The Accommodation Challenges of International Students

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2012

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to quality for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and any editorial work paid or unpaid carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Kornkanok Duangpracha
March 30, 2012

Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful of a large number of people for their assistance, encouragement, help and support. Without them, this thesis would not have been completed. I wish to say thank you to the following people:

To my supervisors, Dr Paul Gibson and Professor Clive Morley. I am deeply grateful for your guidance, help and support. I feel truly fortunate to have been under your supervision.

To all the participants who so generously contributed their time and effort to participate in this research, I am grateful to you for your kindness.

To my PhD friends and colleagues at RMIT University, thank you for sharing your knowledge, expertise, time, experience and sense of humour. A special thanks goes to Dr Phoommhiphat Mingmalairaks, Dr Benedict Sheehy, Dr Siredech Kumsuprom, Dr Zarina Md Nor, Dr Sittimont Kanjanabootra, Ms Thi Viet Hoa Tran, Dr Lin Xiong, Ms Paweena Khongchan, and Ms Ploy Sud-on for being such good friends and great company.

To my best friend, Bancha Rienkham and his partner, Barry Tomlinson, I thank you so much for always being there for me and especially for supporting me through difficult times.

To my husband, Rick Williams, thank you so much for listening, cheering me up, and making me laugh when I had my bad days. Your understanding, encouragement and support have meant a lot to me.

To my sister, Nannaphat and her family, thanks heaps to you guys for looking after mum and me.

Finally, I am deeply thankful to my father, Kraida and my mother, Phikul for their unconditional love and support. Without them I would never have had the chance to receive an education overseas and achieve this milestone.

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Abstract

In recent years, the number of international students has grown sharply in Australian higher education institutions; and trade in education services has brought substantial benefits to Australia. International students make a significant contribution to their host universities and to society as a whole.

Although studying abroad offers benefits to international students, leaving their home country and achieving a degree in another language also carries with it a range of difficulties, including those associated with finding suitable accommodation.

This research explores (and seeks to explain) the ways in which international students attempt to manage the various accommodation challenges that they face. The primary research question addressed by this research is:

> *In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?*

The thinking behind that research question is that perhaps those who cope more effectively are more self-responsible, autonomous and capable social agents (as Neoliberalism suggests). Alternatively, it could be that international students, when it comes to accommodation, find themselves in situations where what matters primarily is not their capacity for self-responsibility, but is instead the availability of external resources such as finance, or social support, or accurate and comprehensive information (as Welfarism suggests). Or rather than seeing the Neoliberal and the Welfarist characterizations of international students as two sides of a competing dualism, it could be that both internal and external resources matter, and there is an interplay between those resources – an interplay that can be understood and used to explain differences in how effectively individual students manage the challenges of accommodation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introduction will explain why the author has chosen to conduct research into the ways in which international students attempt to manage the various accommodation challenges that they face, along with a specification of the primary research question and the secondary research questions. Providing that explanation will not only involve an overview of the increasing economic importance of international students, and the many stressors with which international students have to contend, but also a discussion of the background assumptions that seem to be informing the approach to governance of international student accommodation that is currently employed by university administrations. Those background assumptions will turn out to be central to later chapters of the dissertation in which the research findings are interpreted, and the contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge and to practice is explained.

It may be helpful to present the primary research question immediately, even though it will not be fully explained and discussed until later in the chapter:
In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?

There are three potentially contributing elements to student decision making and action taking highlighted by the wording of that question. Self-efficacy will be explicated in Chapter Two as comprising the beliefs or convictions that an individual holds about their abilities and capacities for effective action taking and problem solving within particular fields of endeavour. Self-leadership will be explicated in Chapter Two as a set of mutually reinforcing strategies that contribute to self-efficacy and thereby to effective problem solving and action taking. University support differs from those first two elements in that it is external to the individual: including university support as the third element needed to understand and explain differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not,

acknowledges the need to explore interactions between intrapersonal and social resources. That exploration has the potential to inform our thinking about what matters most – intrapersonal, internal resources or social, external resources – and that information will be shown to contribute to the debate about whether it makes most sense for universities to adopt a Neoliberal or a Welfarist approach to governance of international student accommodation.

1.1 Significance of this study

The importance of international education is well established. Since the early twentieth century, the trade in higher education services has grown rapidly (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin 2002). The international demand for higher education is forecast to increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million international students in 2025 (Bohm et al. 2002, p. 3). From an economic perspective, trade in education services has brought substantial benefits to many countries (Australian Education International 2011b; Centre for International Economics 2008; IDP 2007; Larsen, Martin & Morris 2002; Marginson 2006; Marginson et al. 2010; Mazzarol, TW & Soutar 2008; OECD Publishing 2004). This is because international students "make a significant contribution to their host universities and to society as a whole" (Barron, Baum & Conway 2007, p. 88). International students spend large amounts of money on "tuition fees, food, transport, accommodation, living costs and entertainment" (Czinkota 2005; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin 2002; Marginson 2006, p. 10; Mazzarol, T, Soutar & Seng 2003) during the completion of their degrees. Further, their visiting families also help to boost the host country's economy (Czinkota 2005).

According to Australian trade statistics, international education has been a fundamentally important economic activity to Australia (Australian Education International 2005, 2008b, 2011b; Australian Government 2009; Gatfield & Hyde 2005). In 2009-2010, international education activity contributed 18.7 billion dollars in export income to the Australian economy. Education services was ranked as the largest service export industry followed by personal travel services ($12.2 billion) and professional and management consulting services ($3.1 billion) (Australian

Education International 2011a). The data clearly shows that for the Australian economy, recruitment of international students has been beneficial (Andrade 2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; Banks, Olsen & Pearce 2007; Bohm et al. 2002; Gatfield & Hyde 2005; Harman 2004; IDP 2007; Khawaja & Dempsey 2008).

Since 1997, the numbers of international students has grown sharply in Australian higher education institutions (Lukic, Broadbent & Maclachlan 2004). In 2010, there were 469, 619 international students studying on a student visa in Australia. This was a slight decline from the previous year where the total number of international students was 491,290. This was a decline of 4.4% (Australian Education International 2011c). Nevertheless, the presence of international students in Australia institutions is highly significant and carries with it important economic benefits.

For international students, receiving international education results in improvements to their economic position, lifting of their social status (Doria 2005; IDP 2007; Mazzarol, T & Soutar 2002), development of their English proficiency, building their business skills, making ongoing social contact with local people (Beaver & Tuck 1999), enhancement of their education through an international experience (Chiu 1995; DeVerthelyi 1995) and accessing better employment opportunities (Bohm et al. 2003).

The most important factors influencing international students' decision to choose Australia were the attraction of studying in an English-speaking country, the quality of Australian education, the positive impact of Australian qualifications on their job prospects, Australia's reputation for the kind of course they were interested in, and Australia's safe and friendly environment (Australian Education International 2003).

The importance of Australia being seen as a safe and friendly environment has been discussed at length and in great detail by Marginson et al. (2010). That reputation has recently been undermined by a series of widely publicized attacks on Indian international students. Marginson et al. (2010) not only discuss the impact of those attacks on Australia's reputation, but also relate this problem to a

larger issue: the ways in which “international education is a revenue-raising business and its students are seen as consumers with needs and rights understood in terms of a bargain struck in the marketplace” (p. 10). Within that context, Marginson et al. conducted research into whether “the supports and protections that are part of a consumer bargain (are) adequate to the needs of international students as they see it” (p. 10). We will return to the implications of international students being seen as consumers, and its importance for this thesis, later in the chapter.

Although studying abroad offers benefits to international students, leaving their home country and achieving a degree in another language also carries with it a range of difficulties, including the difficulties associated with finding suitable accommodation. International students have to face the costs and complications involved in living and studying in new environments (Ballard & Clanchy 1984). Not surprisingly, moving away from home and starting a new life in another country is a notably stressful period for many international students (Baker, SR 2003).

In general, all students experience some level of adjustment when relocating to a new environment (Andrade & Evans 2009; Baker, G & Hawkins 2006; Baker, RW & Siryk 1986). Students encounter problems such as academic pressures, financial shortfalls, poor health, loneliness, interpersonal conflicts, difficulty in adjusting to change, and reductions in personal autonomy (Baker, RW & Siryk 1986; Furnham & Bochner 1986). All successful students undergo a process of psychological, social, and academic adaptation as part of their university experience (Berno & Ward 2002; Dunne & Somerset 2005). Compared with their local peers, however, international students are often faced with higher adjustment hurdles (Beaver & Tuck 1999; Kaczmarek et al. 1994) and their experiences are sometimes traumatic (Baker, G & Hawkins 2006).

Some international students experience a profound sense of loss in moving to another country for the first time (Baker, RW & Siryk 1986; Hayes & Lin 1994) as they have to leave their families, friends, schools and community behind (Baker, G & Hawkins 2006). Consequently they feel more lonely and homesick than domestic students who live away from home (Andrade 2006; Baker, G & Hawkins

2006; Dunne & Somerset 2005; Oei & Notowidjojo 1990). They are more at risk of becoming depressed, vulnerable and of becoming targets for unscrupulous perpetrators (Baker, G & Hawkins 2006, p. 21).

Ryan and Twibell (2000) point out that not all international student perform effectively within an environment with different norms and rules. Church (1982) notes that international students struggle to define their role as foreigners, experience difficulty in making new social contacts, have problems with verbal and non-verbal communication, and sometimes encounter racial discrimination and relationship problems. Furnham and Bochner (1986) also comment that international students have to deal with problems such as racial discrimination, language difficulties, accommodation difficulties, separation reactions, dietary restrictions, financial stress, misunderstandings and loneliness. Harms (1998) asserts that it is extremely difficult for international students to establish any routine involving study, housing, relationships, living arrangements, part-time work, and finance, as the unusual nature of the academic year interferes with resolution of these issues.

Zhai (2004), Andrade (2006) and Ballard & Clanchy (1984) found that the most significant adjustment issues international students faced were related to cultural differences, language challenges, and the educational system. It was reported that issues which were of little concern to international students were those relating to finances, homesickness, and health issues. These findings are contrary to those of Ying and Liese (1994), who found that the level of homesickness was the strongest predictor of poor adjustment. Similarly, Baker G and Hawkins (2006) argue that social integration, family stress, and isolation resulting in homesickness and loneliness are significant problems for many international students. Li and Kaye (1998) investigated overseas students' perception of their concerns and their problems relating to their learning experiences. They pointed out that the most important problems for Asian students and for students from other developing countries were financial, academic, and those related to accommodation. Their results suggested that students viewed accommodation and financial problems as being equally important.

In Australia, the main problems of international students are associated with English language proficiency, coping with the education systems and its demands, culture adjustment, and provision of support services (Andrade 2006; Ballard & Clanchy 1984; Beaver & Tuck 1999; Bochner 1977). During their first year at universities, international students have difficulty understanding lectures in terms of vocabulary and speed, and with tutors who speak too fast or gave too little input (Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999). In attempting to adjust to life changing circumstances, international students are significantly more likely to experience moderate to severe clinical depression and loneliness than Australian students (Oei & Notowidjojo 1990, p. 121). Furnham (2004, p. 19) suggests that "in many cases international students do appear to experience more physical and mental ill health than native students".

Overall then, international students have greater adjustment difficulties than local students in regard to cultural, academic, environment, social, and accommodation challenges. Details of these difficulties can be found in:

- Cultural challenges (Andrade 2006; Bochner 1977; Bradley 2000; Burns 1991; Church 1982; Furnham 2004; Harms 1998; Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002; Khawaja & Dempsey 2007; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006; Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999; Ryan, ME & Twibell 2000; Scheyvens, Wild & Overton 2003)
- Academic challenges (Andrade 2006; Burns 1991; Furnham 2004; Harms 1998; Hashim & Zhiliang 2003; Khawaja & Dempsey 2007; Misra, Crist & Burant 2003; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006; Olivas & Li 2006; Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999; Rice, KG & Dellwo 2002)
- Environmental challenges (Andrade 2006; Bochner 1977; Burns 1991; Church 1982; Furnham 2004; Harms 1998; Khawaja & Dempsey 2007)
- Social challenges (Andrade 2006; Bochner 1977; Burns 1991; Church 1982; Furnham 2004; Harms 1998; Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002; Jacob & Greggo 2001; Khawaja & Dempsey 2007; Lewthwaite 1996; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006; Olivas & Li 2006; Rajapaksa & Dundes 2003; Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999)

- Accommodation challenges (Campbell 2004; Chen, CP 1999; Evans et al. 2000; Furnham & Bochner 1986; Harms 1998; Khawaja & Dempsey 2007; Lin, J-CG & Yi 1997; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006; Vissing & Diament 1997).

As we have seen, moving away from home and starting a new life in another country is a notably stressful period for many international students. The positive affective tone that characterizes the pre-arrival expectations of international students is often replaced by feelings that are more negative after they enter the host country (Baker, SR 2003). As part of the research project of this thesis, international students were asked about the ways in which they found that their accommodation difficulties led to stress. Those findings are presented in Chapter Five.

1.2 Local context

Australian institutions have been successfully recruiting international students from many countries (Australian Education International 2010, 2011c). The number of international students in Australia was more than 500,000 in 2008-2009 (Australian Education International 2010). However, there has been not enough attention paid to their well being while they are studying and living in Australia. Universities need to consider not only how to recruit international students, but also how to keep them happy. Carr, McKay and Rugimbana (1999) suggest that appropriate information, services, and programs are critical to helping international students have positive experiences, fulfil their educational goals, and return home as satisfied customers. Considering the many expectations that international students have and the many problems they face adjusting to a new country and learning environment, it is important for educational institutions to be aware of students needs and expectations, and take steps to identify, measure, meet and exceed those expectations which are under their control (Sherry et al. 2004, p. 2).

Finding suitable accommodation is one of the first serious needs confronting international students when they decide to study abroad (Niven 1987). On one hand, suitable accommodation can be the heaven that helps them encounter the

stresses of life; on the other hand, unsuitable accommodation can add extra stress and worry (Bondi & Christie 2000; Heath & Kenyon 2001; Niven 1987). Myburgh, Niehaus and Poggenpoel (2006) point out that it is important to international students to feel a sense of being 'at home' in their study and living conditions. This is because living "away from their supportive families, can lead to emotional disturbances" (Hodgkin 1978, p. 139).

Living in suitable accommodation helps international students to counteract feelings of insecurity and loneliness (Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006; Thomsen 2007). Further, living in suitable accommodation is crucial to the well-being and academic performance of international students (Altschuler & Kramnick 1999; Li & Kaye 1998; Lloyd et al. 1980; Scheyvens, Wild & Overton 2003). Not surprisingly, living in poor quality accommodation can have a negative outcome on mental health (Evans et al. 2000; Humphrey et al. 1997). Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) explain that finding a place to live is a task that adds to adjustment difficulties and creates distress.

International students might have some preferences and opinions about their preferred living arrangements while they are still in their home countries; however, they do not get to know the real accommodation situation until they have been living in a country for quite some time. With only limited information sources, a limited social network, and limited knowledge about a new city, it is difficult for international students to choose the right accommodation. Smith & Pang (2007) and Ryder (2004) point out that early in the stay of international students, most choose to live close to education institutions for safety and security reasons, given their lack of knowledge of surrounding suburbs and transport options.

Unfortunately, international students are given limited information in education provider orientation packs which often contain only on-campus options or the most expensive off-campus options (Smith 2007). And when international students attempt to organise their own living arrangements they have limited knowledge and understanding of how to find the right accommodation (Campbell 2004; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006). These difficulties produce negative housing experiences, "particularly in the first 12 months" (Smith et al. 2007, p. 2).

Mackie (1998) investigated why the ‘expectant hope’ of some students turns into a need met and the fulfilment of a desire, while for others, the 'expectant hope' turns into fears realized, uncertainty and doubt and eventual departure from university. Mackie’s findings showed that accommodation acted most powerfully as an external constraint: high costs, inappropriate locations, unacceptable standards, and difficult housemates were all negative factors. University managed accommodation gave first year students limited choice of location or housemates. Further, most students could not easily change their accommodation as rental contracts commit them to a one year tenancy.

Marginson et al. (2010) assert that many universities in Australia and other English-speaking countries that provide international education have turned away from direct provision of student dormitory accommodation in favour of the provision of student housing by non-university agents. This is partly due to space shortages, partly because universities are no longer willing to subsidise on-campus housing despite the pastoral and educational benefits and in some cases also because partnerships with non-university providers of housing provide revenues. There is continuing debate about the role of institutions in providing housing and related services

Marginson et al. (2010) also point out that students live in squalor not through choice but because of the combined effects of two factors. One factor is market forces, not just the patterns of supply and demand for housing of different types, but also their own desires to minimize costs and sometimes to maximize the earnings they can repatriate back home. The other factor is the policies and regulations that shape the housing system. The partly deregulated market sustains a thick layer of low grade housing. Students are forced into that layer by absolute scarcity of accommodation, or by the desire or necessity to live as cheaply as possible. Governments and educational providers do little to check or monitor housing standards or to provide higher grade alternatives on the necessary scale. Students are particularly vulnerable to poor quality and exorbitant rents in properties close to universities: such locations have premium value because of the cost of travelling.

In the United States, Stoner and Moss (1982) conducted a survey of resident student satisfaction and quality of life of the on-campus living environment. Their data indicated that rendering buildings safe and comfortable, policies and services were the main concerns of resident student. Janosik, Creamer and Cross (1988) examined the relationship between the student-environment fit in residence halls and the sense of competence of freshman students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The results suggested that higher 'sense of competence' scores were associated with higher levels of student-environment fit.

Damron and Twale (1991) conducted a study to assess resident student satisfaction with respect to the facilities, services, communications, staff, and programs offered by Auburn's office of Housing and Residence. The results indicated that students chose on-campus accommodation because of safety, cleanliness, programming, and decision making opportunities. The study revealed that once safety and liveable conditions were provided, resident students were more likely to appreciate educational programming.

Rohrlich and Martin (1991) studied student sojourn expectations for and reactions after return from a college level study abroad in Western Europe. The study found that the highest difficulty of adjustment issue for students was housing, followed respectively by coursework, food, climate and language. This study therefore suggests that international students view accommodation challenges as more difficult than academic challenges.

In the United Kingdom, Rugg, Rhodes and Jones (2000) conducted research into the nature and impact of student demand on housing markets. The findings indicated that students chose to live in university accommodation because of the reasonable rental cost, quieter accommodation, and convenient location. Those students who chose to live off campus suggested that the ability to live with friends was a key advantage. However, both group of students stated that they wanted to find better quality accommodation.

In Kuwait, AlKandari (2007) conducted a mail survey of Kuwait University students living in single-sex residence halls. The main focus of the study was to explore

student's perceptions toward the residence hall living environment. The research findings indicated that the students were mostly satisfied with their residence hall living environment. However, the study also pointed out that students prefer to live in a single room. In addition, the study findings suggested that the residence hall administrators and supervisors should increase their efforts to reduce the homesick feelings of the students by encouraging students to participate in hall committee activities, programs, and other student activities provided by the university, which would help them to interact with a number of other students and make friends.

1.2.1 Accommodation issues that impact international students in Australia

There are a number of issues concerning the accommodation situation in Australia which have an impact on international students' accommodation experience. Firstly, the housing shortage and the large increase in property prices and therefore rental accommodation availability and access has led to a large problem for all institutions in meeting housing needs in the local areas surrounding education providers (NLC 2008). This is most apparent in the larger inner city campuses in Melbourne and Sydney, although smaller cities, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane have also been affected to a large extent and have been active in developing initiatives to try to meet housing needs (Smith 2009; Tottenham & Bell 2003). For example, in New South Wales, a housing crisis affects both local and international students. In response, universities and a large private student accommodation provider have been looking at increasing the number of purpose built student accommodation buildings in Sydney in order to cater for the growing number of international students. The project aims to provide safe and secure housing near the education institution (Pang 2007). Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) comment that rising costs and discontent with accommodation may serve to increase the financial and psychological strain on internationals students. Many international students are unable to find suitable housing on account of the scarcity of residential hall accommodation and lack of housing in the private sector (NLC 2008).

Secondly, many international students are unaware of their housing rights and obligations (NLC 2008). As a consequence, some international students are not sure about whether they are allowed to rent privately or reside in 'student housing accommodation'. In addition, boarding house legislation remains confusing and inadequate to address the many rental and safety problems in this increasingly popular and affordable accommodation option (NLC 2008; Smith 2009). Baker and Hawkins (2006) argue that often due to a lack of knowledge and poor decision making skills, students find themselves living in less than satisfactory accommodation, feeling lonely, alienated and with a high chance of becoming 'at risk'.

Thirdly, international students are given limited information in education provider packs which often only list on-campus options or the most expensive off-campus options. With these loopholes, some accommodation providers make large profits which leave students with a very sour taste of Australian accommodation (NLC 2008). Tottenham and Bell (2003) contend that such difficulties and dissatisfactions point to strong challenges for the management of current and future accommodation for international students. Hence, universities have a responsibility to provide accommodation and adequate care to their international students (Fernandes 2006).

In 2008, the City of Melbourne undertook an International Student Survey to gather feedback from international students living and/or studying within the City of Melbourne. The survey results showed that, in general, international students satisfied with their living/studying experience in Melbourne; however, survey respondents raised some issues on the cost of living and accommodation. Many international students complained that the cost of living in Melbourne is high. They have had problems with the cost of accommodation and problems finding accommodation (City of Melbourne 2009).

In 2009, the University of Melbourne conducted research titled "Transnational and Temporary: students, community and place-making in central Melbourne". The research project looked at the experience of students at RMIT and the University

of Melbourne who live in and around the central city. Some important issues of student housing were highlighted. Housing near the universities was often poorly designed and expensive. Further, housing options and information about those options were limited. As a consequence, students from overseas were the main occupants of the high-density, high-security purpose-built student housing in the study area. The researchers recommended that attention needs to be paid to providing a suite of affordable housing alternatives for students, in locations away from the central city as well as near it (Fincher et al. 2009).

In summary then, because increasing the number of international students is the main focus of education as an export industry, there has been insufficient attention paid to the well being of international students, especially in term of their living arrangements and their living experiences after they have been recruited. Most previous research has been primarily aimed at identifying shortcomings in available accommodation and/or has been aimed at asking international students what they want from their accommodation. Relatively little work has been carried out on how students live while at university (Humphrey et al. 1997; McCarthy & Humphrey 1995). Stress research is particularly relevant to understanding the impact of accommodation problems on international students.

1.3 Stress

Selye (1976, p. 74) has defined stress as *"the non-specific response of the body to any demand that has an impact on mental and somatic"*. Cox (1978, p. 25) has defined stress as "*a perceptual phenomenon arising from a comparison between the demand on the person and his ability to cope"*. Lazarus & Folkman (1984, p. 19) have described stress as *"a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being"*. Meanwhile, Aldwin (2007, p. 24) has referred to stress as *"quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction that, through either over arousal or under arousal, results in psychological or physiological distress"*. In short, "*stress may be considered in terms of a life change to which the person must adapt*" (Hislop 1991, p. 9).

1.3.1 Stress and accommodation

In general, individuals can experience stress when they feel they are unable to cope with the pressures or demands upon them. This feeling is a natural reaction to excessive pressure or even to excessive boredom. It is not a disease, but if stress is excessive and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill health (Healey 2009, p. 15). Edlin, Golanty and Brown (2000, p. 26) suggest that "for most individuals, situations that are interpreted as stressful include harm and loss, threat, and challenge". Lazarus (1993) asserts that stressful situations are often accompanied by "negative emotions such as anger, fright, anxiety, shame, guilt, sadness, envy, jealous and disgust" (p. 23). Sometime stress can become "a threat to quality of life, and to physical and psychological well-being" (Cox 1978, p. vi). Clearly, having to live in unsuitable accommodation for too long constitutes a stressful situation.

Lazarus and Lazarus (1994, p. 227) have divided circumstances of stress into two types: life events and daily hassles. Life events was based on the idea that major changes in our lives are inherently stressful because they disrupt our usual patterns, involve personal losses, and require major readjustments. Major changes in our lives, such as travelling to another country for study, are inherently stressful when they disrupt our usual patterns, involve personal losses, and/or require major readjustments. Negative life events are culturally or personally undesirable changes in the usual activities of an individual that require substantial behavioural readjustments (Bunyan 1999, p. 13; Holmes & Rahe 1967).

Daily hassles are very common and sap our goodwill (Lazarus & Lazarus 1994, p. 227). The potential for seemingly minor hassles to be stressful is substantial. Daily hassles include misplacing or losing things, troublesome neighbours, social obligations, inconsiderate smokers, concerns about money, health, or alcohol, fixing meals, cleaning house, one's physical appearance, problems with aging parents, difficulties with co-workers or supervisors, and countless others (Lazarus & Lazarus 1994, p. 229). Many of the daily hassles just listed are encountered by international students when their accommodation is sub-standard.

There are several psychological changes that may be regarded as warnings that a person is under stress. These include a variety of physical symptoms, such as fatigue, insomnia, restlessness, irritability; frequent minor illnesses, such as virus infections; increased use of alcohol and drugs; a hunger for sweet things; and a great diversity of somatic complaints (Hislop 1991, p. 9-10). The psychological reactions to significant stress can include impairment of concentration and disorganisation of thought process, especially in relation to tasks that are unrelated to the object of their stress, such as studying or recalling information when needed (Yoong et al. 1999, p. 64).

Stress to an individual arises from a singular set of circumstances within their life setting. The occurrence engenders an emotional cascade that depends on the specific meaning the loss will have to that person. The stressfulness of any event for an individual is a highly distinctive matter (Hislop 1991, p. 15). Stress responses based on perceptions of threat are considered to be psychological stress responses because the threat value depends largely on our interpretation of the event and its meaning for our own lives (Lovallo 2005, pp. 87-8). Selye (1985, p. 4) suggests that “stress is not necessarily undesirable; it all depends on how you take it”. Doublet (1999-2000) and Healey (2009) point out that too much stress can affect physical and psychological well-being of individuals.

1.3.2 Stress and international students

For all students, university can be a stressful time (Gloria & Kurpius 2001). Especially the first year is stressful; students need to adjust to new educational and social environments as well as coping with developmental issues such as psychological autonomy, economic independence and identity formation (Furnham 2004). Students experience socially isolating and disappointing situations (Burns 1991; McInnis & James 1999; Ying, Yiu-Wen 2002). The demands of these new environments can create stressors that may strain interpersonal relationships, undermine self-esteem (Khawaja & Dempsey 2008, p. 30; Murff 2005) and jeopardise academic performance (Clinard & Golden 1973; Khawaja & Dempsey 2008, p. 30). Hardy (2003) reports that the key causes of stress for students are fear of academic failure, intolerable pressure to achieve in school, increased

anxiety about retention, early exposure to world events and sexual pressures, and parental pressures. Dunne & Somerset (2005) highlight serious upheaval for students, frequently including homesickness and the stress of coping with a new environment, new people and new experiences. Kuhn et al. (2005) found that academic demands and financial obligations were the main stressors of students.

