend are political forces, globalisation of economies and technologies and the passage of time, allowing those who felt initial discomfort with the presence of foreigners in 'their school' to catch up with Australia's permanent multi-cultural mix. In the day-to-day dealings with students it is easy, from their attitudes and comments, to identify the diminishing number who come from racist households. A combination of exposure to better ways of thinking and better role models also provide the chance for a new generation to avoid the trap of intolerance.

The emergence of significant numbers of students from Asia at Gossamer Grammar has produced few changes in the academic program of the school. The school is focused very much on the academic achievement of the students and a relatively narrow range of subjects are taught. Inertia in the academic program was evident during the introduction of the VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) around a decade ago. While many Victorian
schools expanded their senior level subject offerings in line with the new certificate, Gossamer Grammar retained the traditional mix of arts, humanities and sciences. It appears that growing numbers of overseas students has also had limited impact in this area. Mr. Green explains:

The only educational ramifications [of the arrival of overseas students] have been the development of an ESL (English as a Second Language) program and the offering of ESL as a subject. We have established a class of native Chinese speakers at VCE level. Those are the only direct things. I suppose that broader things would be that the school is no longer as selective as it used to be. I would say that the maintenance of our large numbers in the senior sciences would not have occurred without the influx of high achieving overseas students from Asia.

At classroom level, the impact has been greater with the increase in the number of Asian students producing an entirely new set of problems for the teaching staff. The limited communication skills and differing cultural backgrounds possessed by the overseas students has led to frustration and, in some cases, resentment, felt at times by all three groups – teachers, local students and overseas students. As most teachers are aware, the mixed ability classroom is the most difficult environment to provide meaningful and quality instruction to all members of the class.

These problems are accentuated in senior mathematics and science classes which attract overseas students partly due to their inherent aptitude for these disciplines and the prospect of participating in a subject with reduced emphasis on English language ability. In these classes, Asian students may,
at times, appear to make up close to half of the class however, those students from overseas are considerably less in number for reasons outlined earlier. In these situations, the classroom dynamics create significant problems. It is difficult for the teacher to be consistent when the mixed abilities combine with the cultural differences present to produce a vast range of simultaneous requirements for the delivery of information, required in a combination of theoretical and practical modes.

These problems exist to at least some extent across the school with perhaps the most troublesome situation being the arrival of a student from overseas with very poor or no communication skills in English. With no specific program to cater for these individuals, except for some ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, they are often left to languish in the classroom until the stage is reached where they gradually begin to comprehend what is going on. Depending on the individual this can take months or years and in many cases extra tuition is sought, adding to the considerable financial commitment required of families at home. Mrs. Grant, the homestay parent, is aware of this situation and observes:

In education, I get the feeling that within Australia and Victoria we haven't got a really objective and independent screening system for these kids in terms of screening from past education and assessing carefully an appropriate educational setting for them.
There have been proposals put forward and action taken to address this situation at Gossamer Grammar. In 1997, the major pastoral care forum, the Heads of Houses, suggested the formation of a reception class to withdraw overseas students from mainstream classes to be given intensive English tuition. There are private schools in Melbourne who have taken this action. However, the danger lies in further alienation of this group of students from mainstream school activities. In preference to this, a more rigorous English testing program was devised to confirm that language skills of new students had reached acceptable levels prior to entry to Gossamer Grammar. This new system, under the direction of the Head of ESL and the Registrar has already produced results with the Heads of House reporting that new students are able to communicate at a more suitable level than some of the previous arrivals who continue to struggle to cope even in their second or third year at the school.

As the cultural diversity of the student population grew the traditional Anglo-Celtic culture at the school came under the pressure of change. In many cases the required commitment to the so-called broad, liberal education valued by the school is not understood or accepted by the overseas students. For example, participation in sport at Gossamer Grammar is compulsory for all students. This involves training two nights a week after school and competition on Saturday mornings, sometimes in distant locations. I have
often observed the absurd situation where Asian boys are forced to compete in sports that they have little ability or interest in. Although a far wider range of sports are now available, some students see this as simply ‘doing time’ to meet the requirements of the school. The conscientious objectors are not all Asians, however overseas students tend to be disproportionately represented when punishments are handed out for not meeting sporting requirements. As Mrs. Howden observed “they cannot comprehend why we have sport. How it has anything to do with education. ‘How dare they demand it of me’.

The cultural and traditional values of schools such as Gossamer Grammar clash with those from Asian countries in areas such as sport. As authors such as Brick (1991) and Donohoue Clyne (1994) report this occurrence, Brick pointing out that use of leisure time is a subtle cultural contrast developed from early on in life. Donohoue Clyne reminds us that the Anglo-Celtic sporting heritage in Australia leads to ‘the unspoken assumption that to be Australian in to be interested in sport’ and that in Asia ‘The scholar rather than the athlete is more valued than the role model; the influence of Confucius is all powerful, while Cazaly is unknown’ (p. 21).

To attribute the pressure for change on the current increase in overseas students is to oversimplify the situation. When asked of the impact of
overseas students on the sports program at Gossamer Grammar, Mr. Green replied:

It is difficult to disentangle how much the overseas students and how much local forces [operate]. If we have say 30-40% of boys in the school of non-European descent, the majority of them are local so it is difficult to know how much the overseas students are responsible for the changing of attitudes. It is very difficult to separate the groups. Some Asians can be 2nd or 3rd generation Australians but you know I don’t think it’s just the overseas students. I think the fact that certain schools are more multi-cultural in their makeup has led to, in the sporting area, a move away from the traditional English-Australian sports to the world sports. Soccer is a prime example.