Yoong et al. (1999) and Struthers, Perry & Menec (2000) assert that stress has a negative effect on students' studies. Common symptoms of stress are loss of concentration, feelings of depression and headaches (Yoong et al. (1999). In addition, mental health issues, particularly regarding stress and depression, are important to students (Dunne & Somerset 2005; Furnham & Bochner 1986) because academic success is strongly related to the personal well-being of students (Scheyvens, Wild & Overton 2003).

Compared with domestic students, the problems of international students are unique and more complex (Khawaja & Dempsey 2008; Mullins, Quintrell & Hancock 1995; Pedersen 1991; Toyokawa & Toyokawa 2002). International students tend to encounter stresses and adjustment issues during their sojourn years (Khawaja & Dempsey 2007). They have to adapt to a new culture, language, academic and social environment (Hellstén 2002; Khawaja & Dempsey 2008, p. 31; Mori 2000; Ryan, ME & Twibell 2000). They face difficulties in language barriers, different academic systems, cultural differences, racial discrimination, social interaction, and personal adjustment (Abe, Talbot & Geelhoed 1998; Anderson, TR & Myer 1985; Heikinheimo & Shute 1986; Luzzo, Henao & Wilson 1996; Parr, Bradley & Bingi 1992). They have more difficulties in social and academic situations (Barker et al. 1991). Consequently, psychological stress is a critical phenomenon in international college students' lives (Aubrey 1991; Ebbin & Blankenship 1988; Mallinckrodt & Leong 1992; Redmond & Bunyi 1993).

Burns (1991) and Toyokawa & Toyokawa (2002) comment that international students have higher stressors compared to domestic students. Read et al. (2002) assert that international students are often undergoing role transitions - such as moving away from the family home for the first time, residing with other students, and experiencing reduced adult supervision - these changes may increase the risk

of depression. Furnham (2004) maintains that in addition to the usual student adjustment process, international students have a number of other stressors including the added strain of having to learn different cultural norms, language and a new educational system. Ward, Leong and Low (2004) assert that the absence of a cultural-fit between one's cultural framework and the practices of the host society tends to aggravate adjustment problems. Alexander et al. (1981) highlight differences in food, language, climate, customs, communication, and identity issues associated with loss or change in status as being salient issues of concern for foreign students (Khawaja & Dempsey 2008, p. 33). In addition financial concerns are commonly identified as one of the greatest sources of stress for international students (Chen 1999; Guilfoyle 2004; Lin & Yi 1997; Mori 2000). This includes increasing tuition frees and living expenses (Australian Education International 2008; Chen, CP 1999).

Poyrazli et al. (2002) examined the adjustment needs of international students within their academic and social communities. The findings suggested that international students were more in need during their initial transition after arrival to the U.S. They faced barriers during their adjustment period related to academic life, health insurance, living on or off campus, social interactions, transportation and discrimination. Similar research was conducted by Scheyvens et al. (2003) on the impediments to international postgraduate students' learning experiences at Massey University, New Zealand. The findings showed that the first few months after arrival were the most intensely stressful period for these students. Settling in and finding their way around were the main problems, which were caused by language difficulties and a lack of knowledge of the local culture and environment.

Oei and Notowidjojo (1990) studied the effect of life changes of overseas students compared with Australian students. A survey method was used in this research (N = 342, 125 overseas and 217 Australian students). The result indicated that overseas students were significantly more likely to experience moderate to severe clinical depression and loneliness than the Australian students. The results also showed that age and expectation of difficulty in study were the best predictors for depression in overseas students. The older the overseas students, the less depressed they were. The bigger the gap between a student's expectation of

academic achievement and the problems they perceived, the more depressed they became.

Ying and Liese (1994) examined the pre- to post-arrival change in emotional well-being of a group of 171 Taiwan students in the U.S. The results suggested that over half of the students experienced decline in emotional well-being, while the rest reported no change or improved mood upon arrival. The results pointed out that stable/improved mood from pre- to post-arrival was associated with higher pre-departure depression levels, experiencing fewer interpersonal and academic problems, having a larger social support network far away, and feeling better prepared for the overseas study. Conversely, students who became more depressed upon arrival in the U.S. reported lower pre-departure depression, experienced more interpersonal and academic problems, had a smaller support network far away, and were less well prepared for this transition.

Khawaja and Dempsey (2008) compared factors such as accommodation and financial satisfaction, social support, mismatched expectations, academic stress, dysfunctional coping and psychological distress between international and domestic students at an Australian university. The results showed that international students had less social support, used more dysfunctional coping strategies, and had greater incongruence between their expectations and experience of university life.

Misra, Crist and Burant (2003) examined the relationships among 143 international students between life stress (primary stressor), academic stressors (secondary stressor), perceived social support (stress mediator), and reactions to stressors (stress outcome). The results indicated that there was no significant difference in academic and life stressors by gender. However, women exhibited higher reactions to stressors than men. Higher levels of academic stressors were predicted by higher levels of life stress and by lower levels of social support. Higher academic stressors predicted greater reactions to other stressors.

Sam (2001) examined self-reported satisfaction with life and the factors predicting it among 304 international students (159 males and 145 females) at the University

of Bergen, Norway. The results showed that the students were satisfied with life in general. However, students from Europe and North America were more satisfied than their peers from Africa and Asia. The results also revealed that the number of friends, satisfaction with finances, perceived discrimination and information received prior to the foreign sojourn significantly affected the student's life satisfaction.

Ebbin and Blankenship (1988) conducted a survey of 476 college health center directors in order to determine if certain stress-related diagnoses were more prevalent among foreign than domestic students. They also aimed to identify barriers to health care among foreign students. The findings showed that foreign students had higher frequencies (than domestic students) of anxiety, gastritis, headache, constipation, insomnia, depression, "no pathology", chest pain, abdominal pain and peptic ulcer. Compared to foreign students, domestic students had higher frequencies of hypertension, low back pain, amenorrhea and neurodermatitis. The findings also indicated that factors such as language difficulties, different health beliefs, lack of knowledge and acceptance of stress as causes for somatic complaints, and reluctance to see a mental health counselor, were identified as barriers to health care of foreign students.

Burns (1991) studied stress indicators among first year overseas students in an Australian university. Overseas students from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong (N = 133) and Australian born students (N = 76) participated in a questionnaire survey. The results showed that compared to local students the overseas group had significantly greater difficulties adjusting to academic requirements, particularly with regard to managing the demands of study, specifically study methods, independent learning, language skills, participation and time management. The overseas students manifested significantly higher degrees of various stress indicators than did the local students.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) assert that stress is an inevitable aspect of life and that what makes the difference in human functioning is how people cope with it. Cox (1978, p. 77) asserts that the experience of stress has been viewed as producing a disruption of psychological equilibrium which brings into play

homeostatic mechanisms to reduce its impact. These mechanisms have been described as coping, and are a part of the overall pattern of behaviour. Coping may simply involve a reorganisation of the usual pattern of behaviour, and the reorganised behaviour may still be within the range of normal behaviour. However, if this normal coping is unsuccessful in reducing or removing the experience of stress then reorganisation may give rise to the disorganisation of behaviour.

International students clearly experience stress and could benefit from strategies to reduce it. If university personnel are to effectively promote the adjustment of students to an academic environment, they need to be aware of the type of stressors that are most common to college students and the effects of those stressors on outcomes such as academic performance and health (Nonis et al. 1998). As we have seen, unsuitable accommodation is one of the most important stressors that confront international students. To survive, international students have to find ways to cope.

1.4 Coping

Coping refers to *"dealing with demanding situations which are experienced as stressful"* (Cox 1978, p. 79). Coping is defined as *"constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person"* (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p.141). Coping describes as *"any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner"* (Matheny et al. 1986, p. 509).

According to Selye (1974) and Murff (2005, p. 102) stress places demands on an individual and in response to the stress, the body attempts to adapt to the stressful experience to maintain a sense of normalcy. Thus coping happens when a person "attempts to master" stressful situations (Cox 1978, p. 79). A situation may or may not be stressful, depending on individuals' interpretation of stress as positive or negative, motivating or paralysing (Healey 2009, p. 37). The way a person copes is determined in part by his or her resources, which include health and energy;

existential beliefs, e.g., those which have a motivational component that can help sustain coping; problem solving skills; social skills; social support; and material resources (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 179).

To say that a person is resourceful means that he or she has many resources and/or is clever in finding ways of using them to counter demands. Resources are something one draws upon, whether they are readily available to the person (e.g., money, tools, people to help, relevant skills) or whether they exist as competencies for finding resources that are needed but not available (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 158). Evans-Martin (2007) asserts that how well a person cope with stress determines many things, such as our ability to reach our goals and maintain our health under the pressures of modern life.

Coping involves two processes: direct action and palliation (Lazarus 1966, 1976). Direct action refers to actual behaviour aimed at changing the person's relationship with his environment, and can take several forms: preparation against harm, aggression and avoidance. Avoidance refers to removing oneself from the presence of actual danger of threat (Cox 1978, p. 79). Palliation is a matter of moderating the distress caused by the experience of stress, and reducing its psychophysiological effects (Cox 1978, p. 83).

1.4.1 Types of coping

There are two forms of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping involves direct attention towards the problem and looking for ways of solving it. **Problem-focused** efforts are often directed at defining problem, generating alternative solutions, weighting the alternatives in terms of their costs and benefits, choosing them, and acting them (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub 1989; Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 152). Emotion–focused coping consists of cognitive processes directed at lessening emotional distress and includes strategies such as avoidance, minimization, distancing, selective attention, positive comparisons, and wresting positive value from negative events (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub 1989; Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 150). **Emotional-focused** coping involves "positive

reinterpretation of events" and "seeking out of social support" (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub 1989, p. 268). It is important to understand that emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to occur when there has been an appraisal that nothing can be done to modify harmful, threatening, or challenging environment conditions. On the other hand, problem focused forms of coping are more probable when such conditions are appraised as amenable to change (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 150, Lazarus & Folkman 1985).

1.4.2 Coping styles

Seiffge-Krenke (1995) has divided coping styles into two categories, functional and dysfunctional coping styles. **Functional coping** refers to active efforts to manage a problem or think of a solution. **Dysfunctional coping** focuses on effort to deny or avoid the problem and attempts to regulate the emotions. Dysfunctional coping was the only factor contributing to psychological distress (Khawaja & Dempsey 2007, p. 13).

According to cognitive relational stress theory (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; Orucu 2005, p. 14), people's psychological adaptation to new circumstances may be either facilitated or impeded depending on contextual factors. These factors include personal resources or vulnerabilities on the one hand and environmental resources or constraints on the other. In encounters with stressors, resources, vulnerabilities and constraints influence stress appraisals, coping strategies and subjective well-being. Strong resources and weak constraints foster adaptive coping strategies that mediate better psychological and physical well-being compared to weak resources and severe constraints.

1.4.3 Coping resources

Coping resources are categorised into two kinds: internal and external coping resources. **Internal coping resources** refer to health and energy, positive beliefs, problem-solving skills and social skills. Within internal coping resources, *health and energy* are among the most pervasive resources in that they are relevant to

coping in many, if not all, stressful encounters. A person who is frail, sick, tired, or otherwise debilitated has less energy to expend on coping than a healthy, robust person. *Positive beliefs*, viewing personal traits positively can also be regarded as a very important psychological resource for coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 159). Personal traits include self-efficacy, optimism, perception of control, and self-esteem (Rice, PL 1999).

Problem-solving skills include the ability to search for information, analyse situations for the purpose of identifying the problem in order to generate alternative courses of action, weight alternative courses of action, weigh alternatives with respect to desired or anticipated outcomes, and select and implement an appropriate plan of action (Janis, I L 1974; Janis, Irving L & Mann 1977). Problem-solving skills are themselves drawn from other resources – a wide range of experiences, the person's store of knowledge, his or her cognitive/intellectual ability to use that knowledge, and the capacity for self-control (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 163).

Social skills are an important coping resource because of the pervasive role of social functioning in human adaptation. They refer to the ability to communicate and behave with others in ways that are socially appropriate and effective. Social skills facilitate problem-solving in conjunction with other people, increase the likelihood of being able to enlist their cooperation or support, and in general give the individual greater control over social interactions (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 163).

External coping resources include social support and material resources. *Social support* is categorised as an environmental resource. Having people from whom one receives emotional, informational, and/or tangible support has been receiving growing attention as a coping resource in stress research, behavioural medicine, and social epidemiology (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 164). Rice, PL (1999, p. 292) suggest that social support has emerged as a major resource for effective coping. Cohen & Wills (1985) assert that social support makes only a small contribution to coping efforts by itself, but it is very important when combined with other coping techniques. Social support may help people cope with stress through

indirect or direct action. The indirect effect is called the buffering model. Here, social support does not do anything directly to reduce or eliminate stress. It only shields the person from the negative effects of stress (Rice, PL 1999, p. 292).

Material resources refer to money and the goods and services that money can buy. People with money, especially if they have the skills to use it effectively, generally fare much better than those without. Obviously, monetary resources greatly increase the coping options in almost any stressful transaction; they provide easier and often more effective access to legal, medical, financial, and other professional assistance. Simply having money, even if it is not drawn upon, may reduce the person's vulnerability to threat and in this way also facilitate effective coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p.164).

1.4.4 Studies of coping and international students

Ryan & Twibell (2000) examined the person-related variable of values and goals, cognitive stress appraisals of threat and challenge, coping effectiveness as a measure of secondary appraisal, and perceived health as an adaptational outcome within a stressful situation. The situation was participation in a cross-cultural learning experience in which an individual travelled alone to a host country outside of the U.S. The findings indicated that respondents appraised a typical study abroad experience as a challenge rather than a threat. The coping styles used most often were the optimistic, confrontive, supportive and self-reliant styles.

Struthers, Perry & Menec (2000) investigated the capacity of an academic specific measure of college students' coping style to predict students' academic motivation and performance. The results showed that the relationship between college students' stress and course grade was qualified by their academic coping style and motivation. Further, greater academic stress was associated with greater problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The results also indicated that coping and motivation were related processes and should be considered within the same model.

In another study Lee and Larson (1996) examined which coping strategies for dealing with examination stress contributed to lower rates of emotional and physical problems among Korean adolescents. The results showed that Korean adolescents who experienced life event stress in addition to their examination stress reported more psychological and physical symptoms. No gender difference was observed in the use of information seeking coping to deal with both examination and no examination stress; however, difference was found in the frequency of emotional-discharge coping. The effectiveness of different coping strategies for Korean adolescents appeared to be similar to patterns found in research with Western adolescents dealing with stress. The results also suggested that problem solving and information seeking coping were related to less depression, whereas emotional-discharge coping was related to more physical symptoms.

Hess and Copeland (2001) studied the relationships between coping and mental health in adolescence. The results showed that coping styles that tend to avoid or ignore the stressor were associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety. Similar outcomes found in Hess and Copeland (2001)'s study. Hess and Copeland found that students who dropped out of school have reported higher levels of stress and more frequent use of dysfunctional coping styles, such as avoiding problems and externalizing feelings.

Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) studied the manner in which psychological distress was manifested in international students and the factors that contribute to their psychological distress. The participants consisted of 86 international students enrolled at a Queensland university who completed a battery of 9 self-report questionnaires. The results showed that obsessive-compulsiveness reflected by worry, ruminations and perfectionist tendencies, was the most common symptom of psychological distress in international students. Dysfunctional coping was the only factor contributing to psychological distress.

1.5 Research issues

In the preceding pages, it has been established that international students are of enormous economic importance to Australia; it has also been established that not only in Australia but also in other economies which export education, international students struggle with many difficulties, including less support than they need from universities when facing the challenges of accommodation; and finally, it has been established that there are undeniable links between accommodation problems and the development of significant stress for international students. This means we are confronted by a mystery: Why would any exporter of education not do its utmost to reduce the stressors that impact international students?

Underlying this mystery is an ongoing debate concerning the best approach to university governance. Marginson et al. (2010) highlight the many ways in which Australian universities manage their relationship with international students through the ideology of Neoliberalism rather than Welfarism. According to Marginson et al, Neoliberalism "privileges economic markets above social objectives" (p. 64); and as a consequence "shift the basis of social programs from universal entitlement to individual choice, (and) save money that would otherwise be spent on public programs …. all in the name of enhanced popular powers and freedoms" (p. 64). Most importantly for our understanding of the ways in which the accommodation problems of international students appears to be neglected by universities, Marginson et al. (2010) explain how Neoliberalism is associated with the conceptualisation of students as autonomous and capable social agents. "Consistent with the growing role of individual agency and self-responsibility in modern societies, and with steering from a distance, there is reduced use of systems based on top-down control and ordering, and growing reliance on and delegation to choice-making individuals and institutions" (pp. 63-4). The Welfarist approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for governments and institutions to support, and to provide economic and informational resources for, individuals if they are to develop the capacity to deal with life's vicissitudes.

So there is a need to explore what is actually going on when international students are confronted by accommodation challenges. Is it the case that some international students manage those challenges more effectively than others; and if so, is that because those who cope more effectively are more self-responsible, autonomous and capable social agents (as Neoliberalism suggests)? Or is it the case that international students, when it comes to accommodation, find themselves in situations where what matters primarily is not their capacity for self-responsibility, but is instead the availability of external resources such as finance, or social support, or accurate and comprehensive information (as Welfarism suggests)? Or rather than seeing the Neoliberal and the Welfarist characterizations of international students as two sides of a competing dualism, is it the case that both internal and external resources matter, and there is an interplay between those resources that can be understood and used to explain differences in how well individual students manage the challenges of accommodation? To address those fundamental issues, the following research question has been formulated: *In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?*

Self-leadership and self-efficacy are central to the formulation of this research question because each of those concepts derive from a theoretical position in which individuals are seen as agents who have varying internal levels of self-leadership strategies as an intrapersonal resource, and varying levels of internal self-efficacy as a contributor to confident and sustained problem solving. The nature of self-leadership and self-efficacy, and their relationship to each other will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. What matters most as we come to the end of this introduction, is that both self-leadership and self-efficacy are psychological rather than social (although, of course, they facilitate effective social action), and they are both consistent with the Neoliberal conceptualisation of international students as independent, autonomous agents who are responsible for their own well-being.

Learning more about the differences between students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and students whose approach is ineffective has the potential to contribute to relevant theory, but is also important for practical reasons. The findings of this research could be used by universities to increase the likelihood that students will be assisted to find the kind of accommodation that is best for them and to provide better advice to students about what they should look for and how they might find it. Increasing the effectiveness of accommodation support services may assist students to adjust more successfully to their host nation. Further, international students who feel their needs are being acknowledged and responded to may convey favourable feedback about the host university to their families and friends. Positive feedback should not only assist in retaining and capturing more of the export education market but also help improve or maintain institutional reputation and image.

Two secondary research questions are:

1. *What kinds of university provided assistance do international students receive in relation to accommodation and how useful is that assistance?*

2. *What connections do international students make between their accommodation experiences, their subjective sense of well being, and their overall opinion of the university?*

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2 - explores literature which is relevant to understanding the links between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university support programs for student housing.

Chapter 3 – explains and justifies the research design, sample, participants, instruments, procedures and approach to data analysis.

Chapter 4 - presents findings and discussion from the surveys.

Chapter 5 - presents in-depth interview findings.

Chapter 6 - presents discussion and analysis of the in-depth interview findings.

Chapter 7 - concludes the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed and discussed literature on education as an export business, literature on student accommodation, and literature on student stress. That review clearly demonstrated a wide range of serious inadequacies in student accommodation; it also demonstrated strong links between accommodation problems and student stress. Consequently, Chapter One led to the discovery of a mystery: “Why would any exporter of education not do its utmost to reduce the stressors that impact international students?”

In discussing that mystery, the author noted that leaving international students to their own devices when it comes to meeting the challenges of accommodation makes sense if we adopt the Neoliberal position that societies and institutions should treat adults as autonomous, independent agents who are responsible for their own well being. On this view of international students, the solution to accommodation problems lies in how effectively they use their internal resources of motivation and ability to solve their own problems. The competing position, which we could loosely characterize as a Welfarist position, emphasizes the crucial importance of external resources (such as social support, accurate information, and student rights advocates) when it comes to the kind of assistance that universities should provide.

Chapter One then arrived at the conclusion that rather than seeing the Neoliberal and the Welfarist characterizations of international students as two sides of a competing dualism, it makes more sense to assume that both internal and external resources matter, and there is an interplay between those resources that can be understood and used to explain differences in how well individual students manage the challenges of accommodation. To inquire more deeply into this proposed explanation, the following research question was formulated: *In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international*

students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?

Given that research question, this chapter reviews previous theory and research concerning self-leadership, self-efficacy, and support programs for students who are facing accommodation challenges. The review will be constructive rather than critical, in that the author is seeking to construct an explanatory framework which can later be applied in an analysis of the empirical data that constitutes the main body of the research on which this dissertation is based. Each of those three areas will now be briefly explained before moving on to an in-depth review of the literature.

Not surprisingly, the literature on self-leadership suggests that self-leaders have clear personal strategies and motivations in relation to task accomplishment. They take control over their own behaviours through self-motivation and self-direction. They evaluate the effectiveness of their performance through monitoring their own behaviours and actions. They motivate and persist until they arrive at personal accomplishments, and they often castigate themselves for personal failure. Therefore, this study explores the supposition that the level of self-leadership of international students has an effect on how well or how poorly international students manage their accommodation challenges. On this way of thinking, those international students who have a high level of self-leadership are able to manage their accommodation challenges more effectively than those who are less able to employ self-leadership strategies.

The literature on self-efficacy contends that personal self-efficacy reflects an individual's confidence in their ability to perform (and self-leadership strategies influence the individual's level of self-efficacy) within a particular task domain. Individuals with a strong sense of task self-efficacy exert greater effort to master the challenges, whereas low self-efficacious individuals doubt their capabilities. Individuals with low self-efficacy levels view difficulties as overwhelming and give up their efforts easily. Thus this study explores the ways in which the level of international students' self-efficacy helps to explain how they manage their accommodation challenges.

The literature associated with the value of social support suggests that social support plays a very important role in helping individuals cope with stress, problems, and difficulties. This is because social support operates primarily as "coping assistance" (Thoits, Peggy A. 1986, p. 416). It functions as a coping resource that protects individuals against stressful life events (House 1981; Turner 1983; Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). Social support helps individuals cope when confronting negative situations or challenging destructive experiences, such as accommodation problems.

Social support is very important especially to those who are new to a country. If international students are aware that there is someone there for them when they need help, that awareness provides some relief. This study explores the likelihood that social support is a crucial factor in the management of accommodation challenges. Although institutional support lacks some of the characteristics of social support, this author contends that it does nevertheless provide a form of social support. The support program that helps students to find accommodation at the university where this author's research was conducted is called the Housing Advisory Service.

Given these three potential contributors to effective management of accommodation problems, the strategy this study adopts is not to argue that one is more powerful than the other two. The alternative strategy which will be pursued is to focus on the way in which these three factors combine to provide us with explanation. Self-leadership and self-efficacy are internal resources that international students can call upon to manage accommodation challenges whereas a support program provided by the university is an external resource. To fully understand how a combination of internal, individual resources; and external, social or institutional resources, can combine to provide explanation, a deeper understanding of those resources is required, so we turn now to the literature.

2.2 Self-Leadership theory

The theoretical foundation of self-leadership is derived from social learning theory (Bandura 1977, 1997) and social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986). Social learning theory explains how people can influence their own cognition, motivation, and behaviour (Yun, Cox & Sims 2006). Social cognitive theory explains that people and their environment interact continually (Satterfield & Davidson 2000) and "behavioural consequences serve as sources of information and motivation" (Zimmerman 2000, p. 121). Self-leadership is conceptualized as "a comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating" (Manz, Charles 1986, p. 589). Self-leadership explains how self leaders think and how they behave according to cognitive, motivational and behavioural strategies (Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998; Yun, Cox & Sims 2006). Self-leadership is "a process in which people direct and motivate themselves to behave and perform in a desired way" (Georgianna 2007, p. 570; Houghton & Neck 2002; Manz, Charles 1986; Neck & Houghton 2006). It represents a self-influence process that involves self-direction and self-motivation (DiLiello & Houghton 2006).

The fundamental idea behind self-leadership is that individuals look first within themselves for the necessary tools and strategies to motivate and control behaviour and thought (Boss & Sims 2008, p. 142). Self-leadership takes place at both an observable (physical) and unobservable (mental) level. The way individuals practice self-leadership is affected by tendencies in thinking patterns as well as physical action. Individuals can lead themselves to desired accomplishments by combining these two levels of influence (Manz, Charles 1992b, p. 80).

Self-leading individuals are described as self-starters, those who provide themselves with self-direction and motivation, providing themselves with feedback, rewarding personal accomplishment and chastising personal failure (Pierce & Newstrom 2006, p. 10). Self-leaders are seen as "capable not only of monitoring

their own actions but also of determining which actions and consequent outcomes are most desirable" (Neck et al. 1999, p. 479).

Individuals with high self-leadership urge themselves to have more innovation and creativity than individuals who have weak self-leadership (DiLiello & Houghton 2006, p. 319). They posses opportunistic thought patterns (i.e. view difficult situations as worthwhile challenges to be overcome) and believe in their abilities to complete a task required to produce given attainments. In addition, self-leaders tend to exert more effort and persistence during the course of their work (Houghton, Neck & Manz 2003, p. 32). When self-leaders achieve difficult goals, they feel strong and capable of accomplishing more (Locke 1999, p. 80). Consequently, once a self-leadership plan is in action, the individual develops a mechanism for evaluating the knowledge, skills, and behaviours he or she has employed.

Self-leadership involves making consistent forward progress. This is accomplished through self-motivation, practicing new skills and behaviours, and continual assessment (Watson 2004). In explaining individuals' behaviour, self-leadership is employed to describe the influence that people exert over themselves and the intention to control their own behaviours (Manz, CC & Sims 1980; Yun, Cox & Sims 2006). Watson (2004, p. 466) explains that self-leadership is "a continuous process of self-assessment and discovery". Individuals who effectively self-lead become highly effective leaders for their organization and for their co-workers. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) claim that effective self-leadership results in positive changes in the individual's intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional domains. These changes increase the leaders' ability to lead effectively and provide a renewed sense of motivation for establishing a lifelong process.

Manz (1986, p. 589) defines self-leadership as

> "a comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating."

Manz (1991, p. 17) comments further that self-leadership is:

> "a self-influence process and set of strategies that address ***what*** is to be done (e.g., standards and objectives) and ***why*** (e.g., strategic analysis) as well as ***how*** it is to be done. It incorporates intrinsic motivation and has an increased focus on cognitive processes."

Similarly, Yun, Cox & Sims (2006, p. 337) define self-leadership as

> "both thoughts and actions that people use to influence themselves, and implies that people look within themselves for sources of motivation and control."

These definitions support the Neoliberal view that adults are able to find within themselves the resources required for effective management of life problems, such as accommodation.

2.2.1 Self-Leadership strategies

Self-leadership strategies are aligned with both social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986, 1991) and social learning theory (Bandura 1977, 1997). Social cognitive theory suggests that human behaviour may be best explained by a triadic reciprocal relationship among internal influences, external influences and behaviour (and this tripartite conceptualization concurs with the formulation of the author's primary research question). Social cognitive theory proposes that people and their environment interact continually (Satterfield & Davidson 2000) and behavioural consequences serve as sources of information and motivation (Bandura 1986; Schunk 2001). Social learning theory explains how people can influence their own cognition, motivation and behaviour (Yun, Cox & Sims 2006).

Self-leadership strategies foster self-confidence through positive thinking. The focus is on opportunities rather than limitations. Self-leaders eliminate critical and destructive self-talk, and challenge unrealistic beliefs and assumptions (Hackman & Johnson 2004, p. 149). Self-leadership strategies include building natural

rewards into tasks, self-management of beliefs/assumptions/mental images, self-dialogue and thought patterns (Neck & Houghton 2006; Stewart, Courtright & Manz 2011, p. 188).

Self-leadership strategies are divided into three categories: behavioural-focused, natural reward and constructive thought strategies (Anderson, JS & Prussia 1997; Neck & Houghton 2006; Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998; Stewart, Courtright & Manz 2011, p. 188). The use of self-leadership strategies facilitates a perception of control and responsibility which positively affects performance outcomes (Manz, Charles 1983, 1992a, 1992b); and contributes positively to an individual's assessment of his or her self-efficacy.

Behavioural-focused strategies encompass the self-regulation of behaviour though the use of self-assessment, self-reward and self-discipline (Manz, Charles 1986; Manz, CC & Sims 1980). Behavioural-focused strategies heighten self-awareness and facilitate personal behavioural management through methods such as self-goal setting, self-rewards, self-punishment, self-observation and self-cueing (Alves et al. 2006; Neck & Houghton 2006). These strategies are designed to foster positive desirable behaviours while discouraging ineffective behaviours. Behavioural-focused strategies are particularly useful in managing behaviour related to the accomplishment of necessary but unpleasant tasks (Neck & Houghton 2006). This characterization of behavioural strategies resonates with the tasks involved in effectively managing accommodation problems.

Natural reward strategies focus on seeking out work activities that are inherently enjoyable (Manz 1986). Natural reward strategies aim at the increase of feelings of competence and self-determination through the enhancement and focus on enjoyable task features (Alves et al. 2006).This set of strategies also includes the focusing of attention on the more pleasant or difficult aspects of a task. It is a strategy which helps individuals shape their perceptions and build enjoyable aspects into activities (Neck & Houghton 2006). People can successfully execute natural rewards strategies through creating a positive identification with work that pull them to high performance because they are committed to, believe in, and enjoy the work for its own value (Manz, Charles 1992b, p. 80).

People can receive motivational and emotional benefits from focusing on the naturally rewarding aspects of their challenges, especially when they must deal with problems and concerns. The central focus to this strategy is “not to avoid or ignore the difficult or distasteful aspects of challenges, but rather to deal with them constructively” (Manz, C 1992, p. 80). Again, there is an obvious way in which employment of this strategy has the potential to assist those international students who have to overcome difficulties with their accommodation.

Constructive thought strategies emphasise thought patterns that are constructive in nature. Thought patterns are integrative and repetitive (Carmeli, Meitar & Weisberg 2006, p. 77). This strategy aims to increase positive thinking through the reduction of dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions, the reduction of negative self-talk, and the increase of positive self-image (Alves et al. 2006, p. 341, Neck & Houghton 2006).

Constructive thought, as a self-leadership strategy, focuses on the creation and maintenance of functional patterns of habitual thinking (Houghton & Neck 2002, p. 674). Constructive thought strategies can “change thinking patterns” (Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998, p. 524) and positively impact outcome expectations (Boss & Sims 2008; Yun, Cox & Sims 2006). Self-talk involves what people covertly tell themselves (Manz, Charles 1992b; Neck 1996; Neck & Manz 1996) and involves mental self-evaluations and reactions (Manz, Charles 1992b). Mental imagery is the symbolic and covert cognitive creation of an experience or task prior to actual overt physical muscular movement (D'Intino et al. 2007, p. 107). Individuals who envision successful performance of an activity in advance of actual performance are more likely to perform successfully when faced with the actual task (D'Intino et al. 2007, p. 107; Houghton & Yoho 2005; Manz, Charls & Neck 2004). As with the previous two strategies, behavioural and reward, there is an obvious way in which the employment of constructive though has the potential to assist those international students who have to overcome difficulties with their accommodation.

2.2.2 Self-Leadership research

Previous research, discussed below, has inquired into the relationship between self-leadership and various outcomes: job satisfaction, critical thinking, creativity and innovation, autonomy, coping, academic performance, productivity, and career success. There have not been any direct studies concerned with the self-leadership of international students, especially in the area of managing accommodation challenges. One of the key contributions that this thesis makes to knowledge, therefore, is a set of findings that directly relate to the importance and the role of self-leadership in the behaviour of international students when they have to overcome difficulties with their accommodation.

Job satisfaction

Neck and Manz (1996) examined the applicability of thought self-leadership in an organizational setting (of bankruptcy), and the potential for cognitions to be self-controlled. The training intervention-based field study was conducted with a control group of 48 respondents. The results suggested that individuals who received the thought self-leadership training experienced improved mental performance, positive affect (enthusiasm), job satisfaction, and decreased negative affect (nervousness) relative to those not receiving the training. The results indicated that the trainees reported a strong and positive reaction to the training. This research also found that those who received the training experienced enhanced perceptions of self-efficacy and more optimistic perceptions of the organization's bankruptcy condition than those not receiving the training.

Houghton and Jinkerson (2007) investigated the potential of constructive thought strategies for enhancing employee job satisfaction. The results showed a significant relationship between constructive thought strategies, dysfunctional thought processes, subjective well-being, and job satisfaction as mediated by the absence of dysfunctional thought processes and the presence of subjective well-being.

Uhl-Bien, M & Graen, GB (1998) investigated the effect of team type (functional or cross-functional) on the relationship between a team's level of individual self-

management and teamwork effectiveness. The survey data were collected from 211 respondents. The study was conducted in a large public sector regulatory organization in an eastern state of United States of America. The respondents were professionals who were highly educated (91 % had at least bachelor's degrees, 44 % held or were working toward master's degrees, and 13 percent held doctorates or other advanced degrees). The respondents had been with the organization an average of 11.71 years. They worked on an average of three or more cross-functional teams at a time. The results showed that individual self-leadership was beneficial for effectiveness in functional units but not in cross-functional units. The study also explored the effects of interactions of individual self-leadership and unit type (functional or cross-functional) on team members' overall levels of job satisfaction and perceptions of bureaucratic obstacles. The results suggested a need for a contingency model of self-leadership.

Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg (2006) examined the relationship between self-leadership skills and innovative behaviors at work. The data was collected through survey (N = 175). The participants were employees and their supervisors, working in six organizations in Israel. The results indicated that self-leadership skills were positively associated with both self and supervisor ratings of innovative behaviors. The findings also showed that income and job tenure were significantly related to innovative behaviors at work.

Politis (2005) examined the relationship between the dimensions of self-leadership behavioral-focused strategies, job satisfaction and team performance. Politis also evaluated the extent to which job satisfaction mediates the influence of self-leadership behavioral-focused strategies on team performance. The data were obtained through a questionnaire-based survey of employees from a manufacturing organization operating in Australia. A total of 304 useable questionnaires were received from employees who are engaged in self-managing activities. There were three major findings in this research. First, the relationship between self-leadership behavioral-focused strategies and job satisfaction was direct, positive and significant. Second, the relationship between job satisfaction and team performance was positive and significant. Finally, the results had clearly

shown that job satisfaction mediates the relation between self-leadership behavioral-focused strategies and team performance.

Taken together, this research into the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction, strongly indicates the potential for self-leadership to function as a strategy which should increase the likelihood of international students managing their accommodation challenges in ways which lead to satisfaction with their accommodation.

Critical thinking

Semerci (2010) investigated general relationships between self-leadership and critical thinking. The survey method was used in the study. The respondents were 386 students who attended a pedagogical formation program for trainee teachers in secondary schools: 57.3% male and 42.7% female. The results suggested that there was a positive correlation at intermediate level between critical thinking and self-leadership. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that self-leadership is a significant predictor of critical thinking. Thus, those with a high level of self-leadership are able to realize critical thinking at a higher level than those with lower self-leadership.

Creativity and innovation

DiLiello and Houghton (2006) developed and presented a conceptual model of the relationships between self-leadership, innovation, creativity and organizational support. The study was based upon existing theoretical and empirical evidence. The model suggested that individuals with strong self-leadership will consider themselves to have more innovation and creativity potential than individuals who have weak self-leadership. The study also showed that individuals who have innovation and creativity potential will be more likely to practice innovation and creativity when they perceive strong support from the workplace compared to individuals who perceive weak support from the workplace.

Houghton and Yoho (2005) developed and presented a contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment that specified the circumstances and situations under which follower self-leadership should be encouraged. The model

indicated that certain key contingency factors, including follower development, situational urgency and task structure, dictate which of several leadership approaches, including directive, transactional, transformational and empowering, should be chosen. Each specific leadership approach in turn results in a specific combination of predictable outcomes, which include the level of follower involvement, dependence, creativity and psychological empowerment.

Autonomy

Yun, Cox and Sims (2006) investigated the causal inference between leadership and follower need for autonomy and follower self-leadership behaviors. The results showed that both empowering and directive leadership (group level) interacted with follower's need for autonomy (individual level) to enhance subsequent follower self-leadership (individual level). That is, empowering leadership had a stronger positive effect on followers who were high on the need for autonomy, and directive leadership had a stronger negative effect on followers who were high on the need for autonomy. In summary, the influence of leadership on follower self-leadership was contingent on follower need for autonomy. Overall, the results supported the view that attributes of the follower can be an important element in contingency theories of leadership.

Coping

Dolbier, Soderstrom and Steinhardt (2001) examined the correlations between the concept of self-leadership (as described within the framework of the internal family systems model) and enhanced psychological, health, and work outcomes. Two cross-sectional studies were conducted. In Study 1, the data were collected from 270 of university students. The results showed that self-leadership was significantly related to higher psychological functioning (e.g., effective coping style, greater optimism and hardiness, and less ineffectiveness and interpersonal distrust) and better health status (e.g., greater perceived wellness, less perceived stress, and fewer symptoms of illness). In Study 2, the data were obtained from 160 corporate employees. The results suggested that self-leadership was significantly related to greater perceptions of work satisfaction, enhanced communication, quality management, effective work relationships, and in terms of health outcomes, greater perceived wellness and less work stress.

Academic performance

Garger and Jacques (2007) investigated the impact of self-leadership on student performance. The data were collected through questionnaire survey from 316 students from 18 different management courses. The results suggested that students' transformational self-leadership positively correlated with grade point averages while passive/avoidant self-leadership negatively correlated with grade point averages.

Productivity/quality

Frayne and Geringer (2000) studied a control-group field experiment using a reversal design, 30 insurance salespeople were randomly assigned to an experimental group that received self-management training. The results showed that compared with a control condition (n = 30), training in self-management skills significantly improved job performance as assessed through both objective and subjective measures. Further, subsequent training of the control group produced similar increases in self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, and job performance. The results also suggested that potential mediating effects of self-efficacy and outcome expectancies on the self-management-performance relationship were explored and partially supported.

Birdi et al. (2008) investigated the effect of employees' psychology based practices (empowerment, extensive training and teamwork) on organizational performance (total quality management, just-in-time, advanced manufacturing technology and supply-chain). The data were obtained from 308 manufacturing companies in UK. The data were collected in three phases: survey, telephone interview and either telephone interview or postal questionnaire). The results showed performance benefits from empowerment and extensive training, with the adoption of teamwork serving to enhance both. The results indicated that none of the operational practices were directly related to productivity nor did they interact with other practices in ways fully consistent with the notions of integrated manufacturing or lean production.

Career success

Self-leadership has been shown to result in greater career success for individuals. Murphy and Ensher (2001) examined the contribution of self-management strategies to job outcomes for employees involved in mentoring relationships. The participants (n = 158) reported their use of three types of self-management strategies, the level of support functions provided by their mentors, and their job satisfaction and perceived career success. The results indicated that individuals who used self set career goals reported greater job satisfaction and perceived career success; those who engaged in positive cognitions also had higher job satisfaction; and those who used behavioral self-management strategies reported greater perceived career success. Mentoring and self-management strategies each contributed uniquely to satisfaction and perceived career satisfaction. After controlling for the amount of instrumental support provided by the mentors, positive cognitions remained predictive of perceived career success, and participation in self-set career goals were related to higher levels of job satisfaction. Moderator analysis showed that self-management strategies appeared to be useful in the absence of certain types of mentor support.

Raabe, Frese and Beehr (2007) studied how action regulation theory helps explain employee's behaviour regarding the control of their own careers. The study method used was a career management intervention based on action regulation theory. The participants were 205 white collar employees of a large global technology company, headquartered in Germany. On average, they were 32.0 years old, had 6.3 years of organizational tenure, and 2.6 years of job tenure. About 33.7% were female, and 68.3% had a graduate degree. The respondents engaged actively in their own career building by increasing their self-knowledge, career goal commitment, and career plan quality. The results showed that the three variables were positively related to subsequent career self-management behaviors, which led both directly and indirectly to career satisfaction. The results also suggested that self-management career interventions based within an employing organization appear feasible.

The consistent theme running through all of the research discussed above is that self-leadership strategies are efficacious. Self-leadership strategies do exert a

positive influence on behavior, mood, and self-evaluations. There is strong reason then, to expect that those international students who possess a high level of self-leadership will do a better job of managing the challenges of accommodation, than those international students whose level of self-leadership is low.

We turn now to a review of the literature on the other internal resource that may influence the effectiveness of international student behavior: self-efficacy.

2.3 Self-Efficacy theory

Self-efficacy can be defined as a context-related judgment of personal ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain designated levels of performance (Bandura 1986, 1990). The key difference, then, between self-efficacy and self-leadership, is that the former is a judgment or belief, and the latter is a set of strategies which have the potential to influence an individual's judgment of his or her self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is a psychological judgment that governs behavioral change and management through the coordination of three interconnected yet separate cognitive self-assessments of: one's level of knowledge and skills to perform a behavior; confidence and capability to mobilize motivational and other cognitive resources; and belief in the ability to perform a specific behavior in a given context (Marks 2001; Marks, Allegrante & Lorig 2005). However, efficacy expectations alone cannot produce behavior in the absence of behavioral capability (Bandura 1977). Nevertheless, given appropriate skills and supportive environments, self-efficacy is a major determinant of people's behavior (Bandura 1977, 1989a, 1997).

Bandura (1982) emphasises that efficacy in dealing with one's environment is not a fixed act or simply a matter of knowing what to do. Rather, it involves a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioural skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve numerous purposes. Hence, self-efficacy refers to beliefs about personal capacity to produce a desired effect by individual action (Bandura 1997).

Bandura (1997, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as *"the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments"*. The belief influences "***what*** changes to undertake, ***how much*** effort to expend in the endeavour, (and) ***how long*** to persevere in the face of difficulties" (Bandura 1989b, p. 29). Luszczynska, Scholz and Schwarzer (2005, p. 439) define self-efficacy as *"individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over challenging demands and over their own functioning"*. Neck & Houghton (2006, p. 279) refers self-efficacy to *"a person's self-assessment of the capabilities necessary to perform a specific task".*

Self-efficacy has an impact on affect "through its effects on attention and construal of environmental demands, by the choice of actions taken and through its effect on the ability to control and manage negative or potentially negative emotions" (Chemers, Hu & Garcia 2001, p. 56). Luszczynska, Scholz and Schwarzer (2005) assert that self-efficacy, among other factors, influences which challenges people decide to meet and how high they set their goals. Personal self-efficacy reflects one's confidence in the ability to perform (Dixon & Schertzer 2005, p. 363). Clearly, it is reasonable to therefore expect that international students with a high degree of self-efficacy, will be more inclined to tackle and overcome difficulties with, or inadequacies in, their accommodation.

Self-efficacy theory was developed within the framework of social cognitive theory (Bandura 1977, 1997). In social cognitive theory, individuals are viewed as "proactive agents in the regulation of their cognition, motivation, actions and emotions rather than as passive reactors to their environment" (Feltz, Short & Sullivan 2008, p. 4). Within the social cognitive framework of human functioning, self-efficacy theory "addresses the role of self-referent beliefs as the core factor that determines people's goal-directed behaviour" (Feltz, Short & Sullivan 2008, p. 5) Self-efficacy involves "making judgments about capabilities that relate to a task or a set of tasks" (Mosley et al. 2008, p. 274).

The concept of self-efficacy is less concerned with the number of cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural skills a person has, and more with what an individual believes can be done with what is available under a variety of circumstances

(Bandura 1997). Self-efficacy operates as a common cognitive mechanism that mediates between selected self-appraisal information and subsequent thought patterns, emotional reactions, motivation and behaviour (Bandura 1986, 1997; Feltz, Short & Sullivan 2008, p. 5). According to Prussia et al: “the higher a person’s self-efficacy, the more confident he or she is about success in a particular task domain” (Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998, p. 527).

Bandura (1977) and Coffman & Gilligan (2002) identify self-efficacy as an important factor in the self-appraisal process. It plays a role not only in producing a desired outcome but also in persistence. It is important to note that self-efficacy is not simply the possession of skills but rather the belief that skills can effectively be produced in various circumstances. This is because one’s mastery experiences influence self-efficacy beliefs through the self-appraisal of one’s performances. If one has repeatedly viewed these experiences as success, self-efficacy beliefs will generally increase; if these experiences have been viewed as failures, self-efficacy beliefs will generally decrease (Feltz, Short & Sullivan 2008, p. 7).

The influence of mastery experiences on self-efficacy beliefs also depends on the perceived difficulty of the performance, the amount of guidance received, the temporal pattern of success and failure, the effort expended and the individual's conception of a particular “ability” as a skill that can be acquired versus an inherent aptitude (Bandura 1997; Feltz, Short & Sullivan 2008, pp. 7-8). Hence self-efficacy perceptions relate to an individual’s assessment of his/her capabilities to perform certain target behaviour (Bandura 1977, 1986; Houghton, Neck & Manz 2003, p. 34). Given this perceptual aspect of self-efficacy, part of the empirical research for this thesis examines whether the fact that international students have to confront accommodation problems within an unfamiliar cultural, social, and economic environment leads them to assess their capacity to perform the required target behaviour as low rather than high.

Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) assert that successful performance requires that a person possess both the appropriate skills and abilities and strong feelings of efficacy. A strong sense of personal efficacy seems to reduce the likelihood of negative appraisals of stressful life demands and as a consequence, it provides

protection against emotional distress and health impairments (Trockel, Barnes & Egget 2000). Strong self-efficacy beliefs lead to greater persistence in the face of difficulties, reduce fear of failure (Bandura 1995). Again, there is a direct link between this theoretical assertion, and the empirical research conducted for this thesis, because international students with lower levels of self-efficacy may be finding the challenges of accommodation are more stressful than those with higher levels of self-efficacy.

People with high self-efficacy in a specific domain select more challenging and ambitious goals. High self-efficacy not only improves goal setting, but it also leads to more persistence in pursuing the goal. Therefore, efficacious individuals have stronger intentions. They choose to perform more challenging tasks. They set themselves higher goals and stick to them. Actions are reshaped in thought, and once an action has been taken, highly self-efficacious people invest more effort and persist longer than those low in self-efficacy. When setbacks occur, they recover more quickly and remain committed to their goals (Bandura 1995). So just as there is a connection between the strategies of self-leadership and coping with setbacks, so too there is a connection between self-efficacy and coping with setbacks. As we will see when the empirical data obtained from interview material is analysed later in the thesis, international students have to struggle with a range of deeply significant accommodation setbacks.

High self-efficacy also allows people to select challenging settings and explore their environment or create new ones. Thus, it represents a belief in one's competence in dealing with all kinds of demands (Luszczynska, Gutierrez-Dona & Schwarzer 2005, p. 81). General self-efficacy is helpful in various domains of human functioning. People with strong feelings of self-efficacy are more confident in their "fundamental abilities to cope, perform, and reach success" (Judge & Bono 2001, p. 80). They tend to "deal more effectively with difficulties and persist in the face of failure" (Gist & Mitchell 1992; Judge & Bono 2001, p. 81). High self-efficacious individuals focus on their future and develop possible success scenarios of their actions. Therefore, they are more committed to planning (Luszczynska, Scholz & Schwarzer 2005, p. 441).

High self-efficacy tends to buffer the experience of stress and low self-efficacy results in an increase of appraisals that are threatening and stressful (Jerusalem & Schwarzer 1992). People with high self-efficacy recognize that "they are able to overcome the obstacles and focus on opportunities" (Luszczynska, Scholz & Schwarzer 2005, p. 442). They express "greater degrees of general, interaction, and work adjustment than those with low self-efficacy" (Harrison, Wick & Scales 1996, p. 167).

In general then, self-efficacy is related to positive and negative emotions. One of the sources of self-efficacy is a low level of emotional arousal, that is, one may experience a low level of negative emotions in a threatening situation and, as a result, may feel capable of mastering the situation (Bandura 1997). Self-efficacy leads to effective problem solving, followed by an increase of positive emotions. A low sense of self-efficacy is associated with negative emotions and helplessness: exactly the opposite internal state needed by international students when they encounter stressful accommodation situations. It makes sense then, to ask where students who suffer from a low level of self-efficacy could turn in order to raise that level. In other words, what are the sources of self-efficacy?

2.3.1 Sources of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy has four sources: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological information (Bandura 1977, 1997). **Enactive mastery experiences** that are acquired through performance accomplishments are the most influential sources of self-efficacy. This is because they provide the most tangible evidence of success and failure on a task (Bandura 1977, 1997; Pajares 1997). Repeated success bolsters a person's feelings of self-efficacy while repeated failures undermine them, particularly if these failures occur before efficacy beliefs have been established (Bandura 1997; Holloway & Watson 2002). The relevance to accommodation challenges is that if an international student has successfully solved accommodation problems in the past, then they are more likely to approach new accommodation problems with confidence. Unfortunately, however, if a student's international study is

simultaneous with their first accommodation away from the family home, this is likely to exacerbate their difficulties.

Vicarious experience has an influence on judgments of self-efficacy. Vicarious experience mediates through modeled behaviors and social comparison (Bandura 1997). Observing people who are perceived to be similar to oneself successfully perform a behavior can help to build self-efficacy, even if the person has never performed this behavior themselves (Bandura 1997; Holloway & Watson 2002). Vicarious experience is a less dependable source of self-efficacy information than enactive mastery experience, as social comparison processes influence how a modeled behavior is perceived (Bandura 1997; Holloway & Watson 2002; Pajares 1997). Again, if an international student has not been present to observe others successfully deal with accommodation challenges, this source of self-efficacy is not available to them in the early later stages of their stay.

Verbal persuasion involves leading people through suggestion into believing that they can successfully cope with difficulties associated with behavioural change (Bandura 1977, 1997). The effectiveness of this approach in enhancing self-efficacy is reliant on the perceived credibility, capability and expertise of the persuasive source (Bandura 1997; Holloway & Watson 2002). Verbal persuasion is a weaker source of self-efficacy then either enactive mastery experience or vicarious experience. This is because it is unable to provide an authentic experiential base for efficacy judgments. It is also can be readily extinguished by disconfirming experiences (Bandura 1977, 1997; Pajares 1997). The source of verbal persuasion for international students is most likely to be peers or members of the university's housing advisory service. In the latter case, however, advice is usually restricted to information about accommodation options, rather than persuasive counseling.

The last source of self-efficacy is **physiological information**. Physiological states such as stress, fatigue, anxiety, arousal and mood states convey information about a person's confidence as they contemplate action and prepare to perform a behavior (Pajares 1997). This is because high levels of arousal impede performance, so people learn to expect failure when they experience physiological

stress and expect success in the absence of aversive arousal (Bandura 1997; Holloway & Watson 2002). Fears of failure can help to ensure inadequate performance by further lowing self-efficacy beliefs and heightening physiological stress (Pajares 1997). The effective transfer of physiological information to self-efficacy information is dependent on the nature of arousal (e.g. level, source and situational circumstances) and degree of attentional focus and interpretative biases in appraising physiological states (Bandura 1997). It is important to emphasize that all four sources of self-efficacy information are mediated by cognitive appraisal and processing functions and not directly translated to efficacy judgments (Bandura 1977, 1997; Pajares 1997).

2.3.2 Self-Efficacy research

The most pertinent research on self-efficacy, for the purposes of this thesis, is that which investigates the relationship between self-leadership and self-efficacy. The primary research question assumes that both self-leadership and self-efficacy play an important role in explaining the behaviour of international students who encounter difficulties with their accommodation, so there is a need to clarify why not one, but both concepts are needed for that explanation. As we just saw above, all four sources of self-efficacy information are mediated by cognitive appraisal and processing functions and not directly translated to efficacy judgments, so it is reasonable to propose that at this level of mediation through cognitive appraisal, the connection between self-leadership strategies and the development of self-efficacy can be most clearly seen.

Norris (2008) examined individual differences that may influence the use of self-leadership strategies including the individual's level of self-efficacy. The participants were graduate students (n = 124) enrolled in summer courses at a small, liberal arts university. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between general self-efficacy and use of natural reward, constructive thought, and general self-leadership skills.

Prussia, Anderson and Manz (1998) studied the effects of self-leadership skills and self-efficacy perceptions on performance. The data were obtained from 151

respondents enrolled in three separate undergraduate entrepreneurship classes at a large southwestern university. The respondents were 66% male and 34% female, ages ranged from 20 to 49 years, and the average age was 27 years. Respondents' average work experiences were 9.3 years. The results suggested that self-leadership strategies had a significant effect on self-efficacy evaluations, and self-efficacy directly affected performance. The results also showed that self-efficacy perceptions were found to fully mediate the self-leadership/performance relationship.