The schools’ sporting program has increased greatly in breadth since the days when students chose between cricket and tennis in summer and played football in winter. While the established sports still gain most of the prestige, basketball, badminton and soccer are relatively new sports that attract an increasing number of students, particularly those from overseas. It is likely that the process of change in this area has been accelerated by the arrival of greater numbers of overseas students combined with the compulsory nature of the program. However, it is also likely that pressure to include new sports in the program would have come from within the local community in recent years as Australian society embraced, and became successful at, a vast range of sports.
In other co-curricular areas such as music, drama and outdoor education where participation is on a voluntary basis, the story is quite different. Mr. Green explains:

The students who come into these schools from overseas tend not to become heavily involved in school life because they have not grown up with it. So they are a bit like the students who come in from high schools in year eleven. They don’t become involved because they’ve arrived on the scene too late. The students coming in later years, the adjustments they have to make and the English language use is such that they haven’t got time or energy to involve themselves. Many of the families are making an enormous financial investment and they probably don’t see that as an investment in the co-curricular activities. The non-European students who are prominent in our music program are all local students – they have been here for many years.

Overseas students have an extremely low level of participation in these activities for the reason outlined by the Principal and because of cultural barriers as well. Language limitations exclude involvement in dramatic productions and cultural backgrounds do not provide incentives to join an outdoor trip where camping in the Australian bush is just an initial requirement. Added to this is the fact that many of these activities take place during holidays when overseas students have returned home to enjoy what little time they have to reacquaint themselves with family and friends.

Gossamer Grammar places great importance on student involvement in musical and dramatic productions and to a lesser extent, outdoor education. Awards are made for excellence in participation and school publications
contain many articles and photos showing the community the abilities of the
students involved and the achievements of the school. In many ways, a
student’s success at the school can depend on his ability to become involved
in some aspect of the co-curricular program. Participation brings rewards
through respect from peers and the teaching staff and glowing remarks in
reports and references. To be excluded from this aspect of school life is a
severe shortcoming for overseas students yet it is one that is beyond their
control. It is the responsibility of the school, in this case, to develop some
strategies to provide opportunities for students from overseas to participate in
a program which can accommodate their needs in this area. For example,
cultural exchange need not only happen at the school. Mrs. Grant has a
suggestion:

One way they could be bonded in secondary schools more quickly – and this
is another missed opportunity – all these parents of the Asian kids who are at
home - they are not being communicated with which makes it difficult for
them but also, they are not being drawn into the school family. The
opportunity to engage these intellectual people about education is missed.
Create a system where kids could go on their holidays with an Asian student,
at home in their own country. They would be welcomed and an Asian family
could observe our culture.

As the school already has an extensive range of overseas tours available to
students, the engagement of the families of overseas students to provide
international cross-cultural experience for local students is a proposal that is
not only feasible but has the potential to create strong links with the Asian
members of the school community.
Gossamer Grammar, like most other Australian secondary schools, has changed from a mono-cultural to a multi-cultural school. While the origin of these changes and the mix of nationalities present vary from school to school, the need for concurrent evolution of values, tolerance and school culture remain as the issues that ultimately lead to a successful and harmonious transition. The challenge for Gossamer Grammar is to retain the momentum where successful integration of cultural values occur while identifying and acting on those areas still in need of improvement with respect to the welfare of overseas students and the encouragement of the school community to embrace the new cultural diversity found within the school.
5. The Students: Data and Discussion

'Everything is different. You walk down the street and everything is different.'

Zeng, Year 11 from China.

Leaving one's family, home, culture and country to study abroad is a significant event in the life of any person who undertakes such a venture. In the case of an adolescent, the experience takes on momentous proportions. The teenage years are crucial in the development of character, knowledge, attitudes and abilities and to face these challenges in a familiar home and local environment provides its share of problems and pain. To do the same while relocating your life in a foreign country is an achievement to be recognised.

To be effective providers of educational and pastoral support to overseas students, teachers need to be aware of the backgrounds, circumstances and experiences of the students who end up in their classes or care. In the schools of today there is often little time available for teachers to develop an appreciation of the special circumstances surrounding each individual overseas student. Gossamer Grammar is no exception. While the pastoral care structure provides an opportunity for some staff members to become aware of the background and needs of students from overseas, teachers in the classroom have little time to cope with the demands of providing for a group of students struggling to make progress in a foreign environment. There has
been little, if any, professional development of staff in matters related to the welfare of overseas students and the boys themselves do not experience any more orientation and assistance on arrival than that given to local students.

This chapter examines the experiences of overseas students at Gossamer Grammar as they recall the circumstances surrounding the great change to their lives as they left their homes in Asia to study at an Australian secondary school. It draws largely on the students’ responses in the focus groups. The responses presented should be considered within the context of the variability of emotions and attitudes commonly experienced by those undertaking international study (Barker, 1990).

### a - Before Departure.

The decision process leading to sending young people to study overseas is important and life-changing. There must be a desire to expose children to a new language, culture, values, an alternative education system and there must exist the financial means to make it possible. As Hartley and Maas (1987, p1.) point out, there are few references in literature providing qualitative descriptions as to the decision-making process leading to the arrival of students from overseas in Australia yet surely this is an important factor in the success of the exercise. Customs may dictate that secondary age students in Asian families are unlikely to have much say however lack of input by
students into decisions could lead to resentment. Jackson, from Indonesia, expresses this possibility as:

'Just come if you want to. If you really want to come you have to want to otherwise you will be disappointed'.

Responses from Gossamer Grammar students were fairly well balanced between those whose parents had sole discretion in where and when their child studied overseas and those who contributed to the decision themselves. In cases where answers suggested joint decisions, there was some evidence that student involvement may well have been minimal with parents creating the impression that ownership of destiny was shared. Jimmy, from Taiwan observed:

'My parents talk to me... this is very nice to overseas study and I think by myself and I think maybe and I told them yes'.

Allan, a Thai boy, also remarked:

'My father decided. He also asked me what I want'.

This parental strategy, while universal, is likely to work well within Asian families with respect for parents and their wishes being paramount.

After the decision has been made, the logistics of choosing country of destination, schools or language centres, enrolment, obtaining visas and other governmental requirements, finding transport and accommodation and purchasing books and uniform become complicated tasks given distance between home and school.
While the major reason given for studying overseas is access to and immersion in the English language, there are other important reasons for the expansion of overseas education markets. As for deciding the country, Australia, the UK and the USA offer similar educational products; however the lower cost and proximity of Australia often leads to its competitive edge. Jerry, from Hong Kong, came to Australia;

'to learn English and get access to better Universities'

while South Korean, Robbie said:

'Australia is closer...it does not take as long...about half the time [compared with the USA and Europe].'

b. The First Few Weeks and Cultural Adjustment.

For an adolescent, the intensity of experiences and feelings during the first few weeks of international education would be indelibly etched into memory for life. The documented condition of culture shock (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, p.4, Brick, 1991, p.9) was, for some Gossamer Grammar students, evident in the feelings of fear, homesickness and loneliness. In response to the question 'how did you feel during the first few weeks in Australia and what difficulties did you experience?' the responses, while mixed, contained some common thoughts. Amongst these were Taiwanese student, John's remark:
'[It was] frightening, because I can't speak the language and I don't know anyone'
and Roddy, from Indonesia, recalled:

'It was very bad because no one helped me and I was very lonely'.

While these memories may be a necessary part of adjustment to a new environment, responses like those from Taiwanese student Greg:

'... the other kids did not speak to me. They were teasing me. They were nasty to me'

while unfortunate, are not out of place in most schools when new students arrive, be they local or from overseas. They are, however, just another difficulty to cope with in an already trying situation. It is worth noting that publications offering advice for overseas students such as those by Kenyon and Arampala (1991) do not address the issue of racism directed towards new students from overseas. While it may seem a difficult issue to address, students need to be warned of the possibility of such an occurrence, point out that it is often a part of adolescent environments and encourage victims to seek the help of pastoral carers or homestay parents. This advice may be limited in use due to language and cultural barriers in the early stages. The most likely form of help should be watchful teachers, responsible for the pastoral care of these students. Once again, professional development of staff at Gossamer Grammar would be useful in the area of preparation of overseas students for life in Australian schools and the counselling of victims of racial abuse. The welfare of students at this difficult stage will be directly linked to
the sensitivity to and awareness of the phenomenon of culture shock and identification of the symptoms should be a skill professionally developed amongst teaching staff in secondary schools hosting overseas students.

Homestay provider Mrs Grant adds a viewpoint that helps others understand what overseas students' experience. Often the expectations and reality of international travel can vary greatly:

They are very vulnerable in those first few weeks and I think they need a lot of support to understand they need to settle in one place; to start to feel at home. That first three or four weeks you see a lot of turnover amongst homestays. These kids search around and its basically a need to find what they imagined would be here ... the kids are disorientated so I just try to provide them with a family structure that they can recognise as theirs...

In this light, the home environment created at Homestay accommodation becomes crucial to the survival of the student in the new environment and remains so for the duration of their stay. At a traditional school such as Gossamer Grammar there are few, if any, opportunities for the creation of familiar circumstances for new students. Interaction with other students of the same nationality becomes a necessary retreat from the onslaught of change and to return to the homestay after hours is a similar opportunity. Mrs Grant explains:

They tend to gravitate towards kids of their own culture ... they build up networks quickly amongst their own culture group and I think that's natural. And it's terribly important; speaking their own language is a form of relaxation in a very stressful situation.
This statement relates to another common response to student recollections of the early days of their overseas experience. The expectation of making new friends from within the local student body turns to dismay when this does not occur. John, from Taiwan said:

'The most difficult thing was to make friends'

and Chinese student Zeng observed that:

'I only make friends with people speaking Cantonese'.

Japanese student Katz felt the same way:

'The feeling is very different. At home you have lots of friends. Here it's difficult to make friends'.

Burns (1991, p.72) also reports that Asian students at University in Australia also complain of 'loneliness, little contact with other students and want Aussie friends'.

I have observed local students of secondary age interpreting this occurrence as a lack of interest on the part of overseas students in forging cross-cultural friendships. Many adolescents lack the advanced social skills required to develop friendships bridging language and cultural barriers and this phenomenon is, of course, observed to at least some extent in any multicultural society. Once again, the problem is highlighted when considered in the context of the development of friendships between local students. As Paul, a local student, points out:
The hardest thing was to work my way into the group because some boys had been here since the Junior School – all their families and roots were in the local community. I was this boy from the outer suburbs who caught the train in to school every day. It took some time until I was accepted.

In addition to these major problems, there is the ordeal of adjusting to all the facets of new surrounds and while seemingly less important, the lack of familiarity on a number of fronts adds to the ordeal. The following comments are revealing. Greg, from Taiwan observed that there was:

'Too much footy, not enough world sports'.