Latham and Frayne (1989) studied the long-term effects of self-management training given to 20 unionized state government employees to increase their job attendance in a 6-month and a 9-month follow-up study. A repeated measure and analysis of variance revealed that enhanced self-efficacy and increased job attendance were effectively maintained over time. Perceived self-efficacy at the end of training predicted subsequent job attendance. The control group (n = 20) was then given the same training in self-management by a different trainer. Three months later, this group showed the same positive improvement as the original training group with regard to increased self-efficacy and job attendance.

In sum, the research outlined above points to the conclusion that self-leadership and self-efficacy have a reinforcing influence on each other: the higher an individual's level of self-leadership, the higher will be his or her level of self-efficacy, and vice versa. Consequently, the empirical component of this author's research included gathering data indicative of the interviewees' levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, because that data may support, or undermine, the contention that these two factors are mutually reinforcing.

Stress and self-efficacy

A strong sense of self-efficacy seems to reduce the likelihood of negative appraisals of stressful life demands. Consequently, it provides protection against emotional distress and health impairments. Trockel, Barnes and Egget (2000) determined the effect of several health-related variables on 1st-year college students' academic performance. The data were obtained from 200 students living in on-campus residence halls at a large private university. The set of variables

included exercise, eating, and sleep habits; mood states; perceived stress; time management; social support; spiritual or religious habits; number of hours worked per week; gender; and age. The results suggested that sleep habits, particularly wake-up times, appeared to be the most significant factor that effect higher GPA.

Later wakeup times were associated with lower average grades. Variables associated with the 1st-year students' higher grade point averages were strength training and study of spiritually oriented material. The number of paid or volunteer hours worked per week was associated with lower average grades.

Chemers, Hu and Garcia (2001) examined the effects of academic self-efficacy and optimism on students' academic performance, stress, health, and commitment to remain in school. The participants were 1st year university student (n = 256). The results indicated that academic self-efficacy and optimism were strongly related to performance and adjustment, both directly on academic performance and indirectly through expectations and coping perceptions (challenge-threat evaluations) on classroom performance, stress, health, and overall satisfaction and commitment to remain in school.

Luszczynska, Scholz and Schwarzer (2005) examined the relationships between general self-efficacy and social cognitive variables (intention, implementation intentions, outcome expectancies and self-regulation), behavior-specific self-efficacy, health behaviors, well-being and coping strategies. The data were obtained 1,933 respondents in 3 countries: Germany (n = 633), Poland (n = 359), and South Korea (n = 941). The participants were between 16 and 86 years old, and some were dealing with stressful situations such as recovery from myocardial events or tumor surgery.

Perceived self-efficacy was measured by means of the General Self-Efficacy Scale. Meta-analysis was used to determine population effect sizes for four sets of variables. The results indicated that across countries and samples, there was consistent evidence for associations between perceived self-efficacy and the variables under study, thereby confirming the validity of the psychometric scale.

The results also showed that general self-efficacy appeared to be a construct that yields meaningful relations with other psychological constructs.

Bray (2007) examined undergraduate students' physical activity during transition from high school to first-year University (n = 127). Students' self-efficacy for coping with barriers to physical activity was investigated both as a predictor of physical activity and mediator of the relationship between pretransition and first-year physical activity. The results suggested that physical activity tracks moderately from pretransition to first year. The results also showed that self-efficacy for coping with barriers predicted physical activity and partially mediated the relationship between pretransition and first-year physical activity.

Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and work-related performance through meta-analysis (114 studies, *k* = 157, n = 21,616). The results suggested that self-efficacy is positively and strongly related to work-related performance. The results also showed that the relationship between self-efficacy and work-related performance was moderated by task complexity and locus of performance.

Barkley (2006) investigated whether relations existed between sixth, seventh, and eight grade learners' and their teachers' efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies and whether student perceived efficacy beliefs were predictors of reading comprehension achievement as measured by a reading comprehension subtest score on a state standardized test. The results indicated that when grades six, seven, and eight were combined, student efficacy beliefs about prior knowledge, self monitoring, and graphic organizers positively correlate with reading comprehension achievement.

Harrison, Wick and Scales (1996) examined the relationship role of self-efficacy and self-monitoring in expatriates' general, interaction, and work adjustment. The data were obtained through survey of 99 American expatriates in Europe. The results indicated that subjects with high general self-efficacy expressed significantly greater degrees of general, interaction, and work adjustment than those with low general self-efficacy. Further, high self-monitors expressed greater

degrees of general and interaction adjustment than did low self-monitors. The results also indicated that there was no significant difference found between high and low self-monitors on work adjustment. Given that this study focused on expatriates, it is strongly relevant to the research focus of this thesis.

Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles (2002) specified and tested a model of the individual characteristics of self-efficacy, competitiveness and effort as potential antecedents of salesperson performance. The respondents were salespeople from a cellular phone company (n = 91) and real estate salespeople (n = 182).The results suggested that effort mediated the relationship between competitiveness and sales performance. The results also showed that for competitiveness and sales performance, self-efficacy had both direct and indirect effects.

Dixon and Schertzer (2005) investigated the influence of individual differences on both the attribution process and the relationship between attribution and the behavioural intentions of sales representatives following a failure. The participants were financial services salespeople (n = 296). The results indicated that optimism and self-efficacy played a key role in shaping salespeople's attributions for failed sales calls and in the behavioural responses to attributions for failure.

What can we conclude from the empirical research into self-efficacy conducted to date? One clear conclusion is that there is a large body of evidence, ranging across many areas of life and work that strongly supports the contention that self-efficacy makes a vital contribution to performance, problem solving, and feelings of well-being. There are good reasons then, to suppose that an individual's level of self-efficacy will have high explanatory value when we examine the behaviour of those international students who are confronted by accommodation problems. The review now turns away from internal resources that students can call upon, to an important external resource: social support.

2.4 Social support

Social support most commonly refers to functions performed for a distressed individual by significant others such as family members, friends, co-workers,

relatives, and neighbours (Thoits, Peggy A. 1986, p. 417). Social support has been recognized as a coping resource that protects individuals against stressful life events (House 1981; Turner 1983; Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). Social support presents as a significant factor in predicting both psychological adjustment (Adelman 1988; Fontaine 1986; Hefner & Eisenberg 2009; Sumer, Poyrazli & Grahame 2008; Yang & Clum 1994) and physical health (Kramer et al. 2004; Schwarzer, Jerusalem & Hahn 1994).

Social support operates primarily as "coping assistance" and thereby usefully integrates coping processes and support processes within a more general theory of stress-buffering (Thoits, Peggy A. 1986, p. 416). Social support acts as a buffer, protecting individuals from the harmful effects of stress (Cohen & McKay 1984; House 1981; Zimet et al. 1988, p. 31). Social support may have a beneficial effect on perceived stress by providing a person with integration into the community and by enhancing overall well being (Cohen & Wills 1985). In the light of these findings, this author's research into the factors that influence the ways in which international students manage their difficulties with accommodation, needs to include an exploration of the relationship between social support and effective coping.

Not only is social support crucial in itself for positive well-being, but social support also provides a powerful coping resource for persons experiencing stressful life changes, including the stress of adjusting to an unfamiliar culture (Mallinckrodt & Leong 1992, p. 71), which is part of the challenge facing most international students. The lack of social support is itself a source of stress. This is because the availability of support has a positive impact on adjustment (Jones & Bright 2001). Social support provides stability, predictability, and positive affect (Tardy 1985). It reduces, or buffers, the adverse psychological impacts of exposure to stressful life events and ongoing life strains (Cohen & Wills 1985), and accommodation difficulties can indeed be ongoing for international students.

Social support may arise from a variety of sources, including family members, friends, co-workers, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances (Furnham 2004; Thoits, Peggy A. 1986; Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001); and as this research

explores, it may also arise from institutional policies and procedures, including a housing advisory service.

Social support has been defined in many ways. Shumaker and Brownell (1984, p. 13) have defined social support as *"an exchange of resources between two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient"*. Social support to Cobb (1976, p. 300) is *"information leading the subject to believe he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations".* Zimet et al. (1988, p. 13) have described social support as *"an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient"*. Cohen and Mckay (1984, p. 257) conclude that social support is *"the availability of helping relationships and the quality of those relationships".* The most relevant definition for the purposes of this research comes from Lin (1986, p. 18) who has defined social support as *"perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks and confiding partners".*

2.4.1 Types of social support

Social support is categorised into four types: emotional, informational, tangible, and belonging supports. They are often highly related to each other and not easily separated in everyday life. First, **emotional support**, it is often defined as expressions of caring and concern such as "I'll be there for you no matter how difficult things get". Emotional support is thought to be beneficial because it provides the recipient with a sense of acceptance and may bolster one's self-esteem during life challenges (Uchino 2004, p. 16). Second, **information support** is defined as the provision of advice or guidance. It can be a very powerful form of support to the extent that it provides useful direction. It is important to note that such advice and guidance may also carry an emotional message. It is often the case that useful guidance from close friends can be seen as emotionally supportive in that the person cares enough to speak with you about important decisions (Uchino 2004, p. 17). When seeking to understand the behaviour of international students who are faced with accommodation difficulties, this author

expects to find that the information support provided by the university housing advisory service, will hold considerable explanatory value.

Tangible support refers to the direct provision of material aid. Parent-child relationships are often characterized by high levels of tangible support because important material resources such as clothing, shelter, and food are provided. This form of support is not limited to parent-child relationships; people may also provide friends and family with a loan or a temporary place to stay (Uchino 2004, p. 17). Last, **belonging support** is defined as the presence of others with whom to engage in social activities. An example of belonging support would be a friend with whom to go shopping or to watch a basketball game. Belonging support may be beneficial because such positive social and leisure activities may enhance one's mood and sense of acceptance by others (Uchino 2004, p. 17).

2.4.2 Social support and international students

Social support is important because a person's self-esteem and self-image are validated by significant others. Moving to a new environment deprives the sojourner of these support systems; hence feelings of being uprooted, loss and homesickness are common among sojourners (Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002, p. 462). The presence of social support, however, can help sojourners feel supported and more in control (Church 1982; Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002, p. 462) especially for international sojourners (Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002, p. 462). House (1981) asserts that social support bolsters self-esteem and a sense of environmental mastery. Each of these in turn can foster positive affect and thus reduce the disturbing psychological impacts of stress. Conversely, a lack of social support may have a deleterious impact (Crockett et al. 2007; Lee, J-S, Koeske & Sales 2004).

Sarason, Sarason and Pierce (1990) maintain that social support assists with personal adjustment. For Sarason, Sarason and Pierce, social support consists of instrumental and emotional support. Instrumental support involves assistance with practical problems, while emotional support is associated with the knowledge that one is valued, supported and belongs to a group. This view aligns with the

research base of the thesis, because the author has inquired into the role played by the university's housing advisory service, particularly in relation to assistance with practical problems.

Barrera, Sandler and Ramsay (1981) and Porritt (1979) point out that the effectiveness of social support depends more on how good it is rather than how much there is. Newland and Furnham (1999) also assert that the type of social support is as important as the amount of support available (Newland & Furnham 1999). Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992, p. 71) stated that ''not only is social support crucial in itself for positive well-being, but social support also provides a powerful coping resource for persons experiencing stressful life changes, including the stress of adjusting to an unfamiliar culture''. Asian students may be particularly at risk in unfamiliar cultures, since they are physically away from their support networks, especially from their close-knit families.

Andrade (2006) contend that institutions cannot simply admit foreign students and expect them to adjust to life in a new country and educational system without appropriate support and programming. This is because most international students are geographically distant from home and their familiar environments, so they often lose important support networks that have previously acted as coping mechanisms in times of stressful life events. Internationals students face critical adjustment processes in the first six to eight week after arrival. They need the highest level of support during these times (Barker et al. 1991). Therefore positive and timely social support may help them to adapt more effectively "as well as breaking the clear links between stress and illness" (Furnham 1997, p. 24).
Hellstén (2002) suggests that international students expect to be "taken care of" by the community and institution. Hence universities need to provide support services to students (Dunne & Somerset 2005). Baker and Hawkins (2006) remind us that for international students, the community to which they have the closest link whilst living away from home is their education provider. Therefore education providers needs to build climates where international students feel they are able to seek assistance, and that if they do, the service is appropriate to their needs.

Khawaja and Dempsey (2008) studied international students enrolled at a large Australian university based in a capital city. A survey method was employed for their research (n = 86 for each group). The results demonstrated that in comparison to domestic students, international students had less social support, used more dysfunctional coping strategies and had greater incongruence between their expectations and experiences of university life. The results pointed to the value of providing high quality supportive and orientation programs to international students, to enhance their social support and coping strategies.

Zhai (2004) conducted a study to investigate international student adjustment issues and need for social support while pursuing higher education in the United States. The data was obtained from individual interviews with 10 international students. The results indicated that international students experienced significant challenges in adjusting to academic stress, cultural differences, and language issues within the U.S. higher education system. Adjustments to academic demands tended to present the greatest difficulty for international students. Friends and family were the preferred sources to seek help for personal issues. Students felt that providing academic and cultural orientation programs would be helpful to assist international students in making a successful transition to life in the United States.

2.4.3 Mental health of students

Thoits (1985) investigated social support and mental health variables as predictors of homesickness in 123 first-year undergraduates. The results showed that a low level of perceived social support coupled with a high level of psychological disturbance was predictive of homesickness.

In an investigation which was of direct relevance to this author's research - even though it focused on decisions to discontinue study, rather than difficulties with accommodation – Gloria and Kurpius (2001) investigated the influence of self-beliefs, social support, and comfort in the university environment on the academic nonpersistence decisions of 83 American Indian undergraduates. The self-belief construct comprised self-esteem and 2 dimensions of college-related self-efficacy.

The social support cluster consisted of 3 variables: family support, friend support, and perception of being mentored. The 3rd cluster, comfort in the university environment, was measured by perceptions of university environment, cultural congruity, and college stress. The resulted suggested that each of the 3 constructs significantly accounted for academic nonpersistence decisions, but social support was the strongest predictor, followed by comfort in the university environment, and then self-beliefs. The results indicated that students who were mentored were more likely to report decreased nonpersistence decisions. Similarly, students who had more positive perceptions of the university environment were more likely to make fewer nonpersistence decisions. The results also showed that higher self-esteem and greater college-related self-efficacy were associated with decreased nonpersistence decisions.

Also closely related to the research of this thesis, Furukawa, Sarason and Sarason (1998) examined the ways in which social support may affect the adaptation of individuals to a novel social environment. A distinctive feature of this research was the assessment of social support both before and after entering a completely new network of social relationships. A cohort of international exchange high school students (n = 242) was administered a battery of self-report questionnaires dealing with personality traits, perceived social support, coping behaviors and emotional distress before leaving Japan and six months after living with a host family in a foreign community.

The results indicated that perceived social support abroad contributed to less emotional distress. This health-promoting effect of social support was found to be mediated by adaptive coping behaviors, and was not due to confounding by personality traits. Perceived social support at home was predictive of more emotional distress abroad. Subjects who reported high levels of social support at home were particularly vulnerable when they entered the completely new environment and found that such support was no longer available.

Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) investigated the relationship between mental health and social support of 1,378 college students. The data were collected through a

web-based survey (n = 1,378). The results showed that students with characteristics differing from most other students, such as minority race or ethnicity, international status, and low socioeconomic status, are at greater risk of social isolation. Further, students with lower quality social support were more likely to experience mental health problems, including a six fold risk of depressive symptoms relative to students with high quality social support.

Lee, Koeske and Sales (2004) examined the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health symptoms and the role of social support as a moderator of this relationship. The participants were Korean international students (n = 74). The results indicated that acculturative stress was a strong predictor of mental health symptoms. Korean international students with high acculturative stress exhibited high mental health symptoms. The results showed that a stress-buffering effect of social support was strongly demonstrated in this study. Korean international students with acculturative stress but with a high level of social support would express lower mental health symptoms than the students with low level of social support.

Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) also investigated the significance of social support among international students. The data were obtain from survey method (n = 440). The results shoed that the social support system had not only a direct but also a buffering effect when international students were undergoing psychological stress. The study suggested that social support, especially from one's academic program, is essential to the welfare of international students.

Similarly, Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) investigated the processes through which social integration (or lack of it) influenced students' decision as to whether or not to leave university. The data were obtained through interviews with 34 first-year students. The data showed that making compatible friends was essential to retention, and that students' living arrangements were central to this process. The results indicated that friends provided direct emotional support, equivalent to family relationships, as well as buffering support in stressful situations.

Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) identified the types of social support most helpful to international graduate students (n = 440). Direct effects were investigated by calculating Pearson correlations between the social support factors (i.e. graduate program support and family environment support) and negative life events, depression, anxiety, and physical health symptoms. The results showed that support from their families had a positive direct effect on stress symptoms for international graduate students, and support from their academic programs had both direct and buffering effects.

Sumer, Poyrazli and Grahame (2008) studied 440 international students concerning their adjustment to living and studying in the United States. The results showed that social support made a significant contribution to preventing depression. Their research demonstrated that students with lower levels of social support reported higher levels of depression. The study suggested that higher levels of social support might enable international students to be more socially active and interact with people more often and, as a result, reduce the feelings of depression and anxiety.

Solberg and Villarreal (1997) examined the relationships between stress, social support, self-efficacy, and psychological distress among Hispanic college students. The participants were 164 Mexican American and Latin American undergraduates. The results showed that students who felt that support was available had lower distress ratings than students who felt that social support was less available.

2.5 Explanatory framework

The main aim of this literature review was shaped by the primary research question: *In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?*

To effectively address that question the researcher had to do more than obtain empirical data from surveying and interviewing international students, she also had to construct a well-informed explanatory framework through which she could analyse and interpret that empirical data to arrive at understandings which went beyond those of the interviewees, and which went beyond the immediate understandings provided by 'common sense'. Fortunately, previous researchers have already constructed explanatory models which are intended to capture the interplay between internal and external resources that are available to individuals, particularly in relation to the management of stress, so those models will be used as a guide to the design of this author's explanatory framework, particularly Lovallo's (2005, p. 85) appraisal model of psychological stress.

Mental health problems, including stress and depression, badly impact students (Dunne & Somerset 2005; Furnham & Bochner 1986) because "academic success is strongly related to personal well-being" (Scheyvens, Wild & Overton 2003, p. 309). Harms (1998) asserts that it is extremely difficult for many students to establish any routine involving study, housing, relationships, living arrangements, part-time work, and finance, as the unusual nature of the academic year interferes with resolution of these issues. Most commonly, students have reported higher stress from failure to obtain academic goals they desired (Rice, KG & Dellwo 2002). Lovallo (2005) has proposed the following model as way of capturing the factors involved in the management of stress – this model is particularly relevant to the current study because it captures the interplay between social factors external to the individual, and psychological resources and processes internal to the individual: Figure 2.1 shows Lovallo's appraisal model of psychological stress.

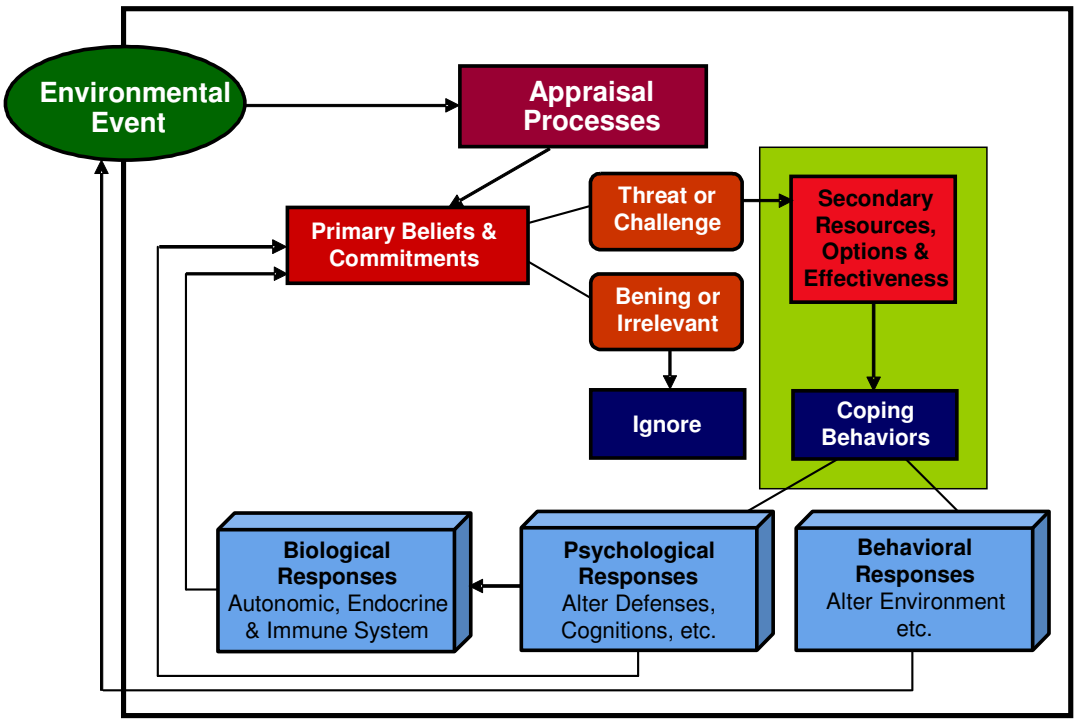

Figure 2.1: Appraisal model of psychological stress

"The main elements entering into our primary appraisal of an event are our beliefs about how the world should work and our commitments to given courses of action. Some events are judged as either benign or irrelevant, and others are perceived as threats or challenges. When we consider an event a threat, we simultaneously have an emotional reaction that signals alarm and motivates further behavioural and psychological responses along with physiological activation" (Lovallo 2005).

The literature reviewed in this chapter has established that unsatisfactory accommodation is appraised by international students as threatening or challenging, and Lovallo's appraisal model of psychological stress highlights the connection between that appraisal and negative psychological and biological impacts on well being. Importantly however, the model also portrays the potentially helpful role of external secondary resources – such as university provided programs of assistance related to effectively managing accommodation – in the development and enactment of coping behaviours that reduce or remove negative psychological and biological responses.

As we have seen earlier in the chapter, coping has two functions. On the one hand, coping involves managing or altering the problem within the environment which is causing distress (problem-focused coping). On the other hand, its function involves regulating the emotional response to the problem (emotion-focused coping). The way a person copes is determined in part by his or her internal resources, which include self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Self efficacy and coping are also partly determined by external resources, which include social support and material resources (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Figure 2.2 illustrates how social support – such as university provided forms of assistance - can help to reduce stress and improve performance.

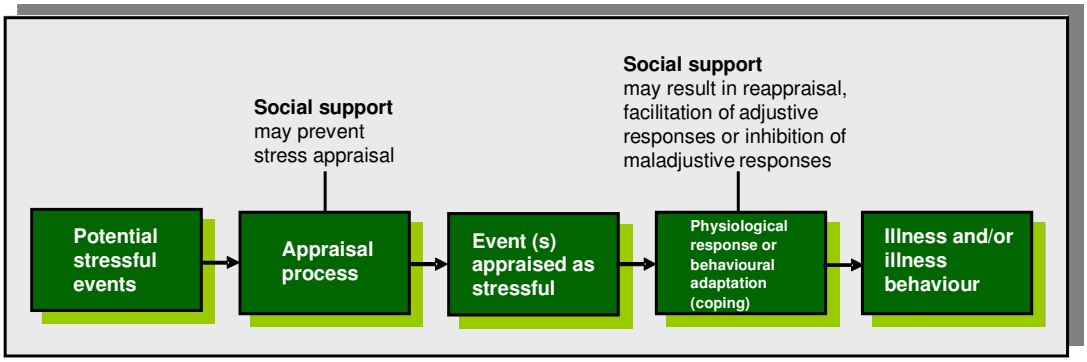

Figure 2.2: Two points at which social support may 'buffer' the link between stress and illness

Cohen and Wills (1985) suggest that social support may intervene at two stages of the stress appraisal and coping process (see Figure 2.2). Firstly, it may intervene at the stage of appraisal. For example, if a person is aware that others are around who will help with their problem then they may appraise the event as less harmful and themselves as more able to cope. Secondly, social support may intervene at the coping stage by reducing the impact of the stressor on the person, for example, by providing a solution or perhaps by providing informational or emotional support to minimize any effects (Jones & Bright 2001). As noted earlier in this chapter, empirical evidence of these connections has been found by Gloria and Kurpius (2001) in their study of the influence that self-belief, social support, and comfort in the university environment have on the academic nonpersistence decisions of American Indian undergraduates.

This author's research assumes that when international students face problems and difficulties with accommodation, they need to use both internal (self-leadership and self-efficacy) and external (social support) sources in order to overcome challenges. The literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that the higher the levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy the better outcomes international students will produce in managing accommodation challenges. In combining self-leadership theory with self-efficacy theory, the researcher proposes that there are four types of coping behaviour that international students may produce as a result of differences in their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy:

1. achieving,
2. doing,
3. aspiring, and
4. accepting.

Figure 2.3 visually presents the types of coping behaviour expected, in respect to varying levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

The figure shows that individuals with high levels of both self-leadership and self-efficacy are expected to produce "achieving" behaviour. Such an individual is capable of determining which actions and consequent outcomes are most desirable (Neck et al. 1999). When they face difficult tasks, they direct and motivate themselves to behave and perform in a purposeful and effective way. The individual with strong self-leadership will employ goal orientation strategies in order to accomplish the most effective outcomes (DiLiello & Houghton 2006).

Self-efficacy depends not only on possession of task relevant skills but also on the belief that those skills can effectively be produced in difficult circumstances (Bandura 1977; Coffman & Gilligan 2002). High self-efficacy therefore produces "more persistence in pursuing goals" (Luszczynska, Scholz & Schwarzer 2005, p. 441). As a result, individuals with high self-efficacy invest more effort and persist longer than those low in self-efficacy. When setbacks occur, they recover more quickly and remain committed to their goals (Luszczynska, Gutierrez-Dona & Schwarzer 2005, p. 81).