John, also from Taiwan said:

'Shops are not open Sunday and not open late. Public transport does not operate late'.

Jimmy, again a Taiwanese student, remarked:

'I often stay at home with nothing to do'.

Jerry, from Hong Kong, felt strongly about some aspects of life in Melbourne:

'Melbourne is boring, the public transport is crap'.

Jerry was not the only one to experience boredom. Thai student Allan complained that:

'When you have finished your homework there's nothing you can do – it's boring'.

These comments need to be considered in the context of individual backgrounds and universally common adolescent attitudes. The quotes referring to boredom tend to be made from residents of large Asian cities.
where twenty-four hour action is in stark contrast to the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Mrs. Howden comments:

If you say to them would you like to go to the Dandenongs or the Zoo they're not really interested. On the whole, they're fairly typical teenagers and they aren't interested in what's going on around them... It's part of their culture — staying up late at night and going out. I know that in Indonesia in the evening everyone goes out and walks the streets until the early hours and that is normal social interaction — also for the children.

The importance of shopping to overseas students was somewhat a surprise. While I have often observed the need for Australian students to go shopping as a form of security while in unfamiliar circumstances while interstate or overseas, Mrs Howden reminds us that social needs for overseas students are fulfilled:

Shopping is their idea of entertainment — wandering around the shops — from what I gather — when they are at home they wander around the shops and it is a social thing.

Students, and probably most people for that matter, invariably head for the shops after any form of isolation. The thought of purchasing something familiar and taking part in a familiar ritual attracts the unsettled individual.

Responses from the focus groups included this comment from Japanese student Kotz:

'In terms of shopping Japan is much better and you can find what you want....'.

Ken, from Taiwan, expressed frustration from the language barrier in the context of shopping:
‘The most difficult thing is conversation in English. Sometimes I want to buy something and the Australians don’t understand’.

One of the greatest difficulties in adjusting to new cultural patterns lies in food and the customs surrounding its consumption. Indonesian student Roddy remarked:

‘At home food is spicy and you can do what ever you like. You can eat what ever you like. At our homestay we have our breakfast, lunch and dinner and some of the cooking is very different.’

The homestay providers recognise the contribution of food to the overall well-being of individual students. Mrs. Grant says:

Food is a very big issue – for an Asian student the whole structure of our diet is almost in opposition so all the foods that underpin our diet, like chops on the barby are in opposition ... their metabolism is different ... my basic philosophy about food to all human beings is that food is very much a part of being at home. It can be very disorientating if you can’t find foods that you like; you may feel on the outer.

In the homestay situation where students of different nationalities co-exist, it is impossible to recreate the familiar cuisine for each student. This problem is compounded by the variation in the customs and patterns of food consumption. Some of the key factors are revealed by Mrs. Howden:

Some are quite good at trying things, others are very reluctant to try anything and dismiss it out of hand ... most students suffer from putting on weight because it’s a total change in diet ... overseas students are not used to 3 meals a day so they find it hard to eat a big meal ... sandwiches are an unknown to many. One boy would only have a pepper sandwich.

Chinese students and those from smaller centres tended to respond more positively to their overseas experiences. Yang, from China said:
It was pretty good because I came here in December which is very sunny days — a very big country'.

Roddy, from Indonesia observed that:

'The city [Melbourne] was more safer and clean'.

So, while not all comments reflect the anxieties felt as a response to arriving in Australia, the overwhelming majority of experiences for new students are those of unfamiliarity and unsettledness. Reactions to cultural differences such as food and shopping habits also confirm that culture shock can be a recurring problem depending on the attitude of the individual combined with everyday exposure to new experiences. These findings are supported by research by Barker (1990) who describes the cyclical nature of the severity of culture shock.

c. Differences in Teaching and Learning.

As reported by authors such as Brick (1991, p.163) and Stevenson (1992, p.33&37), the basic organisational structure of Asian schools differs significantly to those in Australia in areas such as daily organisation and teaching styles. This was also evident in the responses of overseas students from Gossamer Grammar when questioned about their school days in their country of origin. For example, Indonesian student Jackson told of the six day week and no choice of subjects studied at his school. Yang, from mainland China, recalled class sizes of up to 60 and recalled that:
'In China you must go to school at 6:30 a.m. and finish School at 7:00 p.m. Most of the time you stay at School and not at home.'

It is interesting to note that the practice of 'streaming' classes into groups of students with similar abilities remains in some parts of Asia. One comment confirmed this:

'Some schools [at home] if you study really bad they will put all the same class'.

This strategy was dropped from most Australian school during the 1980s. The superior facilities at Gossamer Grammar were also commented on: however the physical resources available would compare extremely favourably with most Australian schools.

In terms of perceptions of teachers, teaching styles and learning strategies, the responses of the overseas students contained similarities to those reported by authors such as Samuelowicz, (1987), Kenyan and Amrapala, (1991) and Ginnsberg, (1992). Lecture-style teaching methods, reliance on memory, stricter discipline and corporal punishment were given as responses when questioned about the main differences in teaching and learning between Asian and Australian schools. The following comments reveal how these students have experienced education systems and schools with vastly different styles of teaching and learning. Chien, from Taiwan, said:

'At home the teacher is strict and we do not say much in class and we have to remember'.

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Katz observed:

'Memory is much more important in Japan'.

Yang agreed with this:

'In China the teacher tells you everything and they give you a lot of exams'.

Allan remarked that:

'In Thailand we haven't got much activities – just study'.

Zeng reminded us of a practice long since banned in Australian schools:

'[The students were punished] with a stick. The teacher is allowed and the parents like'.

These comments suggest a contrasting view between school experiences at home and in Australia and are supported by Donohoue Clyne (1993, p21) who quotes from a Vietnamese teacher’s viewpoint ‘discipline in Vietnam is fantastic; in Australia it is too loose’. From my observations this contrast is somewhat skewed further when the relatively strict and ordered system at Gossamer Grammar is compared to the average Australian school climate.

For overseas students, the extra-curricular program at Gossamer Grammar is unexpected, poorly understood and unattractive. As Mr. Green explained, the overseas students do not get involved in the arts or outdoor pursuits offered at Gossamer Grammar. Sport, however, is compulsory for all and thus creates problems for the overseas students. Mrs. Howden notes:

‘They cannot comprehend why we have sport. How it has anything to do with education? How dare they demand it of me?’
These comments and questions sum up well the feelings experienced by the overseas students as they try to negotiate the rigid expectation of compulsory sport. For them there is little motivation or reason to engage in physical activity in a place such as a school. There appears to be few, if any, links between education and sport in Asian schools and a perception that sport and its accompanying values and requirements are a facet of life to be found and engaged in outside the scope of services provided by schools. As discussed earlier, there are deeper and wider cultural and social factors at work here. Perhaps the values are best summed up by the following observation made by Jimmy:

We didn’t get too much sport in school – in Taiwan between year nine and ten we get big exams and we had to work hard in year nine so we don’t get much activity. We have physical education for two periods but we use these to have tests.

The difficulty for Gossamer Grammar is in providing attainable, attractive and meaningful extra-curricular experiences for overseas students. There is obviously a need for some type of activity as boredom is a feeling that many students from the focus groups reported. Compulsory activities will always fail, to some extent, as overseas students having no choice will inevitably become disenchanted and disengaged while supervising staff are left to take part in supervision rosters with a ‘child minding’ element (some local students are also reluctant participants). In some cases, sport or officiating at sport is used as a punishment, causing further resentment.
Waiving the compulsory sport for overseas students is not an option due to the inevitable backlash from local students who are by no means unanimous in their support of the program. These problems have been noted elsewhere (Donohoue Clyne, 1994) and while Gossamer Grammar and its parent community remain in favour of compulsory sport, this problem appears to be an unfortunate and permanent one where the clash of cultures lead to a situation where little common ground exists.

The more relaxed and informal style of Australian teachers was noticed and appreciated by overseas students. In fact, comments suggested that their former teachers were, on the whole, lacking the same levels of interest and compassion of their Australian counterparts. Perhaps this is not the indictment it appears when class sizes and working hours are taken into account along with the cultural values and expectations placing Asian teachers in differing roles to Australian teachers. When asked if Australian teachers are different the following were typical replies. Andy, from Hong Kong:

'Yes, they are more kind'.

Kotz observed:

'The teachers in Japan say just do your work – in Australia they care more'.

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Indonesian student Salim said that:

'Australian teachers teach from the heart'.

Roddy, also from Indonesia, made a comment showing that some are able to take a more balanced view:

'Some [Australian] teachers are good because they are very conscious (sic), others just think of money and do just what is required. But some just teach because it's all they have to do'.

This student has obviously realised that, to a certain extent, teaching, like all other pursuits has a variety of approaches and commitment within the profession and while generalisations can be made, this fact will apply across education systems and international boundaries.

The concept of depth of learning was mentioned by Yang:

'Every subject is not as wide as Australia but deeper'.

In saying this, Yang has explained that his former school had less breadth in its curriculum but the content was covered in more detail. This adds weight to the hypotheses of Biggs (1994) and Volet and Renshaw (in Watkins and Biggs, 1997) that Asians do, in fact, learn at least as deeply as their western counterparts. Perhaps the surface learning techniques claimed to be found in Asian schools (e.g. Murphy, 1987) are offset by a depth of curriculum not found in Australian schools for some years. Since the late 1970s, modern educational trends in the West have led to such a wide array of subject offerings that depth has, to at least some extent, been replaced by breadth.
d. Advice From Overseas Students For Those Yet To Arrive.

The final question put to the focus groups was designed to encourage the students to give an overall opinion on their international education experiences. They were asked 'If you were giving advice to another student from home, about to begin school in Australia, what would you tell them?' As the final question, it was hoped that the students would be relaxed enough to speak with complete honesty.

Of the responses to this, there were three broad groups. The first type of response contained advice to avoid the opportunity to study in Australia. The responses ranged from simply:

'don’t come'

to:

'Don’t come to Australia ... It’s boring, it’s not entertaining, not exciting. It’s some kind of place for people who are more than 50 years old – too peaceful. [they should study] anywhere except for Australia.'

The second type of response encouraged others to study overseas to secure their future, often with the comment that that it will take some time to get used to it but that it would be worth it in the end. A third type of response included more specific pieces of advice and it can be assumed that the students who gave these responses had accepted, without question, that they would study in Australia. This type of response suggests that the concept of
‘face’ to an Asian person is a strong cultural motivator. Brick (1991) defines face as a combination of the maintenance of a positive self-image and the avoidance of shame.

For many Asian students who are sent to Australian schools, returning home is not an option as loss of face would be an unacceptable result. As John from Taiwan remarked:

'Take it easy because you can't go home ... because your parents pay a lot of money – you must be successful.'