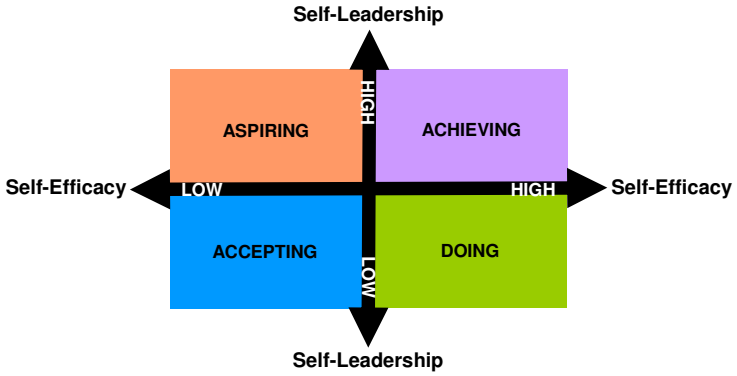

Figure 2.3: Levels of self-leadership, self-efficacy, and resultant types of coping behaviour

International students who scored high on levels of both self-leadership and self-efficacy, therefore, should execute more effective coping methods and strategies in encountering their challenges. Moreover, they also should produce more successful outcomes compared with students who scored low on levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Thus, we should find “achieving” behaviour among high self-leaders and high self-efficacious students. When challenges arise, these students would not easily give up. They would think, plan, and respond to the required challenges constructively, promptly, and effectively. They would persist in executing the most effective strategy in order to achieve optimal outcomes to the challenges.

Students with a high level of self-leadership and a low level of self-efficacy, however, are predicted to produce “aspiring” behaviour. Such students are able to think, plan, analyse, and choose the most effective coping strategy in encountering accommodation challenges but lack confidence in executing the strategy, and that lack of belief in their efficacy creates hesitation in taking actions towards meeting challenges, and thereby produces less active coping behaviour. This is because students with low self-efficacy try to avoid challenges and do not set ambitious goals. When challenges occur low self-efficacious students have low expectations of being able to meet those challenges. Due to lack of self-confidence, students with low levels of self-efficacy perceive accommodation challenges as too difficult. Hence, although they aspire to reach better outcomes, they produce less effort and persist less than those with high self-efficacy.

“Doing” behaviour is predicted to be produced by students with low level of self-leadership and high level of self-efficacy. This is opposite to the “aspiring” behaviour. The “doing” behaviour can be found in students who have less constructive thoughts and plans in dealing with accommodation challenges but, nevertheless have confidence in their ability to manage accommodation tasks. Therefore, they tend to take action quickly, rather than strategically. As a result, their doing may not lead to the best outcomes.

The least effective coping behaviour is “accepting”. This type of coping behaviour can be found in students with low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Students who fall within this category would be unable to handle accommodation challenges. Since they have weak strategic thoughts and low self-confidence, when facing challenges, they tend to accept negative situations rather than acting to make them better.

In this study, therefore, international students who have differing levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were expected to produce different types of coping behaviour when encountering accommodation challenges. To comprehensively explain the way international students manage accommodation challenges, however, social support theory is also part of the explanatory framework, even though it does not appear in figure 2.3. The explanatory framework includes the expectation that social support will have a positive impact on an individual student’s level of self-efficacy, and thereby become a major contributor to whether that student engages in achieving, doing, aspiring, or accepting behaviour.

We turn now to an account of the research methodology adopted by the author for the purposes of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the choice of research methodology and the associated research methods used in this investigation. Selection of an appropriate research methodology is crucial to the success of any research project (Corbetta 2003; Creswell 2003), because research methodology guides the conduct of the research and affects the quality of the findings. Consequently, this chapter discusses issues related to research purpose, research logic, research paradigm, research design, and methods employed for data collection and analysis, as well as ethical issues.

3.2 Research purpose

The fundamental goal of this research was to explore and explain the ways in which situational, organizational, and intrapersonal factors combine to enable some international students to do a better job of managing the challenges of accommodation than others. According to Neuman (2006), the purpose of social research can be classified into four different categories: to explore a new phenomenon (exploratory), to describe a phenomenon as it exists (descriptive), to explain why or how something is happening (analytical or explanatory), or to predict certain phenomena (predictive research). Even though research projects may have multiple purposes, one purpose is usually dominant (Neuman 2006, p. 33). This research falls mainly into the exploratory and explanatory categories.

3.2.1 Exploratory research

Researchers employ exploratory research when the area of research or the subject of inquiry is new or at least not yet well researched. Exploratory research has been considered as appropriate for satisfying one's curiosity or to arrive at a better understanding of the topic (Babbie 2004). As Neuman (2003) observed, exploratory researchers seek to discover new areas of study, to become familiar

with the basic facts, settings, and concerns related to that area, and to create a general mental picture of relevant conditions. According to Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 10) “The aim of this type of study is to look for patterns, ideas or hypotheses rather than testing or confirming a hypothesis”. Neuman also points to the fact that there are few guidelines for exploratory researchers to follow, and recommends that they explore many sources of information and take advantage of serendipity.

This study was not designed to test any specific hypothesis although it does make central use of existing theory. The researcher explored how international students manage their accommodation challenges by combining internal resources (self-leadership and self-efficacy), with an external resource (the housing support program provided by a University). This intention resulted in the emergence of one primary and two secondary research questions, which led to the design of a lengthy survey questionnaire, and the conduct of in-depth interviews. The genesis and formulation of the research questions was presented and explained in Chapter One, and those questions are re-presented here: The primary research question is *In what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?*

The two secondary research questions are:

1. *What kinds of university provided assistance do international students receive in relation to accommodation and how useful is that assistance?*

2. *What connections do international students make between their accommodation experiences, their subjective sense of well being, and their overall opinion of the university?*

3.3 Research paradigm (Philosophy)

The term *paradigm* refers to a set of philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge held by a community of scientists, which

influences the type of problems they investigate and their way of conducting research (Babbie 2004; Collis & Hussey 2003). A scientific paradigm, as Neuman (2006, p. 81) observes, is generally "A whole system of thinking. It includes basic assumptions, the important questions to be answered or puzzles to be solved, the research techniques to be used and examples of what good scientific research looks like". The most widely accepted research paradigms are *positivist* and *interpretivist*; sometimes carrying alternative labels such as *objectivist* or *experimentalist,* as opposed to *subjectivist* or *phenomenological*. Those two paradigms are distinguished on the basis of their fundamentally different views of reality, on what reality is and how one should investigate it.

3.3.1 The realist paradigm

While positivists regard reality as independent and objective, and apply logical reasoning and experimentation to investigate research problems, interpretivists, on the other hand, point to the subjective state of the individual, and argue that social reality is significantly dependent on the mind, so it is important to find ways to understand individual (and social) experience and meaning (Collis & Hussey 2003). Realists adopt a midpoint position: they agree with Positivists that there is an external world which exists independently of our perception, and also point out that the concept of awareness itself presumes the existence of objects independent of that awareness (Hunt 1991, pp. 260-1); but they nevertheless acknowledge the role that subjective experience plays in individual and social reality.

The critical realist position is outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994, pp. 110-1) in terms of three major elements. Firstly, its ontology is labeled as critical realism, because of its claims that reality should be subjected to the widest possible critical examination. Secondly, objectivity is the 'regulatory ideal' of critical realist epistemology, with findings subject to critical traditions and to members of the critical community such as editors, referees and professional peers. Thirdly, critical realism's methodology concentrates on collecting situational information in natural settings, focuses on discovery as an element in enquiry, and seeks respondent viewpoints to ascertain the meanings ascribed to action.

The transcendental realist position is outlined by Milles and Huberman (1994, p. 4). This position affirms the existence of both the objective and perceptual realities, and assumes that "some lawful and reasonably stable relationships are to be found among them". These relationships derive from the "regularities and sequences that link together phenomena". In sum, the transcendental realist seeks to identify these linkages and to provide evidence, or causal explanations, for their existence.

Taking both critical and transcendental realism into account, and given the nature of this study and its objectives, it falls clearly within the realist paradigm. This researcher seeks not to identify or test variables, but rather to explore and understand action within a social context: individual management of accommodation difficulties faced by international students.

3.4 Research design

Research designs are procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies (Creswell & Clark 2007, p. 58). Decisions on research design should be based on the research purpose, and on what best matches the research problem. As stated earlier in this chapter, the research conducted for this thesis is exploratory in nature. Exploratory research normally uses qualitative techniques for data gathering, because qualitative methods are less bound to a specific theory or research question, and because qualitative inquiry provides access to the subjective element of realist inquiry (Neuman 2003). However, quantitative methods such as surveys can also be employed in this type of research (Collis & Hussey 2003; Neuman 2003; Yin 2003), proving access to objective aspects of the inquiry. This researcher has therefore adopted a mixed-method procedure in order to benefit from both approaches.

3.4.1 Mixed methods research

Mixed methods research involves both collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the

use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. Mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative research thereby addressing questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone. Mixed methods research is “practical” in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods appropriate to the nature of a research problem (Creswell & Clark 2007).

3.4.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is used when a researcher wanted to directly compare and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings or to validate or expand quantitative results with qualitative data (Creswell & Clark 2007). Triangulation has been broadly defined by Denzin (1978, p. 291) as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.” It is one of several rationales for multi-method research using different methods to investigate research questions (Bryman 2004). The idea of triangulation in research came from a technique used by land surveyors or sailors, in drawing a triangle to check the accuracy of a distance measured between two points or objects. Hence, initially in the research field, triangulation was perceived as a mechanism for combining research methods to confirm the accuracy of research findings or as a validation strategy. Denzin (1971) however, extended the concept of triangulation to cover more than the combination of research methods, to integrate multiple theories or perspectives, researchers, and empirical materials. He distinguished four types of triangulation, including:

- Data triangulation: Including gathering data from a variety of data sources across three dimensions, either at different times, in multiple locations, or from different people.
- Researcher or investigator triangulation: Including the involvement of several researchers in the study.
- Theoretical triangulation: Including the use of more than one theoretical paradigm or perspective to interpret data.

- Methodological triangulation: Involving the use of more than one method for data collection.

Other types of triangulation have been acknowledged, such as multiple-triangulation (Mitchell 1986), which entails a merger of more than one of the above categories, or interdisciplinary-triangulation (Janesick 1994), which means combining multiple research elements from a number of different disciplines.

Among all of these categories, methodological triangulation i.e. the amalgamation of different methods is acknowledged as the most common meaning of the term (Flick 2004; Mitchell 1986), and that is the meaning adopted in this thesis.

Approaches to conducting methodological triangulation, include the *intra-triangulation* method and the *inter-triangulation* method. The intra-triangulation or internal method uses a variety of methods of the same nature, and within the same research category, either from a quantitative or qualitative approach. The inter-triangulation or the between-method or across-method however, consists of dissimilar but complementary methods from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As it uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches, therefore, the current research falls into this category.

To extend the application of this approach, Jick (1979, p. 138) refers to "the purpose of *completeness* in some triangulation studies." He highlights the function of triangulation, beyond confirmation or convergent validation, to help reach a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study.

Triangulation in its initial sense however, was the subject of some criticism. Fielding and Fielding (1986, p. 33) for example, referred to the problem of *extreme eclecticism* in applying triangulation as a validation strategy, and reminded readers that each method provides a unique way of investigating the issue. Bearing this in mind, they called upon researchers to implement triangulation with the intention of adding breadth or depth to their analysis, but not for the purpose of pursuing objective truth. Triangulation was thus considered less as a validation strategy, and more as a strategy leading to deeper understanding of the topic, and as an

approach for justifying and underpinning knowledge by gaining additional knowledge (Flick 2004). Deep understanding, leading to explanation, through exploration and analysis is the goal of the present study.

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, in Denzin and Lincoln's words "Reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 5). In general, the efficiency of multi-method studies for answering research questions in more depth has been considered as a driver for the increasing popularity of mixed method research (Kemper, Stringfield & Teddlie 2003, p. 284).

Methodological triangulation, as explained in the literature, makes it possible to capture different aspects of the issue under investigation (Flick 2004). In a similar vein, as Shih (1998, p. 636) reiterates "When using the strategies of data triangulation, the investigator explicitly attempts to maximize the range of data which might contribute to a more complete understanding of the topic being investigated. Shih (1998) suggests that, in studies which address more encompassing domains of investigation, triangulation helps the researcher to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

In this regard, Erzberger and Kelle (2003, p. 469) point to the complementarity model of triangulation, as opposed to the model of triangulation for mutual validation, and argue that "The varying perspectives opened up by different methods may supplement each other so as to produce a fuller picture of the empirical domain under study". The order of methods, or how the design in a multi-method study is finally put together, depends on the research topic, the research questions and the setting in which the research is taking place (McMurray, Pace & Scott 2004; Miller & Crabtree 2000).

The research literature recommends description of the sequence of data collection involved in implementing multi-method studies in enough detail to help others to understand how convergent data was collected and interpreted (Jick 1979; McMurray, Pace & Scott 2004). For this research, an extensive literature review was conducted to assist with the formation of ideas and objectives before

questionnaire design (Ali 1998). A survey was employed as the first instrument for data collection to help reach an overall understanding of the topic, and to identify those themes which required more clarification. As a subsequent procedure, in-depth interviews were conducted to address these gaps, and to better understand the issues by obtaining the insights of international students who were actually engaged with managing accommodation challenges. Potential interviewees were located through the online survey and then they were recruited. Further details of each of these techniques are reported below.

3.5 Methods

The methodological instruments employed in this research include literature review, interviews with experts in this field, followed by web-based surveys of onshore international students at an Australian University, and in-depth interviews with a smaller group of onshore international students who were selected because they had experienced accommodation difficulties. The reason for focusing on this group of students, as explained in Chapter One, was that international education has economically contributed significant income to Australian universities and to Australia as a whole (Barron, Baum & Conway 2007; Bayley et al. 2002); however, onshore international students tend to experience more problems than students do in general (Pedersen 1991). If such students are not properly looked after, Australian universities may lose their targeted customers. As Fernandes (2006) suggests, difficult learning and living experiences of current international students will have an impact on success or failure in attracting future international students.

3.5.1 Interviews with experts

Before designing survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews questions, the researcher conducted unstructured data collection in the form of interviews with experts. Information, data, and opinions gathered from experts who are dealing directly with international students helped the researcher to understand more about the issues and problems of international students from the university staff point of view. The experts were a Manager - International Student Information and

Support (ISIS), a Consultant - Cross Cultural Issues, and a Student Housing Co-ordinator.

3.5.2 Survey

The first phase of data collection for this study was a web-based survey. The main purpose of this stage was to investigate and explore international students' experiences with accommodation in Melbourne. Powell (1997) called this type of survey an 'experience survey', wherein the researcher gathers and synthesizes the experiences of people in a particular field. Powell moreover, confirmed the exploratory nature of this type of survey, which seeks to obtain provocative ideas and useful insights. Exploratory surveys as Powell observed "Can increase the researcher's familiarity with the phenomenon in question, they can help to clarify concepts, they can be used to establish priorities for future research, they can identify new problems, and last but not least, they can be used to gather information with practical applications, although such results can not always be anticipated" (Powell 1997, p. 58).

The web-based survey was designed to obtain access to all prospective participants (international students) at an Australian University. Only one university was used for this research, in an attempt to protect the data from being affected by too big a range of moderating variables.

The major strengths of survey include its versatility, its efficiency and its economy (Bryman & Bell 2003). The major weakness of adopting such a method is that the quality of information secured depends heavily on the ability and willingness of respondents to cooperate. It also requires much time to design and pilot the questionnaire and analyse the results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000).

The purposes of using the online survey for this study were:

- to construct an informed overview of the accommodation situations facing international students,

- to discover whether the situation in Melbourne parallels the findings of previous researchers (reviewed in Chapter One) who investigated accommodation for students in other locations,
- to identify factors that influence accommodation choices when students need to find new accommodation, and
- to identify which sources of help were found to be useful by international students

Collecting details of the accommodation situation that international students are facing in Melbourne is crucial to the fundamental goal of this research project. The fundamental goal is to explore the situational, organizational, and intrapersonal factors that combine to enable some international students to do a better job of managing the challenges of accommodation than others. The survey was designed to collect data relating to the situational and organizational factors which contribute to that dynamic interplay.

3.5.2.1 The development of the questionnaire

Questionnaires are structured instruments. They are an effective means to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents (Bryman & Bell 2003; Yin 2003). A well-designed questionnaire can gather both overall and specific facts, opinions, experiences, and attitudes on a specific research topic.

After extensive work on the literature review, which was followed by interviews with experts in this field, the survey questions were designed to discover and evaluate the kinds of assistance international students currently received in relation to managing their accommodation. It also was designed to discover connections that international students make between their accommodation experiences and their opinions of the university.

Appendix A includes the questionnaire developed to identify the accommodation experience of international students in Melbourne. There were 3 sections on the survey. Section 1 was designed to identify the profile of respondents including age, gender, country of citizenship and the length of time they have been a

student at the University. Section 2 was designed to investigate the way respondents manage their accommodation challenges prior to their arrival, and during their stay. This section was also designed to explore respondents' experiences with accommodation, levels of satisfaction with their first choice of accommodation, reasons why some moved to new accommodation and why some did not they move to new accommodation, the kind of resources they used to seek out accommodation options, their opinions about the availability of suitable accommodation for international students, and factors that influenced their choice of accommodation. A mix of closed and open-ended questions were used. Open-ended questions were included to accommodate more complex opinions or information. Section 3 of the survey was designed to investigate the university's housing advisory service program, and online housing database. That data was collected to explore the usefulness of the program and its services. Open-ended questions were included for respondents to express their feelings, and experiences about the services.

3.5.2.2 Targeted respondents

The targeted respondents were all onshore international students at one of the universities in Melbourne. All onshore international students were potential respondents because they could access their student e-mail. The researcher sent all onshore international students an email explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, and its online location.

3.5.2.3 Delivery of the questionnaire

The survey was conducted online. The advantages of online surveys include the widespread reach to potential respondents, low cost, the potential for quick response, computerised data formats, and the ability to monitor the response process (Bryman & Bell 2003; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000; Ticehurst & Veal 2000). Online surveys also offer the capacity to arrange the layout of the questionnaire in many ways. The checkbox and option box can allow respondents to make multiple choices or a single choice where necessary. In this way, the likelihood of response errors can be reduced. The flexible text box enables

respondents to type as many words as they wish, which is not the case with printed questionnaires.

After the questionnaire was mounted on a web site, it was piloted to test its layout, the wording of questions, the sequencing of questions, the Likert-scale responses, the route of skipping some questions, introductory remarks, the hyperlink, and the result of submission. According to the results of the pilot survey, some necessary revisions to the questionnaire were made.

The key to successful surveys (online or hard copy) is to reach the potential respondents and to maximize the responses. Since this survey was exploratory, it was difficult to precisely identify members of the desired population. Self-selection was the preferred option to find the desired respondents.

The questionnaire was distributed to all the university's onshore international students the "International Student Bulletin". The International Student Bulletin was a monthly student electronic newsletter. The content of the newsletter is on a website and the table of contents of newsletters is sent via email lists. If recipients are interested in specific content, they can hit the hyperlink of the newsletter's website, browse that content, and respond to the survey. The International Student Bulletin was sent to international students in mid June 2009. The hyperlink to the survey was activated on the university's website until the end of August 2009.

3.5.2.4 Data collection

The online survey was designed and conducted for self-administered completion and self-submission by the respondents. The submitted survey results were saved directly into a computerised file, which could be downloaded anytime during the process of the survey and readily used in any data analysis software package. This sped up the data collection and analysis process considerably, and cut down the possibility of error in transcribing results from questionnaire to computer. In the meantime, each response was also sent to the researcher via email for monitoring of the process.

3.5.2.5 Data analysis

The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) v16.0 for Windows was used to analyse the online survey data. The first step was to prepare the data for analysis. After importing the XLS-format file into SPSS, variables were defined for each of the single-choice questions. Any respondent could tick all the boxes of the multiple choice questions, so each of them had to be a separate variable.

In addition to defining the variables, the results of the questionnaire responses had to be converted into numerical codes. For multiple-choice questions, each option was treated as a single variable with '1' indicating 'selected' and '0' indicating 'not selected'. Seven-point Likert scale responses were used to code the attitude statements of satisfaction levels, ranging from '1' indicating 'extremely dissatisfied' to '7' indicating extremely satisfied'. The scale was applied to code the attitude statements of usefulness of sources, ranging from '1' indicating 'extremely useless' to '7' indicating extremely useful'. Similarly, the scale was used to code the attitude statements of accommodation options in Melbourne, ranging from '1' indicating 'extremely strongly disagree' to '7' indicating 'extremely strongly agree'. It was also applied to code the attitude statements of importance choice of accommodation, raging from '1' indicating 'extremely unimportant' to '7' indicating 'extremely important'.

Five-point Likert-scale responses were used to code the attitude statements of experience factors, ranging from '1' indicating 'very often to '5' indicating 'never. For categorical variables, a whole number was assigned to each category. For example, the age of a respondent fell into any of six categories, with '1' assigned to the category of '20 and less than 20' and '6' to the category of '40 and over'. However, in order to make it easier to report the results, and to capture a larger number of differences in attitude statements, a Three-point Likert-scale was utilised instead of Seven-point, or Five-point.

The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics to obtain a demographic snapshot of respondents. This was principally achieved by a frequencies analysis of all the data of the questionnaire. Survey data were

explored by comparing their specific value and interdependence, highest and lowest values, totals, and proportion.

Next, ANOVA analysis was used to investigate the relationship between dependent variables (e.g., satisfaction with the first accommodation) and independent variables (demographic factors and situational factors). Last, Cross-tabulation analysis was employed to identify the relationship among the variables that showed significance at 1% level. For example, the relationship between respondents' agreement/disagreement with a statement of "Melbourne has adequate range of accommodation for IS to choose from" and country or region (Appendix D). Graphics and tables were used to present the data.

3.5.2.6 Validity and reliability of the survey

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey, the process of questionnaire construction, survey piloting, survey delivering, data collection, and data analysis was carefully designed and implemented.

Sproull (1995, p. 74) emphasizes that prior to using any measure the validity and reliability of the measure should be assessed to estimate its accuracy and consistency. If the researcher is using existing instruments, there should be a pamphlet indicating the validity and reliability estimates based on several studies. If the researcher has designed the instrument, validity and reliability estimates should be generated prior to use.

Neuman (1994) suggests four principles to enhance reliability and validity: (a) clearly conceptualized constructs, (b) use of a precise level of measurement, (c) use of multiple indicators and (d) use of pilot tests. The questions designed for the questionnaire were asked in a straightforward and unambiguous manner. This follows the first principle and avoids the possibility of different interpretations by respondents. The second principle was achieved by assigning a five-point scale to attitude statements and whole numbers to the categorical measures. The third principle was observed by including more than one question to indicate the different aspects of the same dimension and asking essentially the same thing in

different parts of the questionnaire (Ticehurst & Veal 2000). For example, in section 2 of the questionnaire, a question was designed to ask respondents about their satisfaction with their first accommodation, while towards the end of section 2, respondents were asked about satisfaction with their current accommodation. The responses of these two questions could be tested for consistency.

The pilot survey was conducted before the distribution of the letter of invitation via email and news bulletin. Nineteen participants including two professors, two senior lecturers, and 15 international students tested the survey layout, the wording of questions, the sequencing of questions, the measurement of questions, the completion time, the introductory remarks, the hyperlink, and the submission process. Based on feedback from the pilot test, some revisions to the questionnaire were made to enhance its validity and reliability.

3.5.2.7 Ethical issues

Ethical issues arise when research involves human and non-human but sentient subjects (Sproull 1995). The online survey was subject to and adhered to the Ethics Policy and Procedures of RMIT University. Privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, freedom of choice to participate in the survey and to withdraw the unprocessed data was guaranteed in the design and conduct of the online survey, and in the reporting of results. Potential respondents were informed of their rights through the letter of invitation and the introductory remarks of the questionnaire.

3.5.3 Qualitative research method: Interview

After conducting the first phase of data collection, a preliminary processing of the questionnaire data was undertaken. The results from this part of the research served as the basis for in-depth probing and further exploration of the themes and topics raised. In this way, the results from the processed survey data were used to guide the design and implementation of the subsequent data collection procedure. In the second phase of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted.

The in-depth interview is considered to be the most common data collection instrument employed in qualitative research and exploratory studies, where the researcher seeks to obtain a deep understanding of the topic and intends to develop theories or hypotheses rather than testing theories or hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The in-depth interviews conducted by this researcher were designed to enable interviewees to elaborate on themes covered or emerging in the questionnaire, and to explore more details of the accommodation experiences of international students. This method was considered appropriate because the research project was undertaken to obtain explanatory insights into the dynamic interplay between three elements of the overall accommodation situation: self-leadership, self-efficacy, and university provided forms of assistance. Dick (1990, pp. 8-9, 39) and Perry (1998, p. 792) suggest that interviews should begin with general questions to discover the respondent's own meanings and subjective understandings, then converge on significant issues though the use of probe questions.

3.5.3.1 Interview methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 633) consider the interview as the art of asking questions and listening. Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 361) suggest that "interview is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings". An in-depth interview as a research method implies the conduct of relatively lengthy and significant interviews (Minichiello et al. 1995), which in the case of the interviews conducted for this thesis lasted between 45 and 60 minutes in length.

The research literature distinguishes between at least three methods of interview structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Fontana & Frey 1994; Lincoln & Guba 1985; McMurray, Pace & Scott 2004). The difference between these methods is as follows:

- In *structured* interviews the researcher knows what they need to know about the topic. As a result, questions and their order in structured interviews are pre-determined, and the interviewer aims for consistency in all interview situations. Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 363) assert that the role

of the interviewer is to control "the pace of the interview by treating the questions as if it were a theatrical script to be followed in a standardized and straightforward manner". As a result, this style of interviewing is inflexible in the way questions are asked and answered.

- *Unstructured* interviews, on the other hand, have been found to provide data in greater breadth and to give deeper insights. In the unstructured interview, the area of inquiry is somewhat undetermined, and the interviewer seeks to learn from respondents about the unknown issues that need to be investigated. Unstructured interviews, as McMurray, Pace and Scott (2004, p. 200) remarked "Differ from semi-structured interviews in that the interviewer follows only a general interview guide consisting primarily of a few key questions to guide the interviewer". As a result, they give the interviewees much more freedom to express their ideas in their own way (Morse & Richards 2002). Despite the merits of this form of interview, time pressures, on interviewees rather than the researcher, resulted in its being impractical for use in the present research project.

- Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to escape the restrictions of structured interviews, in terms of prescribed questions, and of the wording and order of questions, while having the ability to track any interesting ideas that might come up unexpectedly throughout the interviews (Rubin & Rubin 2005; Sommer & Sommer 2002).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research study. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of the breadth and depth of responses that they make possible in comparison with structured interviews, and because, as Fontana and Frey (1994) argue, a structured interviewing style "elicits rational responses but it overlooks or inadequately assesses the emotional dimension" (p. 364). The emotional dimension had to be embraced by this research because interviewees were asked to access pivotal decisions, and turning points, in the management of their accommodation and material of that nature not only carries emotional weight, it is often best remembered through emotion.

A further reason for the choice of semi-structured interviews conducted as conversations was that they allow the researcher to establish a human-to-human relation with the interviewees. The research objectives of exploring and explaining call for a method which elicits open and considered responses, and a method which establishes rapport. Clearly, there can be only limited rapport where there are barriers between people. An inability to *attend* to what the other person is saying, because of an inappropriately formal, structured, interview procedure, would create an unhelpful barrier between the researcher and the interviewees.

Regardless of the method used by the interviewer, the interviews provide an advantageous position as compared to other research techniques. Some of the benefits offered by the interviews are (Sproull 1995, pp. 162-5):

- Elicits information directly from people.
- Allows opportunity for probing; finding out why people feel or respond the way they do.
- Allows opportunity to clarity information as it is given.
- Allows opportunity to explain complex information.
- Allows opportunity to clarity previously collected data.

On the other hand, interviews are also accompanied with some disadvantages such as (Sproull 1995, p. 165):

- Very costly because of the time required for each interview and the required training of interviews.
- Less information can be gathered than by other methods because of the time requirements.
- Probability of inaccurate data because people may lie, omit information or use selective recall.
- Possibility of inaccurate data because of interviewer bias or untrusting interaction of interviewer and respondents.

Written notes and digital voice recorders are the two main ways used by the researcher or interviewer to document the interviewees' responses. Even though the use of the second method, that is, the digital voice recorders is useful, as it

provides accurate responses and reduces the percentage of misinterpretation, alternatively it also raises issues of confidentiality and ethics. Hence it is essential that a digital tape recorder be used only after an affirmative answer from the interviewee has been granted for its usage.

Yin (1994, p. 86) argues that taping should not be used if any of the following conditions are prevailing:

- An interviewee refuses permission or appears uncomfortable in its presence
- There is no specific plan for transcribing or systematically listening to the contents of the tapes
- The investigator is not comfortable and confident to use mechanical devices. This way the tape recorder creates a distraction during the interview itself, and
- The investigator is attempting to replace good listening skills with the usage of the tape recorder throughout the course of an interview.

In this research project, both written notes and a digital voice recorder were used to document the interviewees' responses; however the second method, that is, use of a digital voice recorder was preferred. It enabled the researcher to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview. The words and their tone, pauses, and the like, are recorded in a permanent form that can be returned to again and again for relistening (Kvale 1996, p. 161). Nonetheless a digital voice recorder was used only after obtaining prior consent from the interviewees.

3.5.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of interviews

As a research method, interviewing possesses several strengths. Interviewing allows for careful targeting of a topic, great depth through the direct interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and allows for immediate follow-up and clarification of responses. Interviews can be insightful, and the flexibility inherent in some forms of interviewing permits researcher and respondent to move back and forth between past, present and future via the processes of reconstruction, interpretation and prediction (Yin 1994, pp. 80, 5).

Interviewing's weaknesses include reflexivity, where the respondent provides the answer which they believe the interviewer is seeking; bias resulting from poor questions or in relation to the respondent's answers; poor respondent recall; possible respondent discomfort in sharing sensitive information; the possible underestimation by researcher of the complexity of interviewing; interviewing's time consuming nature; and the dangers which come from being over-dependent on one respondent (Yin 1994, p. 80). Fortunately, because the researcher was aware of these potential problems with interviewing, she consciously sought to avoid them. For instance, being over-dependent on one respondent was easily overcome by having access to many interviewees; whereas the first concern, that an interviewee might provide the answer which the interviewer is seeking, was addressed by explaining to interviewees that this study is exploratory in nature, so answers provided by interviewees were followed up in the search for deep detail, thereby reducing the possibility of any interviewee trying to guess at the answers sought by the interviewer.

The most serious concern was that of interviewees being uncomfortable in sharing sensitive information, given the potential for feeling embarrassed about not acting effectively to address an accommodation problem. To reduce the likelihood of such discomfort, the researcher took the time to assure all interviewees that their situations were not unique, and the researcher was careful not to reveal any surprise or disapproval, whatever the interviewees said in response to questioning. The possibility of underestimating the complexity of interviewing was reduced by the researcher trialling her interview questions with friends before embarking on the real interviews.

3.5.3.3 Interview questions

After the literature on international students and accommodation was reviewed, and then the literature on self-leadership, self-efficacy, and social support; the research questions were developed. After consulting with the researcher's supervisor, however, some minor adjustments to terminology and the reordering of the questions in to a more logical order occurred.

The researcher developed nine questions for this study. Questions were grouped into three parts. The first part consisted of four questions that were designed to explore the accommodation experiences of international students in Melbourne. The second part consisted of two questions that were designed to elicit details of each interviewee's experiences and attitudes towards the housing support program at their university. The last part consisted of three questions that were designed to gather each interviewee's opinions about who should take primary responsibility for the accommodation of international students (Appendix B).

3.5.3.4 Interview participants

30 onshore international students participated in the face to face in-depth interviews. The participants were recruited through the online survey. Survey respondents were asked to leave their contact details such as name, telephone number, and e-mail address after completing the survey, if they were interested in sharing their accommodation experiences for further studies.

3.5.3.5 Interview procedure

The in-depth interviews were conducted during the period between the end of July 2009 and mid-September 2009. All interviewees were first contacted by e-mails to request their participation. The researcher sent out an introduction letter together with the topic, objectives, and purposes of the interviews, before the actual interviews were conducted. All prospective participants were also informed about the length of the interviews: 45 minutes to 1 hour. After their agreement was gained, appointments were made.

Each interview was held at the Group Study Room in a library at RMIT University. Letters of consent were presented and the researcher also informed all interviewees verbally about their rights as an interviews participant.

Before the interviews started, the researcher asked each interviewee to complete a general self-efficacy measure and self-leadership measure. The self-efficacy instrument was taken from Chen, Gully and Eden (2001). The self- leadership

instrument was taken from Houghton and Neck (2002). There are eight questions on the instrument for measuring self-efficacy; and 35 questions on the instrument for measuring self-leadership. Both instruments were completed by research participants as self-assessments and are provided in this thesis as Appendix C.

Following the completion of the self-efficacy and the self-leadership instruments, interviews commenced. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and was digitally-recorded upon receiving prior consent from the participant.

The in-depth interviews were then transcribed and written up, the interview content as research data was placed under appropriate headings and within emerging themes. The transcripts were used as reference material for the process of summarising and analysis of the interview data.

3.5.3.6 Interview data

This research study generated an enormous amount of interview data. The researcher received a surprisingly large number of students who wanted to participate in the in-depth interviews. All of the interviewees were very willing and appeared to enjoy the chance to talk about their experiences. They provided rich responses to every question. Some interviews went over 90 minutes. And some wanted to talk even longer. The interview data was consequently rich and meaningful.

3.5.3.7 Data reduction

With so much information in the transcripts collected from thirty international students, the researcher considered it important to manage data reduction carefully to ensure that it was manageable and meaningful.

The first step taken to reduce the data was to summarise the full transcript of each interview. Data reduction refers to the process of “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming” the data (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 10). Similarly, Huberman and Mile (1994, p. 429) emphasis that “Once actual field notes,

interviews, tapes, or other data are available, data summaries, coding, finding themes, clustering, and writing stories are all instances of further data selection and condensation".

3.5.3.8 Data analysis

Qualitative methods enable researchers to understand the world as seen by respondents. Moreover, this approach provides the stories that lie behind the statistics (Patton 2002) that were obtained in from the quantitative survey. In order to demonstrate and illustrate the depth and colour of the responses to the questions, a revealing selection of excerpts from the transcripts has been included in Chapter Five (Interview Findings).

Interview data were processed firstly, by listening to the digital recorder in one sitting before the transcript was typed. This allowed the researcher to compare the original notes from the interview with the digital recorder interview to ascertain if any key ideas or themes were missed initially and needed to be followed up in subsequent interviews. The researcher categorised and coded patterns and themes for analysis. This thematic analysis of comments added a greater depth of meaning, as the themes that emerged were related directly to the research questions.

The themed interview data was then analysed through the lens of the explanatory framework constructed by the researcher as presented at the conclusion of Chapter Two: including, of course, self-leadership theory and self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy theory suggests for instance, that some international students may be affected by a lack of skills in areas such as negotiation and assertiveness. They may also lack knowledge about accommodation options, and their legal rights in regard to tenancy agreements.

Process exploration of support programs provided by the university also guided the analysis, because the researcher wanted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different forms of university provided support, in terms of what those forms of support mean to students. Central to understanding and explaining

the value of assistance programs and processes is the notion of subjective meaning. In addition to knowing what the practical components of the programs are, and knowing what the designers and providers of assistance programs intend, researchers need ways of understanding what such programs mean to their users. It is crucial to understand what actually happens to international students during every part of the process. Understanding weaknesses of processes should allow universities to improve and implement more effective forms of support for their international students.

3.5.3.9 Research instrument credibility

Houghton and Neck (2002) tested the reliability and construct validity of a revised self-leadership measurement scale created on the basis of existing measures of self-leadership (e.g. Anderson & Prussia 1997; Cox 1993). Results from an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) demonstrated significantly better reliability and factor stability for the revised scale in comparison to existing instruments. Further, results from a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) utilizing structural equation modeling techniques demonstrated superior fit for a higher order factor model of self-leadership, thus providing evidence that the revised scale is measuring self-leadership in a way that is harmonious with self-leadership theory. Based on these results, the revised scale appears to be a reasonably reliable and valid instrument for the measurement of self-leadership skills, behaviors, and cognitions.

Chen, Gully and Eden (2001) developed a new general self-efficacy (NGSE) scale and compared its psychometric properties and validity to that of the Sherer et al. General Self-Efficacy Scale (SGSE). Studies in two countries found that the NGSE scale has higher construct validity than the SGSE scale. Although shorter than the SGSE scale, the NGSE scale demonstrated high reliability, predicted specific self-efficacy (SSE) for a variety of tasks in various contexts, and moderated the influence of previous performance on subsequent SSE formation.

3.5.3.10 Reliability and validity of qualitative research

The aim of reliability, according to Yin (1994), is to minimise the errors and biases in a study. The research procedures must be trustworthy so that the research can be audited and so that if the same procedures were followed a consistency of results and findings would eventuate. To ensure that the research carried out for this study could be replicated by other researchers should they wish to address the same questions and concerns, the author has provided as much detail as possible about data gathering, data reduction, and interpretive analysis.

Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 58) have defined validity as "The extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation". Within the multi-method context, Cresswell and Clark (2007, p. 146) have defined validity as "The ability of the researcher to draw meaningful and accurate conclusions from all of the data in the study": Chapters Four and Five will present the research data collected by this researcher, and Chapter Six will transform that data to meaningful findings and conclusions.

3.5.3.11 Ethical issues

Ethical issues arise when research involves human and non-human but sentient subjects (Sproull 1995). The in-depth interview was subject to and adhered to the Ethics Policy and Procedures of RMIT University. Privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, freedom of choice to participate in the interview and to withdraw the unprocessed data was guaranteed in the design and conduct of the interview, and in the reporting of findings. Potential participants were informed of their rights through the letter of invitation and the introductory remarks of the interview questions.

The most important concerns "of any qualitative study is its quality" (Golafshani 2003, p. 601), and the researcher contends that in the case of the empirical research for this thesis, quality was obtained through the comprehensiveness of the explanatory framework; through the gathering of quantitative survey data which – in combination with the explanatory framework - was used to inform the

design of interview questions; through the administration of previously validated instruments for measuring self-efficacy and self-leadership; through the formulation of probing interview questions; through the recursive in-depth interview process; through the structured and systematic reduction of interview data; and finally through the considered and informed analysis of interview data to arrive at theoretically and empirically informed findings. It is in the context of the research design that has been explained, detailed, and justified in this chapter that we turn now to an account of the research findings: Chapter Four presents findings from the online survey, and Chapter Five presents findings, discussion and analysis from the in-depth interviews.

Chapter 4: Survey Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data collected through the online survey. The chapter first presents the demographic characteristics of respondents, followed by information sources that respondents used in to locate accommodation before arriving in Melbourne. Then this chapter reports on the accommodation situation faced by respondents after they arrived in Melbourne. Finally, the chapter reviews respondents' attitudes toward, and opinions of, the housing advisory service at the university. The Housing Advisory Service was chosen because it is a key instance of the sort of organizational support that universities hope will contribute in a positive way toward the ability of international students to best manage their accommodation during their stay.

Before presenting the results, it is important to be clear that, given the ambition of understanding what underlies the differences between students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and students whose approach is ineffective, the survey data contributes to meeting part of that ambition, but cannot meet all of that ambition. The dynamic interaction that is the focus of this research occurs at the personal, subjective level, which is where different individual students make combinatorial use of situational, organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors. Consequently, although the survey findings will provide important contextual data about the situational and organizational factors in particular, the findings will not take us deeply into an understanding of the underlying, personal dynamic. To reach that level, the researcher will build on the survey findings through subsequent, qualitative research. The online survey results also raise issues that will be explored further in the interviews.

4.2 Demographic characteristics

The online survey attracted 215 responses, eight of which were duplicates or invalid on the grounds of incomplete submission. After removing these repeat and invalid submissions, 207 valid responses remained for further analysis.

The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 4.1. The table shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of their age, gender, country or region, and number of years they had been at the University. Respondents were split fairly evenly between males (52%) and females (48%), with most aged in their twenties to thirties (83%), and only 17% older than thirties.

Table 4.1: A profile of respondents

Profile		**Frequency**	**Percent**
Age group	20 and less than 20	27	13
	21 - 25	100	48
	26 - 30	45	22
	31 - 35	20	10
	Over 36	15	7
Gender group	Male	108	52
	Female	99	48
Region	South East Asia	81	39
	East Asia	55	27
	South Asia	36	17
	West Asia	9	4
	Other	26	13
Number of years at the university	Less than 6 months	82	40
	More than 6 months but less than 1 year	27	13
	1 - 2 years	56	27
	2 - 3 years	27	13
	More than 3 years	15	7

This profile matches the university's international student population quite well. Most of the respondents (80%) had spent less than two years at the University at the time of completing the survey. A majority of the respondents came from Asian regions (87%).

The respondents came from 37 countries around the world. Table 4.2 lists country and region of respondents. The largest proportions of respondents came from China (18%), Malaysia (15%), India (12%), and Thailand (8%), with smaller numbers from Vietnam (6%), Singapore (5%), Indonesia (4%), and South Korea (3%).

To analyze the data more effectively, regional groupings were introduced based on geographical locations. Respondents came from five regions: East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and Other. Countries that were grouped into the 'Other' region were from Africa, America, South America, Europe, and various Island countries.

Table 4.2: Country and region of respondents

Country and Region		**Frequency**	**Percent**
South East Asia:	Malaysia	30	15
	Thailand	16	8
	Vietnam	13	6.5
	Singapore	11	5
	Indonesia	8	4
	Laos	2	1
	Cambodia	1	.5
	Total	**81**	**40**
East Asia:	China	37	18
	South Korea	7	3
	Hong Kong	4	2
	Japan	4	2
	Taiwan	3	1
	Total	**55**	**26**
South Asia:	India	25	12
	Bangladesh	4	2
	Nepal	3	1
	Sri Lanka	3	1
	Pakistan	1	.5
	Total	**36**	**16.5**
West Asia:	Iran	4	2
	Jordan	2	1
	Bahrain	1	.5
	Saudi Arabia	1	.5
	United Arab Emirates	1	.5
	Total	**9**	**4.5**

Table 4.2: Country and region of respondents (continued)

Country and Region		Frequency	Percent
Other:	Mexico	4	2
	France	3	1
	Botswana	2	1
	Colombia	2	1
	Germany	2	1
	Kenya	2	1
	Mauritius	2	1
	United Kingdom	2	1
	Fiji	1	.5
	Macedonia	1	.5
	Norway	1	.5
	Russia	1	.5
	Sweden	1	.5
	Turkey	1	.5
	Republic of Vanuatu	1	.5
	Total	**26**	**12.5**
Total		**207**	**100**

Grouping respondents in this way enabled investigation of differences in the management of accommodation difficulties of international students by regions. As most of the respondents came from Asian regions, grouping them all together would not allow this analysis of differences among them.

4.3 Accommodation

The sources that respondents used for gathering accommodation information, the type of accommodation they chose, and satisfaction levels with their first accommodation are presented in Table 4.3. The table shows that most of the respondents obtained their information about accommodation before coming to Melbourne from their family, friends, and relatives (40%). This result indicated that, "word of mouth" was a major source when international students were seeking information on accommodation while they were overseas. One possible reason for this finding is that students might feel more comfortable to seek first hand information from the direct source. Another possibility is that students might be more trusting of first hand, experience-based information. Seeking advice from friends, relatives, and other people that they came across would allow them to feel

more confident and secure since those people had some experiences in Melbourne before.

This finding supported an earlier report by Australian Education International (2003) that students' families at home and acquaintances who had studied in Australia were the most important influences on their decision. Zhai (2004) contends that friends and family are the most preferred resources when international students seek help.

Table 4.3: First accommodation in Melbourne

	Frequency	**Percent**
Received information about accommodation in your home country from		
- Family/friend/relative	82	40
- Internet	37	18
- Education agents	36	17
- IDP centre	28	14
- Other	23	10
- Australian Embassy/Consulate	1	1
First accommodation in Melbourne		
- Share accommodation	68	33
- Other (backpacker & family and friends)	44	22
- Student accommodation	42	20
- Homestay	38	18
- Rent an accommodation by yourself	15	7
Satisfaction with the first accommodation		
- Satisfied	93	45
- Dissatisfied	76	37
- Neutral	38	18

Not surprisingly, those respondents who did not have contact with someone who had been living in Melbourne, sought information from other sources. The Internet and educational agents were used evenly at 18% and 17% as information sources when respondents were seeking information about accommodation from overseas. The IDP centre provided advice about accommodation to 14% of respondents. This finding also supported an earlier report by Australian Education International (2003) that "education agents were the most important non-social influence on students decisions" (p. 3).

The results suggested that all international students looked for information about accommodation when they knew that they were coming to study in Melbourne. This is not surprising because living away from their home countries was a big change for them. One possible reason for the apparently strong motivation to be well informed about accommodation before they arrive is that international students might be afraid of losing social support from their family and friends since they will live at a greater distance (Hechanova-Alampay et al. 2002). As a consequence, they recognized the need to ensure that they will be properly accommodated when they are going to live far from home. Pre-departure information might help them feel safe and secure.

After obtaining pre-departure advice, (33%) of the respondents chose to live in shared accommodation when they first arrived in Melbourne. Other choices of accommodation were split almost evenly between student accommodation (20%), homestay (18%), and other (21%). 'Other' includes backpacker hostels, and family or friends accommodation. A small number (7%) of respondents managed to rent accommodation before arriving in Melbourne.

Shared accommodation was the most common perhaps because the respondents' families, friends, or relatives helped them to reserve rooms in shared accommodation. Another possible reason is they might choose to live in shared accommodation, rather than university halls of residence, because shared accommodation allowed them to be more independent, since most respondents were mature age students. Baker and Hawkins (2006) suggest that mature age students attending university are generally left to find their own accommodation, friends and social contacts. As for those respondents who did not have anyone to help them find accommodation while they were overseas, many chose to live in student accommodation, homestay, and temporary accommodation available to them. The reasons for these choices will be explored in the in-depth interviews.
After arriving in Melbourne, many respondents were satisfied with the choice of their first accommodation (45%). 37% of respondents were dissatisfied with their first accommodation. However, when we consider the total number of international students living in Melbourne, 37% constitutes a worryingly large number of people who may be experiencing considerable stress. Smith and Pang (2007) suggest

that early in the stay of international students, most choose to live close to education institutions for safety and security reasons, given their lack of knowledge of surrounding suburbs and transport options. Unfortunately however, limited knowledge and understanding of how to find the right accommodation (Campbell 2004; Myburgh, Niehaus & Poggenpoel 2006), may lead to negative experiences with housing, particularly in the first 12 months (Smith et al. 2007).

Li and Kaye (1998) point out that accommodation is one of the problems that can affect students' academic progress. Altschuler and Kramnick (1999) stress that there is a clear connection between stable accommodation and success in studies. For international students, positive and timely social support helps them study more effectively "as well as breaking the clear link between stress and illness" (Furnham 1997, p. 24). Scheyvens, Wild and Overton (2003) argue that academic success is strongly related to the personal well-being of students, particularly during the first few months as they try to adapt to a new cultural, linguistic and learning environment.

Fletcher et al. (2003) point out that even when there is a wide range of accommodation options for international students, much of what is offered may not be at an appropriate standard to meet the requirements of students. Newton and Pryon (2006) claim that in the city, most student apartments are low-cost buildings. They offer sixteen and eighteen square metres area with no living space and a communal area. They contain a tiny bathroom, a kitchenette, a cupboard, a single bed and a desk. Studying in such cramped conditions is not conducive to clear mindedness.

We turn not to the accommodation situation of international students after arriving in Melbourne; the results showed that most respondents have changed accommodation since arriving in Melbourne (71%). Of those who have changed, 44% have changed accommodation once, 31% have changed twice, and 16% have changed three times. Table 4.4 shows respondents' accommodation changes after they arrived in Melbourne.

Table 4.4: Accommodation situation after arriving in Melbourne

	Frequency	Percent
Have changed accommodation since arriving in Melbourne		
Yes	147	71
No	60	29
Total	**207**	**100**
Number of times have changed accommodation		
1 time	64	44
2 times	45	31
3 times	23	16
4 times	3	2
5 times	7	5
6 times	3	2
8 times	2	1
Total	**147**	**100**

Even though the initial responses about satisfaction with accommodation suggested that the majority of respondents were satisfied with their first choice of accommodation, the results here indicated that most of the respondents had changed accommodation since arriving in Melbourne. This included those respondents who indicated in response to an earlier question that they were satisfied with their accommodation. This disparity suggests that international students did look around for better accommodation after their arrival: accommodation that was a better match with their needs and preferences, even if they were at least partly happy with their initial accommodation.

The reasons for moving to new accommodation are diverse. Therefore, respondents were given multiple choices when asked why they moved from their initial accommodation. Accordingly, multiple responses were grouped for frequency analysis. There were 494 reasons for moving to new accommodation given by 147 respondents. Table 4.5 shows the frequency and percent of responses to the reasons for moving to new accommodation. The most common reasons were to look for better conditions (69%), to seek better living arrangements (53%), to live closer to the university (47%), to pay lower rent (45%), and to concentrate more on studies (38%).

Table 4.5: Main reasons for moving to new accommodation

	Frequency	Percent
To look for better conditions of accommodation	101	69
To seek better living arrangements	78	53
To live closer to the University	69	47
To pay lower rent	66	45
To concentrate more on my studies	56	38
To live closer to the city	48	33
To live with friends	36	25
Had disagreements/conflicts with share mate	25	17
To live further away from the city	7	5
Other	8	5

The results here clearly suggested that most respondents were seeking better accommodation and better living arrangements. They may have been unhappy or unsatisfied with something in or within the accommodation itself, or perhaps with the people they lived with. They may have been able to find better accommodation after they had been living in Melbourne for sometime. They may have had access to more sources of accommodation. In-depth interviews will be used to help to understand more in this area.

Fincher et al. (2009) suggest that settling in and finding one's way around are common problems for international students. Therefore, they are the main occupants of the high-density, high-security purpose-built student housing close to the university (Fincher & Costello 2005). With limited information about housing options when they first arrived (Fincher et al. 2009), a lack of knowledge, and poor decision making skills, international students find themselves living in less than satisfactory accommodation (Baker, G & Hawkins 2006).

Similarly, respondents might not change accommodation after they arrived in Melbourne because of many reasons. Therefore, respondents were given multiple choices for the reasons why they have not changed accommodation. There were 91 reasons for not changing accommodation given by 60 respondents. Table 4.6 shows the frequency and percent of responses for each reason. Of all possible main reasons for not changing accommodation, 'I am happy where I am' (47%)

and 'I do not have time to look for better accommodation' (47%) were the most popular responses.

Table 4.6: Main reasons respondents have not changed accommodation since they arrived in Melbourne

	Frequency	Percent
I am happy where I am	28	47
I do not have time to look for better accommodation	28	47
I cannot afford better accommodation	12	20
I am not sure what to do	6	10
I do not want to offend my housemate	5	8
I do not know who to ask for help	4	7
Other	8	13

Beyond the obvious result that respondents who were really happy with their accommodation have not moved out since they first arrived in Melbourne, there were some interesting findings. Quite large numbers of respondents suggested that they did not have time to look for better accommodation. One possible reason is the respondents just wanted to fully concentrate on their studies during the time of the survey so they did not want to think about looking for new accommodation or they wanted to avoid any hassle during the study period.

Khawaja and Dempsey (2007) assert that international students place extreme demands on themselves to obtain excellent academic results. Many students find it is difficult to establish any routine involving study, housing, relationships, living arrangements, part-time work, finance, as the unusual nature of the academic year disrupts these other areas of their lives (Harms 1998).

Another possibility is that the respondents could accept their current living conditions. Therefore, finding better accommodation was not a big matter to them. Furthermore, the results showed that some respondents did not have any choice about finding better accommodation because they simply could not afford it. They might love to move into better accommodation that matched their preferences but were not able to pay higher rent. This possibility will be explored further in the interviews.

Back, Davis and Olsen (1997) point out that living costs are a major component of the total costs of an international student in higher education. Financial concerns of international students have been commonly identified as significant sources of stress and one of the primary reasons for withdrawal from studies. Guilfoyle (2004) and Khawaja & Dempsey (2007) assert that rising costs and discontent with accommodation may produce financial and psychological strain for international students.

The survey results indicated that some respondents did not know what to do (10%) when they wanted to look for new accommodation. The results also showed that some respondents did not know who to ask for help (7%). These two groups of respondents were interesting since there were many sources of accommodation information available to them. Information on accommodation can be found from internet, friends, university's notice boards, real estate agents, newspaper, and printing materials. Perhaps they had not put enough effort and attention into looking for new accommodation. However, some respondents might face difficulties in taking control over their accommodation in a new country. Hayes and Lin (1994) remind us that international students often feel less confident when they move to another country for the first time. They tend to encounter stresses and adjustment issues (Khawaja & Dempsey 2007) and therefore, some respondents may not feel able to look for a change.

Those respondents who did look for new accommodation might have used a wide variety of sources. Hence, respondents to this item were given multiple choices. There were 447 responses to the type of source that respondents used when they looked for new accommodation, given by 147 respondents. Table 4.7 shows the frequency and percent of responses to each source and its usefulness.

Most respondents used internet (87%), family or friends (52%), and real estate agents (51%) as major sources when they started looking for new accommodation. In term of usefulness of sources, internet (85%), family or friends (63%), and real estate agents (48%) were suggested as being the most useful.