While loss of money may well be a part of losing face, this student reveals that he can't go home and saving face, or pride, prevents him from doing so. This phenomenon must place immense pressure on students who, for whatever reason, be they academic, social, emotional or a combination of these, cannot admit that international education is not for them and simply pack their bags, cut their losses and resume a normal life back at home.

While teachers, pastoral carers, guardians and homestay providers may often perceive this as the best solution, when all other avenues of help have failed, Asian are aware that it is not an option. Burns (1991, p.70) sums this issue up well:

... the excessive loss of face that failure involves leads to pressure to do well. In written comments many overseas students wrote on their inability to achieve any sort of balance between study and non-academic activities. The consequences of failing are quite different for an overseas student compared to a local student. The latter who fails can return to study sometime later or

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find alternative employment. Overseas students must return home and face the future as a failure; it is unlikely they will ever complete the course or gain acceptable employment. The consequent loss of face is not just personal disgrace but extends to the wider family who may have pooled resources to provide financial support.

While the difficulties and issues facing overseas students in their efforts to gain positive outcomes during their international study experience include those revealed in the focus group data discussed in this chapter, potential loss of face remains as the constant underlying threat to the welfare of the individual. The pressure arising from this problem is, I believe, a significant factor in most other forms of problematic perception and behaviour in overseas students. Those who work with students from overseas must be made aware of these pressures so that those suffering from its effects can be sensitively managed throughout the secondary school years.
6. Conclusion

The advent of significant numbers of overseas students studying in Australia has had telling effects on the individual students involved and on the Schools that they attend. In the case of Gossamer Grammar, experience of multiculturalism for the school community, otherwise likely to be absent, has occurred through demand for education from Asia coupled with economic imperatives in private secondary education. The result has seen young people presented with the difficult task of coping with a variety problems as they negotiate living and studying in a foreign environment.

For the school and its community there are a number of issues to be faced and resolved. Existing traditions and values are questioned and resistance to change encountered: however these events also present opportunities for schools to embrace new experiences, ideas and ways of thinking. For example, exchange and interaction with overseas families connected with the school has been one suggestion raised during this research that had not been previously considered. The realisation that the first few weeks of overseas education can often be the most difficult suggests that some form of orientation program, distinct from that of the normal pastoral system, may be of use in building the confidence and familiarity to oppose the effects of culture shock. Such a program would recognise and communicate the
expected differences between the overseas students' educational past with their likely futures. In other words, we need to tell them how it is going to be different – something that is not currently done and only discovered slowly, and usually painfully, by each individual.

There has also been a slowly evolving awareness of new cultures by some members of the local student body and a growing perception that racism is something that is to be avoided amongst the school community. This element of change is far from complete and more time is required to continue this welcome trend. Also incomplete is the schools' willingness to include overseas students in the achievement ethos in areas other than academic ones. This will need change on the schools' part as well as new tactics to encourage a broader view of education from the students than is brought with them from Asia.

While these changes, some suggested, some occurring, are recommended and necessary for a school such as Gossamer Grammar and its community, it should be remembered that for the overseas students, change becomes a way of life for most of their time here. Schools such as Gossamer Grammar have rarely yielded to change for the interests of individuals or small groups. While this may remain so, educational and cultural progression on a global
scale requires change from schools and offers benefits for all members of the
school community and beyond.

Do the overseas students enjoy their international experience and reach their
goals? There are, of course, a range of answers to this question. Nearly all
students improve their language skills markedly from immersion in an
English speaking society and the aim of going to a good school is usually
met because Australia, by any standards, possesses an excellent secondary
school system. Of enjoyment of the experience of international education
there is far less certainty. The combination of adolescence, relocation and
culture shock can have severe and lasting effects, eroding the potential for
enjoyment. While the exercise is always going to contain unpleasantness, it is
up to schools and the people who work in education and the homestay
industry to work more closely to provide a co-ordinated effort to manage the
welfare of students from Asia studying in Australian secondary schools.
Appendix (i)

Letter to students and attached proforma.

University of Melbourne Letterhead

Dear ,

As part of my completion of a Post-Graduate Master of Education at the University of Melbourne, I have decided to do some research into the experiences of students from Asia in Australian Secondary Schools. From this, I will write a 15,000 word report on the findings from the research.

I would like to invite you to participate in a 45 minute interview with about five other students. The interview will contain some questions about things you have done and experienced, especially since starting school in Australia. You will also have the chance to talk about anything that you feel is important even if a question about it is not asked.

All of the students participating in the interviews will remain anonymous, that is, your real name will not be used in the report. (It is possible that your name could be linked to the report due to freedom of information claims)
or where data is subject to court subpoena.) The interview will be taped so that I can write down the things that are said in the interview. The things you say, and who says them, will only be known by me, Mr. MacInnes, and my supervisor at the University, [name withheld]. No-one else will listen to the tapes. Some time after I have finished my report, they will be destroyed. You should also keep in mind that you will be free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

This letter is only an invitation. You do not have to be involved in the interview if you do not want to do so. If you do not wish to be interviewed then I will not mind at all and your decision will not affect your assessments in any way. However, if you would like to be involved, please complete the attached form and return it to Mr. MacInnes as soon as possible. A time and place for the interview will be decided soon and you will be told about this if you wish to participate.

Thank-you,

Mr. MacInnes.
1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Year Level:

4. House:

Please circle your preferred answer.

5. I  
would like / would not like  
to participate in the project about my 
experiences as a student studying in Australia, particulars of which have been 
explained clearly to me in writing.

If you would like to participate, please complete the rest of the questions.

6. In what year did you start at Gossamer Grammar School?

7. In what country were you born?

8. In what country did you go to school before coming to school in 
Australia?
Appendix (ii)

Focus group questions for Overseas Students.

How and why was it decided that you would study at a school in Australia?

How did you feel during your first few weeks in Australia and what difficulties did you experience?

What are the main differences in the teaching and learning between the school you attended at home and Gossamer Grammar School?

If you were giving advice to another student from home, about to begin at school in Australia, what would you tell them?
Appendix (iii)

Focus group questions for Local Students.

Do you like living in Melbourne? Why do you / don’t you like it?

If you can remember, what was it like during your first few days at Gossamer Grammar School.

How does the culturally diverse student population at Gossamer Grammar School affect your educational experiences here?

If you were giving advice to a student from overseas, about to begin at school at Gossamer Grammar School, what would you tell them?
Appendix (iv)

Interview questions: Homestay Providers.

What are the most common problems students have during their first few weeks in Australia?

What are the cultural differences that affect the students the most?

What strategies do you use to help the students settle in?

What further problems arise when they start at School?

What are the major cultural systemic educational differences that you have heard about?

What would you include as advice to students who were considering Australia as a study destination?
Appendix (v)

Interview questions: Principal

When did the overseas student population become, what might be called, a significant proportion of the student body? (Timeline)

What factors led to the increase of overseas student numbers at this school?

How do you believe the presence of overseas students has affected the educational experiences for our students?

From your perspective, what have been the key management issues arising?

What advice would you / do you give to a student from overseas, about to begin school here?
Appendix (vi)

Interview questions: Registrar.

What motivates Asian parents to send their secondary age children to study in Australia?

How do Asian parents decide on which secondary school is best for their child?

Once a decision has been made, what steps need to be taken by the family to get their child to day one at their new school?

From your perspective what are the major problems experienced by overseas students as they start school in Australia?

What, if anything, needs to be done to enhance the experiences of overseas students at Australian secondary schools?
## Precis of focus group responses.

### Question 1. How and why was it decided that you would study at school in Australia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Family connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Was it your decision or your parents?</td>
<td>• To learn English and get access to better Universities.</td>
<td>• I had an uncle who studied in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• About half they asked me if I wanted to come here and I said yes.</td>
<td>• It’s better to learn English in Australia because in Hong Kong there is no way to speak English to other people.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I decide with my parents – it was decided there were less pressures here for me. The systems are very different.</td>
<td>• Better education maybe – it’s different to Hong Kong. Australia is much more comfortable than Hong Kong. It’s easier to study here.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Because my mother thinks Australia is a very nice place to study. She visited other countries but decide that Australia was good.</td>
<td>• Better education than in Taiwan.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I wanted to go to the USA but I couldn’t. My father said Australia was cheaper and safer.</td>
<td>• In China it’s hard to go to Uni. Easier to get to Uni here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My father decided. He also asked me what I want.</td>
<td>• And they also thought not many Indonesian people so you can better speak (English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I did a study tour in NZ and liked it so my father asked me to come here. Also cheaper than here and safer. My mother thought it was better transportation.</td>
<td>• Indonesia doesn’t have much good education so they send me to Australia lots of people think if you study outside Indonesia you will get a job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• My parents talk to me this is very nice to o.s. study and I think by myself and I told them yes.</td>
<td>• It’s very popular in China if you go o.s. because not a lot go so I am the lucky one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My parents want me to go o.s.</td>
<td>• Because my parents want me to learn another language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My parents, want me</td>
<td>• Australia is closer</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

### Appendix (vii)

Familv connections: I had an uncle who studied in Australia.