Table 4.7: Sources respondents used when looking for new accommodation and the usefulness of each source

	Frequency	Percent	Useless (%)	Neutral (%)	Useful (%)
Internet	128	87	7	8	85
Family or friends	76	52	12	26	63
Real estate agents	75	51	21	31	48
The university's notice boards	54	37	30	32	38
The university's housing website/database	47	32	34	44	22
Newspaper	36	24	29	46	26
The university's housing advisory service	29	20	33	50	17
Other	2	1	16	80	5

Note: respondents were asked to be rate the usefulness of each source on a 7 point scale, "Useful", "Very Useful", and "Extremely Useful" categories, are combined here, as are the "Useless", "Very Useless", and "Extremely Useless" categories, to compress the presentation of results.

The results suggested that most respondents used the internet as a major source when they looked for new accommodation after arriving in Melbourne. The internet became much more important and useful to them compared with the time when they were still in their home countries. It is interesting to see that respondents used to rely on family, friends, or relatives before they came to Melbourne but after they had been living in Melbourne, they relied more on themselves. This may be because they had learnt more about sources and channels. It may be also because they wanted to take control over their choice of accommodation. While they were overseas they did not know the real situation about accommodation in Melbourne. Whereas, living here for sometime gave them more opportunity to learn about what sources were available to them when they needed to look for new accommodation and which of those sources were more useful.

When respondents were asked about satisfaction with their current accommodation after they had moved into new accommodation, most respondents (75%) were satisfied with their current accommodation. However, some respondents (15%) were still dissatisfied and 10% of respondents were unsure whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their current accommodation. Figure 4.1 shows the satisfaction with current accommodation of respondents.

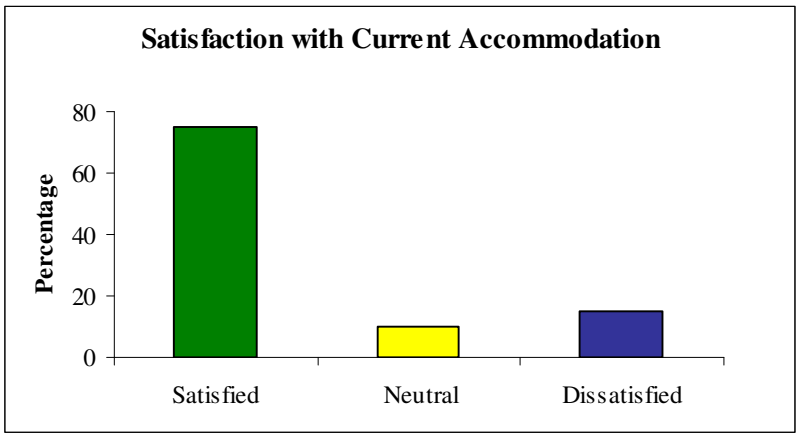

Figure 4.1: Satisfaction with current accommodation

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents were successful with their choice of accommodation after moving out from previous accommodation. This suggested that most respondents managed to find accommodation that suited their needs and preferences. Even though there was a small number of respondents dissatisfied with their current accommodation after moving out from previous accommodation, and a small percentage who moved repeatedly (Table 4.4), most of them seemed to manage and cope well with the challenges. The results demonstrated that the respondents usually managed to find the kind of accommodation they wanted when they were no longer happy with their previous accommodation.

With regard to the number of people who share their current accommodation, the numbers of respondents were split almost evenly between living alone (18%), sharing with one person (20%), sharing with two people (21%) and sharing with three people (21%). Fewer lived with four people (9%) and more than four (11%). See Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Number of people shared in current accommodation

	Frequency	Percent
0	37	18
1	42	20
2	44	21
3	43	21
4	19	9
more than 4	22	11
Total	**207**	**100**

The results showed that the majority of the respondents lived with other people. This finding is not surprising because living alone costs more than sharing with others. The respondents who lived alone must be responsible for paying rent and utility bills by themselves. Therefore, it is quite common for international students to share accommodation with other people. Living in share accommodation allows international students to minimize their cost of living. Furthermore, most respondents lived in the city, where costs of living are higher. Sharing accommodation is therefore the best option for them.

Respondents' experiences with accommodation are varied. Respondents were asked about their experiences with their current accommodation in the last six months. Most of the respondents felt that the accommodation was too expensive (89%). They pointed out that they felt too hot or too cold (81%). They also quite often felt isolated or lonely (76%), and many felt homesick (75%). See Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Problems experienced
(percentage with each experience in the last 6 months)

	%
Too expensive	89
Too hot or too cold	81
Felt isolated or lonely	76
Felt homesick	75
Too small	72
Neighbor made intrusive noises	67
Annoyed / irritated by share mate	66
Too noisy	66

Table 4.9: Problems experienced (continued)
(percentage with each experience in the last 6 months)

	%
Felt you were being treated unfairly	65
Faced sleepless problem	64
Housemate made intrusive noises	63
Worried about security	62
Lost privacy	57
Too smelly	52
Felt you were being trapped in this accommodation	50
Fought with share mate	35

The results indicated that most respondents had some bad experiences within their accommodation. Most indicated that their accommodation is too expensive. Weather seemed to be another concern to respondents. This was perhaps because heating and cooling systems were not provided properly in the accommodation. This also may be because the respondents were not used to the changeable weather in Melbourne. Negative experiences included accommodation being too small, neighbours making intrusive noises, being annoyed/irritated by share mate, housemates who are too noisy, being treated unfairly, sleepless problems.

There was significantly a long list of bad accommodation experiences faced by respondents in the last six months. But Figure 4.1 indicates a high level of satisfaction with current accommodation. This seems to be a contradiction. In-depth interviews will be used to help to understand more in this area.

Research on living and studying in Australia by the Australian Education International (2003) suggests that international students were least satisfied with course cost and the cost of living. Furnham (2004) suggests that rising tuition fees and living expenses are major issues of concern for international students. Back, Davis and Olsen (1997) claim that living costs are a major component of the total costs of an international student in higher education.

Lin and Yi (1997) argue that financial pressures are seriously challenging for international students. International students view accommodation and financial problems as being equally important (Li & Kaye 1998). Baker and Hawkins (2006) assert that many international students experience significant problems with social integration, family stress and isolation resulting in homesickness, loneliness and depression. The homesickness and the stress of coping with a new environment, new people and new experiences are common problems for all first year students (Dunne & Somerset 2005; Ramsay, Barker & Jones 1999). International students however, are significantly more likely to experience moderate to severe clinical depression and loneliness than Australian students (Oei & Notowidjojo 1990).

When respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements testing for their views on the relationship between accommodation difficulties and academic difficulties, most respondents agreed that living in suitable accommodation helps them to focus better with their studies (94%). The majority of the respondents also agreed that living in suitable accommodation makes them feel safe and secure (90%). However, most of respondents disagreed that accommodation for international students came at a reasonable rental cost (87%). They also disagreed with 'I have no problems finding suitable accommodation for my needs in Melbourne' (58%), and 'Melbourne has an adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from' (57%). Table 4.10 shows the frequency and percentage of respondents' responses concerning the suitability of accommodation for international students.

Table 4.10: Suitable accommodation
(Percentages agreeing/disagreeing with statements about suitable accommodation for international students)

	Disagree (%)	**Neutral (%)**	**Agree (%)**
Living in suitable accommodation helps me to focus better with my studies	2	4	94
Living in suitable accommodation makes me feel safe and secure	5	5	90
Living in suitable accommodation helps me avoid homesickness	12	19	69
I regard my accommodation experience in Melbourne as a positive one	29	19	52
My accommodation experience in Melbourne influences my opinion of the University	39	23	38
I have no problems finding suitable accommodation for my needs in Melbourne	58	14	30
Melbourne has an adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from	57	17	26
Accommodation for international students comes at a reasonable rental cost	87	5	8

Note: Agreeing/Disagreeing with statements was asked to be rated in a 7 point scale, "Agree", "Strongly Agree", and "Extremely Strongly Agree" categories, are combined here, as are the "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree", and "Extremely Strongly Disagree" categories, to compress the presentation of results.

The 2008 International Student Survey reports that the high cost of accommodation and the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation are both major problems for international students. Affordability of living, affordability of accommodation and ease of finding accommodation received least satisfaction ratings from international students in their view of Melbourne as a place to live (City of Melbourne 2009). International students often have very limited choices when initially sourcing adequate accommodation (NLC 2008).

With regard to factors that matter to student choice of accommodation, most of the respondents indicated that they wanted to feel safe (96%), to live in better environment (95%), to live in better quality of accommodation (92%) and to gain privacy (92%). See Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Importance of factors in choice of accommodation

	Unimportant (%)	Neutral (%)	Important (%)
To feel safe	3	1	96
To live in better environment	4	1	95
To live in better quality of accommodation	4	4	92
To gain privacy	2	6	92
To pay cheaper rental cost	5	8	87
To escape from noises	5	9	87
To feel like home	11	12	77
To live closer to campus	14	10	76
To find better share mate / housemate	9	19	72
To live with friends	30	25	45

Note: Importance to matters was asked to be rated in a 7 point scale, "Important", "Very Important", and "Extremely Important" categories, are combined here, as are the "Unimportant", "Very Unimportant", and "Extremely Unimportant" categories, to improve the presentation of the results.

The results indicated that safety; living in better environment; living in better quality of accommodation; privacy; paying cheaper rent; feeling at home; living closer to campus; and living with better share mates were all very important reasons that matter to choice of accommodation for the respondents. The finding also showed that safety was a big issue to respondents. Whereas, earlier finding did not indicate that safety was one of the main reasons for students to move out of their accommodation (see Table 4.5). This may be because safety was not the main issue to push students out of accommodation but it was the main concern when students started looking for new accommodation.

Interestingly, to live with friends was not the main concern to them even though most respondents were living in shares accommodation. This may be because they were sharing accommodation with other people who they did not know before. It may be also that as long as they found accommodation that suited their needs, living with friends or not was not that important to them. There are many possible reasons for this result, and the in-depth interviews which will be discussed in the next chapter may provide more insight into this situation.

The university offers help and assistance with accommodation to all students. The service is called "Housing Advisory Service" (HAS). Students can use this service as one of their external sources in order to help them manage their

accommodation challenges. Students can get direct assistance from staff and from a database/website.

The majority of respondents knew of the HAS at the university (70%). Most respondents became aware of the service through the university website (51%). The respondents also heard of the service from orientation day (22%), brochures (21%), and International Student Information Service (20%), see Table 4.12. Of the 70% who had heard of the housing service, 53% said that they have not been using the service, and 47% suggested that they have been using the service. For those respondents who have been using the housing advisory service provided by the university, 53% of them suggested that they were not satisfied with the service, and 47% satisfied with the service.

Table 4.12: An overview of housing advisory service at the university

	Frequency	**Percent**
Heard of Housing Advisory Service		
Yes	144	70
No	63	30
Total	**207**	**100**
Heard of Housing Advisory Service from		
university website	106	51
Orientation day	46	22
Brochures	44	21
International Student Information Service (ISIS)	42	20
E-mail	14	7
Posters	11	5
Other	6	3
Have been using Housing Advisory Service		
No	76	53
Yes	68	47
Total	**144**	**100**
Satisfied with the advice received		
No	36	53
Yes	32	47
Total	**68**	**100**

It is interesting that the majority of the respondents had heard of the service from the university's website but not from the orientation day. Every international

student has an invitation to attend an orientation day where information about living and surviving skills in Melbourne is presented. Therefore, the respondents should have heard of the service through this channel. Nevertheless, the survey results showed that most respondents found information by themselves on the website. This may be because there was not enough emphasis put on the HAS on the orientation day. Or it could be that orientation day covers so much information that students do not absorb it all. Also, many students skip or miss orientation day activities.

The results also suggested that only half of the respondents who had heard of the HAS used the service. And only approximately 50% of respondents who used the service were satisfied with the service provided. The finding showed that half of the respondents chose to use other sources available to them rather than using a source that provided by the university. It may be because they preferred to do everything on their own. It may be because they found other sources were more useful. It also may be that they did not have enough confidence with the service.

Only half of respondents who used the service were satisfied with the advice received. This suggests that the service may not be effective enough. Investigation of why the service did not work well for the respondents will be carried out as part of the in-depth interviews.

Regarding the usage of the online housing database, 55% of respondents said that they have not used the service, and 45% of respondents suggested that they have used the service. For the respondents who have used the service, 52% advised that they found the service useful, and 48% commented that they found the service not useful. See Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: An overview of housing online database and its usefulness

	Frequency	Percent
Have used online housing database		
Yes	93	45
No	114	55
Total	**207**	**100**
Online housing database useful		
Yes	48	52
No	45	48
Total	**93**	**100**

The earlier results indicated that most respondents use the internet as a major source to find new accommodation after they have been living in Melbourne. Interestingly the results in Table 4.13 show that not even 50% of respondents used the database/website provided by the university. This suggests that the respondents relied more on public websites than the university database/website. In addition, the finding demonstrated that only half of respondents who used the database/website were satisfied with the information available.

The finding suggests that the database/website provided by the university does not provide enough information to meet the respondents' needs. This is not surprising because according to a survey by the City of Melbourne (2009), even though information about accommodation was rated as one of the most accessed types of information, it was not rated among the information which was easiest to access. This finding suggests that there is room for improvement in making students aware of the information and services which are available to help them find accommodation.

When the respondents were asked about the overall opinion of the housing advisory service support program for IS at the University, many said that it was average (49%), whilst 29% suggested that it was poor, and only 22% of respondents reported it was good. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents would recommend the service to friends or family (66%). Table 4.14 shows the overall opinion of the housing advisory service support program for international students.

Table 4.14: Overall opinion of the housing advisory service support program

	Frequency	Percent
Overall opinion of the Housing Advisory Service support program for IS		
Average	46	49
Poor	27	29
Good	20	22
Total	**93**	**100**
Would you recommend the service?		
Yes	61	66
No	32	34
Total	**93**	**100**

The results suggested that overall the respondents thought the quality of the HAS support program was average. This finding is consistent with the earlier findings that most respondents suggested that both the HAS and the housing database/website did not provide outstanding support compared with other sources. However, there were a small group of respondents who thought the program was good. Although the majority of the respondents suggested that the overall service was only average, surprisingly most respondents would recommend the service to their family or friends. This may be because the program provides some useful information so that they thought it could be helpful for others.

4.4 ANOVA Analysis

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to investigate whether there were any significant relationships between various satisfaction and importance measures and the demographic and situational factors. Dependent variables included were preferences with first accommodation, satisfaction with first accommodation, satisfaction with current accommodation, usefulness of external sources for accommodation option, and agreement/disagreement with statements about suitable accommodation for international students. Independent variables included were demographic and situational factors. Demographic factors were age, gender, and country or region. Situational factors were number of years at the university,

sources of information before arrival in Melbourne, first accommodation in Melbourne, use of the university's housing advisory service, and use of the university's online housing website/database.

The results of the F-tests in Table 4.15 shows that there were no statistically significant relationships between satisfaction with first accommodation, and demographic and situational factors at the 1% level (chosen to minimize, type I errors in the face of many tests). Demographic and situational factors did not impact on the level of satisfaction with respondent's first accommodation of their choice.

All ANOVAs were conducted on the full seven point scale, although some subsequent cross tabulation is reported on collapsed three point scale for clarity.

Table 4.15: ANOVA Analysis of satisfaction with first accommodation against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Demographic factors					
- Age	6.853	4	1.713	0.883	0.477
- Gender	0.208	1	0.208	0.107	0.744
- Region	9.146	4	2.286	1.178	0.324
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	12.516	4	3.129	1.612	0.176
- Sources of information before arrival in Melbourne	21.981	5	4.396	2.265	0.052
- First accommodation in Melbourne	11.174	4	2.793	1.439	0.225
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.109	1	0.109	0.056	0.813
- Used the university's online housing website/database	5.352	1	5.352	2.757	0.099
Residual	230.985	119			

Table 4.16 shows that there were also no statistically significant relationships between satisfaction with current accommodation, and demographic and situational factors at the 1% level. The results suggested that demographic and situational factors did not have any influence on the level of satisfaction with their current accommodation.

Table 4.16: ANOVA Analysis of satisfaction with current accommodation against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	23.065	4	5.766	0.981	0.420
- Gender	4.985	1	4.985	0.848	0.359
- Region	57.790	4	14.447	2.459	0.049
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	74.468	4	18.617	3.169	0.016
- Sources of information before arrival in Melbourne	29.829	5	5.966	1.015	0.412
- First accommodation in Melbourne	77.997	4	19.499	3.319	0.013
- Used the university's housing advisory service	10.641	1	10.641	1.811	0.181
- Used the university's online housing website/database	21.549	1	21.549	3.668	0.058
Residual	699.151	119			

The results suggested that age, gender, and region where respondents came from did not influence the satisfaction with their current accommodation. This indicated that the respondents were homogenous with regard to satisfaction. The results also suggested that number of years they had been students at the university did not affect their satisfaction with their current accommodation. The respondents' first accommodation did not have any impact on satisfaction either. The results also demonstrated the same outcome with the available sources of information when they were in their home country: source did not influence their opinion on this issue. Further more, the findings indicated that no matter whether the respondents did use or did not use the housing services provided by the university, the satisfaction with their current accommodation were not affected by those sources. On most matters, the respondents can be seen as one group, international students, undifferentiated by gender, age, or region.

The relationship between the usefulness of various sources used for information of accommodation options against demographic and situational factors were also investigated. Dependent variables included in various sources were internet, family or friends, newspaper, real estate agents, the university's notice board, the university's housing website/database, the university's housing advisory service, and other. The F-test results at the 1% level showed that there was a statistical

significant relationship between region of respondents, and the usefulness of internet as an information source (F = 6.235, Sig. = 0.000). See Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of internet as an information source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	2.919	4	0.730	0.600	0.664
- Gender	0.053	1	0.053	0.044	0.835
- Region	30.321	4	7.580	6.235	0.000
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	7.328	4	1.832	1.507	0.209
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	17.511	4	4.378	3.601	0.010
- First accommodation in Melbourne	4.554	4	1.139	0.937	0.448
- Used the university's housing advisory service	1.088	1	1.088	0.895	0.347
- Used the university's online housing website	2.419	1	2.419	1.989	0.163
Residual	89.966	74			

Notably, there are differences in how useful the internet was across region of origin. The results suggested that in some countries people may find the internet easier to use than in other countries. It also might be harder to access the internet in some regions than others.

Most of the respondents were satisfied with the usefulness of the internet. However, respondents from the South Asia region were the most dissatisfied with the internet (Table 4.18).

Table 4.18: A cross tabulation analysis between usefulness of internet as an information source of accommodation against country or region

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
East Asia	5%	5%	90%
South East Asia	2%	4%	94%
South Asia	21%	21%	59%
West Asia	0%	0%	100%
Other	5%	9%	86%

With all other dependent variables measuring usefulness of sources of information, all the F-tests against demographic and situational factors were not significant at the 1% level. The results can be found in Appendix D.

Eight statements were provided to respondents regarding suitable accommodation for international students. The extent of agreement/disagreement with the statements against demographic and situational factors was analyzed. The results indicated that there were two statements that showed a statistically significant relationship with demographic and situational factors. The first statement was "Melbourne has an adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from". The F-test results at the 1% level showed that there was a statistical significant relationship between region of respondents, and the statement (see Table 4.19)

Table 4.19: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with statement 'Melbourne has an adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Demographic factors					
- Age	16.480	4	4.120	1.793	0.135
- Gender	0.431	1	0.431	0.188	0.666
- Region	37.858	4	9.465	4.118	0.004
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	10.684	4	2.671	1.162	0.331
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	4.025	5	0.805	0.350	0.881
- First accommodation in Melbourne	9.499	4	2.375	1.033	0.393
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.740	1	0.740	0.322	0.571
- Used the university's online housing website	0.077	1	0.077	0.034	0.855
Residual	273.489	119			

A cross tabulation analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement that 'Melbourne has adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from' in Table 4.20 shows that the respondents from the South Asia region disagree with the statement the most (86%). Respondents from other regions were more likely to agree.

Table 4.20: A crosstabulation analysis of agreement/disagreement with the statement that 'Melbourne has adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from' and country or region

	Disagree	**Neutral**	**Agree**
South Asia	86%	6%	8%
West Asia	67%	0%	33%
East Asia	51%	22%	27%
South East Asia	46%	21%	33%
Other	58%	15%	27%

The second statement with a significant result was "My accommodation experience in Melbourne influences my opinion of the university". The results in Table 4.21 shows a statistical significance between use of the university's online housing website, and the statement (F = 7.478, Sig. = 0.007). This relationship was investigated further in cross tabulation analysis section.

Table 4.21: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'My accommodation experience in Melbourne influences my opinion of the university' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Demographic factors					
- Age	23.444	4	5.861	2.440	0.051
- Gender	15.874	1	15.874	6.607	0.011
- Region	6.870	4	1.718	0.715	0.583
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	16.849	4	4.212	1.753	0.143
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	6.875	5	1.375	0.572	0.721
- First accommodation in Melbourne	22.167	4	5.542	2.307	0.062
- Used the university's housing advisory service	15.083	1	15.083	6.278	0.014
- Used the university's online housing website	17.965	1	17.965	7.478	0.007
Residual	285.882	119			

The results suggested that age, gender, and region where respondents came from did not influence their opinion of the statement. The findings showed that number of years they had been students at the university did not influence their opinion of the university. In addition, the respondents' first accommodation did not have any impact on their opinion of the statement either. The results also demonstrated the

same outcome with the available sources of information when they were overseas. The findings also indicated that no matter whether the respondents did or did not use the housing advisory services provided by the university, their opinion of the university was not influenced.

The results showed that using the university's online housing website did influence respondents' opinion of the university.

The results in Table 4.22 suggested that the use of the online housing database which was provided by the university did have an affect on whether respondent's accommodation experience influenced their opinion of the university. But there is little difference between those who Agree or Disagree, and this finding has little real importance.

Table 4.22: A cross tabulation analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'My accommodation experience in Melbourne influences my opinion of the university' and use of online housing database

	Influence opinion of the university		
Use of online database	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**
Yes	42%	16%	42%
No	37%	28%	35%

Regarding agreement/disagreement with the other six statements, for each agreement/disagreement analysis, all the F-tests by demographic and situational factors were not significant at the 1% level. The results can be found in Appendix D.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

The findings from the online survey suggested that the onshore international students were an homogenous group in relation to accommodation issues during the time of study. The respondents' age, gender, and region of origin did not influence the preferences of their first accommodation, satisfaction with the first accommodation, and satisfaction with their current accommodation. The results showed that international students from different regions did not need or require

different kinds of accommodation. Survey responses were from students whose home countries were in five geographical and cultural regions. The findings show that respondents had similar attitudes and opinions about their accommodation experience regardless of region of origin.

In conclusion, international students in Melbourne have faced many bad experiences in their accommodation. However, they seemed to cope and to adapt well after they have been living in the city for sometime. They prepared themselves for accommodation challenges by searching for information from various sources. Family, friends, and relatives were the most preferred source. Most respondents were satisfied with the choice of their first accommodation. However, they then looked for accommodation that might suit their needs better even though there were satisfied with their current accommodation. Most of them managed to find what they were looking for.

Respondents nevertheless had some general concerns about accommodation for international students. They suggested that Melbourne does not have a wide enough range of accommodation for international students. They have problems finding suitable accommodation for their needs. Rental cost was reported to be their most common concern. Most respondents suggested that accommodations for international students were too expensive. Despite all the problems, concerns, and bad experiences with accommodation, respondents suggested that they viewed their accommodation experience in Melbourne as a positive one. The results of study suggested that half of respondents indicated that their accommodation experience have influenced their opinion of the university. However, the other half of respondents claimed that their accommodation experience had not influenced their opinion about the university.

There were no significant differences on various measures of attitudes, satisfaction, preferences, and opinions between genders or age groups, and only a few between student origins (mainly around the use of the internet by South Asia). In terms of finding somewhere to live and dealing with accommodation issues, international students are predominantly a homogenous group. There

appears to be little need for the housing service to be tailored to demographic variables (age, gender, and region of origin).

Chapter 5: Interview Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from in-depth interviews with 30 international students. The interview data provides deeper understanding than that obtained from the online survey, of the accommodation situations and experiences of international students. These findings therefore contribute significantly to the central task of this thesis: exploring and explaining the dynamic interplay between the internal and external resources of self-leadership, university provided support, and self-efficacy when accounting for the varying approaches that international students take to manage their accommodation challenges.

In order to get a better picture of and to more deeply understand international students and the way they manage their accommodation challenges, the chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents interview findings regarding the accommodation experiences of international students. In Part 2, the opinions of international students towards the university and its housing support service are presented.

To handle data management, the researcher first went through interview transcriptions, identified the main themes that appeared in the data and linked chunks of data that represented a given idea or concept to its relevant theme. The interview data of each part was compiled under theme headings. The data assigned to each theme was then categorised into sub-themes.

A large selection of excerpts from the transcripts has been included, in order to illustrate the depth and colour of the responses to the questions and to add a richness of ethnographic detail to assist in understanding the issues being discussed. Many of the responses have been presented verbatim to conserve the quality and richness of the information in the reporting process, and to provide a more immediate, hermeneutic insight into the interviewees' experiences than if their comments were paraphrased and summarised. Each quotation has been

followed by a letter and number code in brackets (for example s*1*, *s2, s3* and so on) which refers to the interviewee who made the comment. Table 5.1 presents brief information about the interviewees and the in-depth interviews.