My parents choose I study in Australia because my brother lives in Australia in Canberra but had to return to the army. I move to Melbourne. My uncle was in Melbourne and he...
Q2. How did you feel during your first few weeks in Australia and what difficulties did you experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Likes / Dislikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Frightening, because I can’t speak the language and I don’t know anyone.</td>
<td>- Frightened and lonely because I didn’t know anyone. For instance the other kids did not speak to me. They were teasing me. They were nasty to me.</td>
<td>- Melbourne is boring, the public transport is crap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We mainly learnt in Chinese in Honk Kong – it made it difficult when the teachers spoke in English.</td>
<td>- The most difficult thing was to make friends.</td>
<td>- The TV is bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Just missed home – I was homesick.</td>
<td>- Did you find it hard to make friends with the Australian students? Yes</td>
<td>- Too much footy, not enough world sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Difficulties were English but the people are being friendly.</td>
<td>- Do you still find it hard? Yes because we are from a different culture</td>
<td>- Shops are not open on Sunday, and not open late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you think that disappointing? When you came did you think that you would make Australian friends? It’s ok – as long as I learn English.</td>
<td>- At home food is spicy and you can do what ever you like. You can eat what ever you like. At our homestay we have our breakfast, lunch and dinner and some of the cooking is very different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Are you pleased with your learning of English? It’s OK.</td>
<td>- In terms of shopping Japan is much better and you can find what you want but in terms of sports it’s a great country I think. If you want to enjoy your sports its good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you think it was going to be easier? Yes it should be easier if we make Australian friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
| 2 | First few weeks I was like a young boy abroad – feeling homesick. | The people come from many different countries in Taiwan it’s mainly Taiwanese. | The city was far more safer and clean. |
|   | Were you homesick? No, I wanted to get out of my house - no reason to go home. | I only make friends with people speaking Cantonese. | It was pretty good because I came here in December which is very sunny days - a very big country. |
|   | It was very bad because no one helped me and I was very lonely. | Does anyone have any Australian friends? Not really. | The people back home says all Australians friendly. Some are friendly but not all. |
|   | The feeling is very different. At home you have lots of friends – here it’s difficult to make friends. |   | Have you ever had anyone be nasty to you? I have had some bad experience – I got bashed up. Two Aussie guys, on Anzac day, ask me for a smoke and I say no and they bash me up. |
|   |   |   | I was in StKilda and one guy – he was very drunk – said I don’t want to see your silly face – go away – just drunk. |
|   |   |   | Before I came here the first thing I know about Australians is they like to drink, sit there in lounge and watch the footy. |
| 3 | Everything is different. You walk down the street and everything is different. | The most difficult thing is conversation in English. Sometimes I want to buy something and the Australians don’t understand. | Do you find here that you have a lot of spare time? I often stay at home with nothing to do – I play ‘play station’ games. |
|   | What do you mean by the feeling is different? In China there is always lots of people in the street. In Australia there is none. | I did not know where to go to buy something. | Most people who come to Australia get bored because they have too much free time. |
|   |   |   | What would you be doing at home with your spare time? It’s a long way to the city to go shopping. |
Q 3. What are the main differences in the teaching and learning between the school you attended at home and Gossamer Grammar?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Classes / Teaching</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Extra Curricular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Are the teachers different? Yes, they are more kind. More kind? In what way? Teachers at home gave a lot more work and strict. - If you have problems here do you think you have been offered solutions? No you need to help yourself — you talk to your tutor but when you go to tutor group you sit by yourself. Sometimes people were helpful. - At home the teacher is strict and we do not say much in class and we have to remember.</td>
<td>- In Indonesia we have six school days and we don’t have boarding at all. We can’t choose our subjects. Everybody is in the same class. - Always stay in the same class — also in Taiwan just the teacher speak — we don’t have a lot of discussion — same length of school day.</td>
<td>- Is there much sport done at schools? Less than here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- Australian teachers teach from the heart. - The teachers in Japan say just do your work — in Australia they care more. - Memory is much more important in Japan. - Every subject is not as wide as Australia but deeper. - In China the teacher tells you everything. And they give you a lot of exams. In China its harder. - In my country they don’t care if you are doing your homework or not just as long as you pass your exam.</td>
<td>- You can’t choose your subjects. - The schools start from 7-30am and go to 12-30 p.m. with one main break and afternoon classes. We only have one assembly. - What about class sizes in China? 60 sometimes 40.</td>
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<td>- Some [Australian] teachers are good because they are very conscious others just think of money and do just what is required. But some just teach because it's all they have to do.</td>
<td>- Some schools [at home] if you study really bad they will put all the same class.</td>
<td>- In Australia we mostly do activities like sport but in Taiwan we do chess or music or drawing or something like that.</td>
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<td>- How were the students punished at home? With a stick – the teacher is allowed and the parents like.</td>
<td>- In China you must go to school at 6-30am and finish school at 7-00pm. Most of the time you stay at school and not at home.</td>
<td>- In Australia we have things like house sport but in our country it was not too important.</td>
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<td>- I remember yr. Nine was a hard year – big exams in July and I think school starts at 7-00am and finish at 10-00pm and go home Ten PM? Yes – it depends on the teacher.</td>
<td>- What about class sizes in China? The same – about 50 to 60.</td>
<td>- Australian students are more free than Chinese students – also I like all the sports you can choose – it can make you stronger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The teacher in Taiwan is much stricter than in Australia. The teacher makes you understand and at the end if you don't understand you have to work it out yourself because the teacher looks after many people. So a lot of people start to go to tutors and you must pay them. And another thing in Australia when we learn about science we get more demonstration and more practical work.</td>
<td>- How many students in each class? About 50 to 60 but I think small classes are better.</td>
<td>- We didn't get too much sport in school – in Taiwan between yr. nine and ten we get big exams and we had to work hard in year nine so we don't get much activity. We have physical education for two periods but we use these to have tests.</td>
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<td>- In Thailand we haven't got much activities – just study.</td>
<td>- Some of the equipment and buildings here is much better. The graphics and sciences have much better equipment.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q 4. If you were giving advice to another student from home, about to begin school in Australia, what would you tell them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Advice</th>
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</table>
| 1     | • Don't come to Australia. Why? It's boring it's not entertaining, not exciting. It's some kind of place for people who are more than 50 years old — to peaceful. So should they study at home or somewhere else? Anywhere except for Australia.  
• Take it easy because you can't go home. Why can't you go home? Because your parents pay a lot of money — you must be successful.  
• You will get used to stay in Australia.  
• You will get used to it  
• Do not come. |
| 2     | • Just come if you want to. If you really want to come you have to want to otherwise you will be disappointed.  
• I would tell them that here the school gives you more responsibility. If you want to really study hard come here if you don't, don't come.  
• If you want a good future come. |
| 3     | • I would tell them that it's very nice. Just bring your happy feeling and when you come you need to understand and find out what you can and can't do.  
• I would tell them to improve their English because English is very important in Australia.  
• I would tell him don't go to a boys school go to a girls and boys school. Because I don't think Australian school needs separate girls and boys.  
• I think I would tell him in oz you have a lot of free time so you have to set up your time so you can do something. And you have to build on your foundation of English so if you want to express yourself you can and you are not misunderstood.  
• If my friend came to oz I tell them a lot of things they can bring like the food or electronic things because you won't get electronic things in oz it's expensive. They should bring radio, hi-fi or computer or things like this. |
References.


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