Table 5.1: Brief information about the in-depth interviews

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Length of stay	Date of interview	Length of interview
s1	Female	29	Columbia	1 yr 5 mths	21-Jul-09	1 hr 05 mins
s2	Female	25	Thailand	1 yr	21-Jul-09	1 hr 10 mins
s3	Male	21	Taiwan	1 yr 2 mths	22-Jul-09	1 hr 15 mins
s4	Male	23	India	6 mths	22-Jul-09	1 hr 05 mins
s5	Male	24	Thailand	10 mths	22-Jul-09	1 hr 20 mins
s6	Male	23	Thailand	5 mths	22-Jul-09	1 hr 10 mins
s7	Male	26	Malaysia	1 yr 6 mths	24-Jul-09	1 hr 15 mins
s8	Male	29	India	1 yr 3 mths	24-Jul-09	1 hr 10 mins
s9	Male	28	Thailand	1 yr 8 mths	24-Jul-09	1 hr 05 mins
s10	Female	25	Vietnam	1 yrs 7 mths	25-Jul-09	1 hr 15 mins
s11	Female	27	Bangladesh	7 mths	28-Jul-09	1 hr 10 mins
s12	Male	31	Malaysia	2 yrs 3 mths	31-Jul-09	1 hr 05 mins
s13	Male	25	China	1 yr 5 mths	3-Aug-09	1 hr 10 mins
s14	Female	26	Germany	8 mths	3-Aug-09	40 mins
s15	Female	29	Bangladesh	1 yr 6 mths	3-Aug-09	1 hr 20 mins
s16	Male	30	Columbia	2 yrs 2 mths	4-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins
s17	Female	24	Vietnam	1 yr 5 mths	4-Aug-09	1 hr 10 mins
s18	Female	28	Mexico	7 mths	4-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins
s19	Male	29	France	1 yr 8 mths	5-Aug-09	1 hr 10 mins
s20	Male	27	India	11 mths	5-Aug-09	1 hr 05 mins
s21	Male	26	Vietnam	1 yr 3 mths	5-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins
s22	Male	24	Iran	8 mths	6-Aug-09	1 hr 10 mins
s23	Female	24	Indonesia	5 mths	6-Aug-09	1 hr 05 mins
s24	Female	26	China	1 yr 4 mths	6-Aug-09	45 mins
s25	Male	28	South Korea	1 yr 3 mths	7-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins
s26	Male	23	Pakistan	10 mths	7-Aug-09	45 mins
s27	Female	25	Vietnam	1 yr 4 mths	7-Aug-09	1 hr 05 mins
s28	Female	28	Malaysia	1 yr 10 mths	10-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins
s29	Female	26	Malaysia	6 mths	10-Aug-09	1 hr 10 mins
s30	Female	27	China	1 yr 2 mths	10-Aug-09	1 hr 15 mins

The table shows that there are 16 males and 14 females who volunteered to share their direct experiences with the researcher. All respondents are older in age than 20. Respondents are from 15 countries of origin. The countries of origin included in the interviews are Bangladesh (2), China (3), Columbia (2), France (1), Germany (1), India (3), Indonesia (1), Iran (1), Malaysia (4), Mexico (1), Pakistan (1), South Korea (1), Taiwan (1), Thailand (4) and Vietnam (4). Table 5.1 also shows the date on which each interview was conducted, the length of the

interview, and the period of time the interviewees had been living in Melbourne. Further details of the interviewees have not been provided, for reasons of confidentiality.

This chapter thus provides empirical substance for the analysis which will be provided in Chapter 6, and for the conclusion in Chapter 7.

5.2 Self-leadership and self-efficacy levels of international students

The explanatory framework constructed by the researcher at the conclusion of chapter two, includes an emphasis on the probable importance of an individual's levels of self-efficacy and self-leadership. In particular, the explanatory framework proposes that *self-leadership and university provided support combine to contribute to self-efficacy, which in turn has a positive impact upon a student's management of accommodation challenges.* Consequently, before the in-depth interviews were conducted, the researcher made use of self-leadership and self-efficacy measurement instruments taken from Houghton and Neck (2002); and Chen, Gully and Eden (2001). Both instruments required students to score themselves according to the way they see themselves. The researcher added the scores of all questions together and arrived at a total score on each test. By comparing the difference between total scores of each interviewee, the researcher was able to see who achieved higher and/or lower scores, and then to relate that finding to individual attitudes and behaviours (as revealed during the in-depth interviews) in coping with accommodation challenges.

The scores in table 5.2 below indicate high/low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. The student with the highest score was ranked first which means he/she has the highest self-leadership and/or self-efficacy level. The lower score was ranked second, third, fourth and so on. The student who received the lowest score was ranked 30. Table 5.2 presents scores and ranks of students' self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Table 5.2: Self-leadership and self-efficacy scores and ranks

Interviewee	Self-Leadership (SL)		Self-Efficacy (SE)	
	From total score of 175	Rank	From total score of 48	Rank
High SL - High SE				
s27	171	1	47	1
s15	171	1	39	13
s4	163	4	42	6
s10	158	5	44	3
s16	154	6	45	2
s20	153	7	41	8
s7	151	8	39	13
s5	147	10	44	3
s22	147	10	39	13
s26	141	14	39	13
High SL - Low SE				
s29	164	3	38	17
s28	149	9	36	21
s17	145	12	36	21
s24	144	13	36	21
s1	140	15	35	24
Low SL - High SE				
s11	137	17	40	11
s6	135	18	42	6
s8	134	20	43	5
s9	129	22	41	8
s19	117	26	40	11
s14	116	28	41	8
Low SL - Low SE				
s23	139	16	38	17
s3	135	18	31	29
s2	130	21	38	17
s21	129	22	35	24
s12	128	24	34	28
s13	122	25	37	20
s25	117	26	35	24
s18	109	29	35	24
s30	106	30	24	30

The table divides students into four groups in terms of self-leadership and self-efficacy rank. First, a group of students who perceive themselves as high self-leaders and self-efficacious. Second, a group of students who see themselves as high self-leaders but low self-efficacious. Third, a group of students who have low self-leadership but high self-efficacy levels. Last, a group of students who have low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

It is important to note that this research project assumed that students who perceive themselves as high self-leaders and high self-efficacious would manage their accommodation challenges more effectively than those who express themselves at lower self-leadership and self-efficacy levels. As Manz (1986) suggested, self-leaders lead themselves toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing themselves to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating. Bandura (1997) explained that self-efficacious people believe in their capabilities to perform a specific action required to attain a desired outcome. Therefore students with higher self-leadership and self-efficacy levels were expected to manage accommodation challenges more successfully.

Now that interview data has been obtained and can be compared and contrasted with the self-efficacy and self-leadership scores listed in table 5.2 above, the researcher is in a position to discover whether her interview data corresponds with the theoretically and empirically informed explanatory framework constructed in chapter two. That analysis will be undertaken partly in this chapter, and more thoroughly in the next.

The ways in which international students prepared for and arranged their accommodation prior to arrival will now be presented in Part 1 of this chapter.

Part 1: International Students' Accommodation Experiences

5.3 Arranging accommodation prior to arrival

The question asked of the interviewees was: *What preparations did you make for accommodation before arriving in Melbourne?*

Within the interview data, we can see that all respondents addressed their concerns about their accommodation situation when they realised that the university would not accommodate them. Therefore, all of them planned and constructed ways to arrange accommodation before their arrival. Thirteen respondents received help and support from personal contacts. Six students used the Internet to help in finding accommodation. Six respondents had

accommodation arranged through educational agents. Five students planned to stay at temporary accommodation on their arrival.

Table 5.3 presents the sources used by international students in helping to arrange accommodation prior to arrival, organised into the four combinations of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Table 5.3: Sources used in arranging accommodation prior to arrival

Interviewee	SL -Rank	SE - Rank	Arrange accm through
High SL - High SE			
s27	1	1	contact
s15	1	13	contact
s4	4	6	contact
s10	5	3	agent
s16	6	2	agent
s20	7	8	contact
s7	8	13	contact
s5	10	3	contact
s22	10	13	plan only
s26	14	13	internet
High SL - Low SE			
s29	3	17	contact
s28	9	21	plan only
s17	12	21	agent
s24	13	21	internet
s1	15	24	contact
Low SL - High SE			
s8	20	5	internet
s6	18	6	agent
s9	22	8	plan only
s14	28	8	internet
s11	17	11	contact
s19	26	11	agent
Low SL - Low SE			
s23	16	17	contact
s3	18	29	plan only
s2	21	17	contact
s21	22	24	plan only
s12	24	28	contact
s13	25	20	agent
s25	26	24	internet
s18	29	24	internet
s30	30	30	contact

5.3.1 Arranging accommodation through personal contacts

Seeking help and support from friends was a key success factor in pre-arrival accommodation planning for seven students. Being accommodated by friends helped ease worries and concerns for student about this issue. Living with friends allowed students to adjust and adapt into their new living environment more comfortably. It helped them prepare in moving to more permanent accommodation.

> *"I stayed with a friend for a month" (s1)*
>
> *"My best friend accommodated me" (s2)*
>
> *"I stayed with a friend for a short while" (s4)*
>
> *"I contacted a friend. So when I came here I stayed with her" (s15)*
>
> *"A friend of mine was already living here so I just joined him" (s20)*
>
> *"I got a friend here. I stayed with her for awhile" (s23)*
>
> *"My friends have been here before me. So they got a room for me" (s30)*

To have a family already living in Melbourne also helped some students in terms of saving time and energy on searching, looking and planning for accommodation.

> *"My husband has been living here before me. So he arranged everything for me" (s11)*
>
> *"At that time my girlfriend was a student here so I just came and lived with her" (s12)*

Four interviewees sought help and support through contacts' contacts. In other words, developing social connections generated positive outcomes in accommodation arrangements.

> *"I know one person in my country and he suggested me to a person that he knows. The man offers something like a room rental" (s5)*
>
> *"My friend suggested me to contact his brother. He arranged everything for me" (s7)*

"One of my friends got a friend here and he asked that guy to prepare a place for me" (s27)

"My friend recommended me to her friend. I contacted her and she found a student accommodation for me" (s29)

5.3.2 Arranging accommodation through the Internet

The Internet was found to be useful in arranging accommodation by six interviewees. The students went online, gathered information and studied their accommodation options. These students chose the type of accommodation that matched their preferences and needs. Then they made contacts and corresponded with the chosen accommodation providers until they managed to get the accommodation they wanted.

"I checked out the university's website. I was focusing on a homestay. So I listed all of the available homestays and started sending them emails. And I got myself a homestay" (s8)

"I looked on different websites and I booked a hostel for the first few days" (s14)

"I browsed some websites for backpackers because I just wanted something temporary" (s18)

"I browsed Internet. I contacted accommodation providers on the community website. I got a share apartment from there" (s24)

Being given advice about where to find the right source helped some students overcome their uncertainties about accommodation:

"One of my friends advised me a backpacker website. I stayed there for one and a half week" (s25)

"My friend gave me a website name. So I went and searched. I made some contacts and I got a room" (s26)

5.3.3 Arranging accommodation through agents

Six interviewees received help from educational agents. They informed agents and consulted them about their needs. Then their agents helped in solving the problems.

"The staff of the university who recruited me from Vietnam booked a hotel for me" (s10)

"We talked with the agent. They found a homestay for us" (s16)

"The agent arranged a homestay for me" (s17)

Some respondents were specific about their accommodation preferences when they stated their requirements.

"I had a preference to stay with a homestay. I applied through the agent and they arranged for me" (s6)

"I asked the agent to find a homestay for me" (s13)

"I applied for a homestay through an English school. This school is like an organisation to send students to overseas" (s19)

5.3.4 Planning to stay in temporary accommodation

A number of students (5/30) had a long-term plan to handle accommodation issues but chose not to arrange any accommodation prior to their arrival. Instead, they preferred to stay in a temporary accommodation initially.

"I wanted to make sure that I would get a nice accommodation. So when I came here I stayed in the hostel" (s3)

"I decided to leave without pre-booking any accommodation. When I arrived I stayed at a backpacker place" (s9)

"I wanted to see everything with my own eyes before I made any decision. So I chose to stay at a backpacker when I arrived" (s21)

"I didn't want to get anything organise before I got here. So I stayed in a backpacker when I first arrived" (s22)

On the other hand, travelling with a family left one student no choice but to stay in temporary accommodation before trying to settle down.

"It's too hard to get a permanent accommodation for the whole family while I was in overseas. So the only choice I had was a hotel" (s28)

Somewhat surprisingly, the interview data suggested that students with low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were able to manage accommodation challenges prior to arrival as effectively as high self-leaders and high self-efficacious students. The students with low self-leadership and self-efficacy levels used similar strategies and approaches to those with higher levels when arranging accommodation. Regardless of SL and SE levels, students made use of sources and support that was available to them. They organised their accommodation through personal contacts, educational agents and the Internet. Some of them chose to stay in temporary accommodation on their arrival rather than trying to settle down at once. This interview data shows that students with low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy are just as capable of producing a suitable outcome as students with high self-leadership and self-efficacy levels when the task concerns accommodation.

Contrary to expectations raised by the explanatory framework, the interview data indicated that there seems to be no link between a student's level of self-leadership and self-efficacy and the ways in which they arranged their accommodation prior to arrival. The data revealed that all students used similar methods and strategies to get their accommodation arranged simply because it was a required task. Without arranging accommodation effectively, students would not have a place to stay on their arrival. Therefore the data suggested that external necessity was a more important determinant of behaviour than self-leadership or self-efficacy.

The data further suggested that social support played an important role in helping 85 per cent of students arrange accommodation. Ryan, Solberg and Brown (1996) commented that family and social support systems offer individuals a constant and secure base by providing imperative sources of confidence that ultimately serve to reduce or buffer stress (Knoll et al. 2009).

In the next section of this chapter, international students' negative experiences with accommodation and the ways they managed those difficulties are presented. This next section describes the problems and the issues faced by international students, and also presents the methods and strategies used by students when encountering

those problems. The researcher considers that the ethnographic detail and depth provided in this next section of the chapter makes a significant contribution to knowledge about the real challenges and hardships encountered by international students when it comes to their accommodation.

5.4 Managing accommodation difficulties and challenges

The questions asked of the interviewees were:

- *Have you had any bad experiences with student accommodation in Melbourne – if so, can you please tell me about what happened?*

- *What did you do to try and improve the situation? How successful were you in trying to improve things?*

In this study the way that students manage their challenges reflects how they make use of internal and external resources. The internal resources focused on in this study were the individual levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. The external resource focused on in this study was social support provided primarily by the university housing advisory service, and secondarily by friends and family. When students tried to address their problems and challenges, they made use of both resources. The explanatory framework for this thesis, constructed from the well-founded theory and the attendant empirical studies reviewed in chapter two, proposed that students who scored higher in self-leadership and self-efficacy measurement tests would manage their accommodation difficulties and problems more effectively than those students who scored less well in self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Table 5.4 shows a summary of the types of negative accommodation situations experienced by international students, their coping strategies and coping outcomes in relation to the ranking of their self-leadership and self-efficacy levels. The table reveals that negative accommodation experiences happened to most interviewees (27/30) regardless of their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. This is a surprising finding. The researcher has had to reflect on what this finding suggests about the explanatory value of the framework constructed in chapter two. Could it be that external imperatives are so dominant in accommodation situations,

that resources internal to the individual are insignificant? That question will be taken up in the following chapter. For the moment, the researcher wants to acknowledge that the findings summarised in this table were not expected, and that she initially found them both confounding and confronting.

Table 5.4: Bad accommodation experiences, coping strategies and coping outcomes

Interviewee	SL - Rank	SE - Rank	Bad experience	Coping strategy	Outcome
High SL - High SE					
s27	1	1	being attacked	seek help	stay on
s15	1	13	being attacked	adjust & adapt	stay on
s4	4	6	finding accm	keep looking	find new accm
s10	5	3	difficult people	avoid/ignore	move out
s16	6	2	finding accm	find new accm	move out
s20	7	8	difficult people	confrontation	move out
s7	8	13	misled & lied to	take accm	move out
s5	10	3	being attacked	find new accm	move out
s22	10	13	expensive accm	plan to move out	will move out
s26	14	13	no	n/a	n/a
High SL - Low SE					
s29	3	17	finding accm	keep looking	find new accm
s28	9	21	finding accm	keep looking	find new accm
s17	12	21	finding accm	keep looking	find new accm
s24	13	21	misled & lied to	take accm	move out
s1	15	24	expensive accm	find new accm	move out
Low SL - High SE					
s8	20	5	misled & lied to	take accm	move out
s6	18	6	misled & lied to	positive thoughts	stay on
s9	22	8	difficult people	confrontation	stay on
s14	28	8	no	n/a	n/a
s11	17	11	finding accm	keep looking	still looking
s19	26	11	difficult people	confrontation	stay on
Low SL - Low SE					
s23	16	17	no	n/a	n/a
s3	18	29	expensive accm	accept condition	stay on
s2	21	17	difficult people	understand/ignore	move out
s21	22	24	difficult people	understand/ignore	move out
s12	24	28	expensive accm	accept condition	stay on
s13	25	20	misled & lied to	take accm	move out
s25	26	24	expensive accm	plan to move out	will move out
s18	29	24	difficult people	find new accm	move out
s30	30	30	finding accm	find new accm	move out

The key types of negative accommodation situations experienced by international students were: being attacked (3/27), living with difficult people (7/27), being misled and lied to (5/27), living in overly expensive accommodation (5/27) and

facing difficulties in finding accommodation (7/27). Table 5.4 also lists the coping strategies used by interviewees in response to their problems and difficulties. The outcomes of interviewee coping strategies are shown on the last row of the table.

5.4.1 Being attacked

Three international students experienced being attacked. The attacks were more psychological than physical. These experiences, however, horrified and terrified the students. According to the stress model constructed by Lovallo (2005) and discussed in chapter two of this thesis, environmental events that perceived as threatening lead to significant psychological and biological consequences some of which of course can be long lasting. Being attacked can have long-lasting negative effects. Although statistically there are only a small number of international students who are attacked in local accommodation, experientially this is of great consequence to the individual. And that is a crucial difference between reading the data in a qualitative way and reading the data in a quantitative way.

One student recalled an incident when she was renting a house with two other female friends. A few months after she moved in, one friend brought her husband into the house without informing the others. The interviewee felt uncomfortable with the new living arrangements. But a serious problem only occurred when the couple refused to share utilities expenses per person rather than per room. When the interviewee was alone in her bedroom:

> "*The husband opened my bedroom's door, he didn't even knock. He pointed at me and he said 'you're behaving like this… you'll see, you'll see'. His action was quite aggressive and violent. I couldn't sleep at all for the whole night because I was really scared that he might hurt me. When I went to uni I cried. I cried a lot" (s15)*

The student felt upset, scared, and sad after the attack. The living environment became strained and unpleasant. But there was nothing she could do to improve the situation. Accepting and adjusting to the new living atmosphere was her coping strategy. And her psychological condition did eventually improve:

"There was not much we can do because they didn't want to talk to us. The atmosphere inside the house was terrible. The situation was bad for 3 months. The first few weeks were really bad but then eventually it got better. And later they moved out" (s15)

Table 5.4 shows that s15 had the highest level of self-leadership and an average level of self-efficacy; so the researcher expected that this interviewee would have adopted achieving behaviour; but her coping strategy was passive rather than active. This is because she was stuck with a rental contract. So in this case, the external restrictions upon action were more important than her internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Similarly another student was verbally threatened within her accommodation. The student was living in shared accommodation. And there was one couple who always created problems. They made a lot of noise. They watched movies till very late at night. They always had friends over. They kicked and slammed doors. And one night, some housemates asked them to keep their noises down. The couple was furious. Then they created a big problem:

"They're really offended and very angry. They called their Australian/Italian friend into the house. The man said to us that you intimidated my friends. Who do you think you are? Do you know who are you dealing with? Be careful! You're in my country and they're under my protection" (s27)

The student was scared and terrified by the experience. She was really worried about her safety. So she called and informed the landlord about the frightening incident. Her fear decreased after receiving protection from the landlord:

"We reported to the landlord and the landlord gave them 1 month notice to move out. After that we just ignored them the whole time. After they moved out we were so happy" (s27)

In this case, the internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy – and achieving behaviour - only came into play because an external source of action was available. This was not the case for s15.

One student was assaulted on the street. Even though the incident did not occur within the accommodation, the student commented that the attack happened because of the location of his accommodation. He spent about five hours travelling between the university and his accommodation. And one night he faced frightening abuse:

> *"There were 5 kids attacked me while I was waiting for a bus one night. They yelled at me and threw some bottles at me. I was quite scared. But luckily they didn't hurt me" (s5)*

After realising the risk and danger of travelling at night, the student moved into accommodation that was closer to the university. He explained that the bad experience occurred because of his lack of knowledge about the city when he first arrived:

> *"I moved to an apartment. It takes 20 minutes walk to get to uni. Now I realise that my previous accommodation's too far from the city. But it's the best for me at that time because I didn't know anything" (s5)*

In coping with the issue, s5 who had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy took an active, achieving approach. He made use of both external alternatives and his internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. So in this case, external resources were just as important as the internal resources of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

5.4.2 Living with difficult people

Living in disturbing environments contributed to bad accommodation experiences for seven of the international students who were interviewed. Evans-Martin (2007) suggested that a stressful situation is often accompanied by negative emotions such as fear, anger, or embarrassment. In relation to student academic performance, stress can have a negative effect (Yoong et al. 1999).

Two students explained that living in accommodation where a landlady tried to control everything made them feel uncomfortable, annoyed, frustrated, irritated

and unhappy. They commented that their landladies' purpose in offering accommodation was running a business for profit:

> *"She didn't turn on heater in winter. She always said she's not cold. She asked me to wear more cloths if I feel cold. She always checked how much time I spent in a shower, in the kitchen and even in the house" (s2)*

> *"The landlady is somehow bitchy. She worried about the bills. She complained a lot. Within 4 months she increased rent 2 times. She told everybody what to do and what not to do. She's so crazy" (s21)*

After being monitored and disturbed by calculating and stringy landladies, the students first tried to understand and compromise. But when the landladies repeatedly created issues, the students chose to find better accommodation:

> *"I told her that I understand her concern but asking me not to use heater is too much. She was quiet for a week then she mentioned again. And when she told me she will increase rent. I decided to move out" (s2)*

> *"When she told me the first time that she will increase rent I thought it's not much so it's ok. But then again after 2 months she increased the rent. I started looking for a new place" (s21)*

Table 5.4 shows that both s2 and s21 had low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, which should theoretically produce accepting behaviour. Nevertheless, their coping strategy was achieving, similar to s5 who had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Both students adopted active coping strategies. They made use of the internal resources of self-leadership and self-efficacy and the external resource of alternative accommodation. So in this case, the low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were less important than the external possibilities for action.

One student had a paradoxically negative experience. Her landlord and landlady were too nice and too friendly. The student felt overwhelmed. She explained that she felt there was a lack of privacy and that she was being monitored:

> *"They did involve my privacy. They tried to get involve in my personal life. They always asked personal questions. They always checked on me and questioned me" (s10)*

After being disturbed by those feelings, the student tried to avoid any kind of interaction and communication with the landlord and landlady. Moving out helped her get away from the situation.

> *"I looked for a new accommodation and I moved out. I really could not stand them. They really annoyed me. They annoyed me too much. It's really too much" (s10)*

In this case, the internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy also came into play, but only when an external source of alternative was available. Without an alternative external resource, s10 would have been stuck within accommodation like s15.

Another bad accommodation experience highlighted by the interviewees was noise. Noise caused annoyance, disturbance, frustration, and irritation to three students:

> *"They make noise. They play music. And sometime they have some friends with them so they talk quite loud" (s9)*

> *"Sometimes I have arguments with my housemate about they get really drunk and make noise" (s19)*

> *"A couple of guys used to always listening to loud music until 2-3 o'clock in the morning" (s20)*

These students took a similar approach to each other when dealing with the problem. They talked about their concerns and asked housemates for their understanding and consideration. This approach worked well for s9 and s19 but not for s20. The situation was so bad for s20 that s20 was forced to leave the accommodation:

> *"I talk to them and luckily they understand" (s9)*

> *"I talked to them directly. If they don't like to change then we (the majority of the housemates) asked them to move out" (s19)*

"I tried to talk to them a lot of times but it didn't help. It's almost turned into a fight. That's why I didn't see any point of staying when everything seemed to get from bad to worst" (s20)

In countering the problem, s9 and s19, who both had low levels of self-leadership but high levels of self-efficacy, took an active coping approach. They confronted and talked with their noisy share mates till they managed to resolve the issue. In this case, the internal resources of self-leadership and self-efficacy were crucial. Nevertheless, that approach did not work in s20's case even though s20 had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Instead of resolving the problem, s20's positive actions created a bigger problem. Therefore, s20 did not have any choice but to move to more suitable accommodation.

In another case, living next to a violent neighbour generated a horrifying experience for one student. Security was the student's main concern"

"We were really scared. We were really worried about our safety. He seemed violent and aggressive. He always shouted, screamed, smashed the wall and played very loud music" (s18)

Moving into a better living environment was the student's way of dealing with this issue:

"We started looking for a new accommodation and we moved out" (s18)

In this case, the internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy come into play when an external alternative was available. Without an alternative, the respondent would have been stuck and trapped within his accommodation, regardless of his levels of self-efficacy and self-leadership.

5.4.3 Being misled and lied to

Five international students interviewed for this research were misled and lied to about accommodation. Thus their situations led them toward accepting the conditions of their accommodation. One interviewee explained that he was misled by a friend's friend who helped him find shared accommodation. He was not fully

informed about the kind of living arrangements he was moving to, and when he arrived at the accommodation he was shocked and disappointed:

> *"They put 2 beds next to each other with just a small gap between. My room mate and I had different sleeping time. By the time he woke up, it was my sleeping time. We never talked. I felt very strange and uncomfortable" (s7)*

The student lived in a strange and uncomfortable situation for awhile. He moved out after receiving some suggestions and help from friends.

> *I talked to some friends about my problem and I started looking for an accommodation by myself" (s7)*

One student had a bitter experience living with a local family in homestay. The student imagined that living in homestay would offer a great opportunity to learn, adjust and adapt quickly to the new social and cultural environments. But the experience turned out to be the opposite; he was treated as an unwelcome customer:

> *"I had to share a room with another student. We both paid $280 per week each. There were 2 more students also live in another room. One of her daughters lived in one room with her boyfriend. She lived in one room and another daughter lived in the living room" (s13)*

Receiving discriminatory treatment within a homestay created a bad experience for this interviewee:

> *"About food, she cooked different food for us. Sometimes she just gave us instant noodles and cooked good food for the family" (s13)*

Seeking advice and support from friends helped the student get out of the bad experience:

> *"I felt like they didn't care about me and other students at all. They just care about money. I shared my problems with some friends at uni. They gave me a website name. And I found an accommodation that I like" (s13)*

Similarly another student expected to gain positive experiences from a homestay; but the homestay was not what the interviewee expected:

> *"I imagined that I was going to stay with a complete, perfect family. My homestay is just a single mum with 2 daughters. So she doesn't have time for me. I don't get much chance to practice my English because she's always busy" (s6)*

Instead of accepting negative feelings and thoughts, the interviewee chose to think positively about the accommodation and continued living in there.

> *"At first I felt disappointed and unhappy because it's not what I imagined. But I like my bedroom a lot. The view is really nice. The house stands on a cliff so I get a really nice view" (s6)*

Trusting an accommodation provider who offered a homestay through the university website led to a bad experience for one interviewee. This student thought using a source provided by the university would be safe and secure. Discovering the truth generated a huge disappointment and a real shock to the student:

> *"The house was nothing like the pictures. He sent me some nice pictures of a house. It was not even close. And another issue was he promised that the rent was supposed to be for the house, a warm room and proper food, at least two meals a day. But when I arrived, it's totally different. Because at most he was giving me was one meal per day and the room was so cold" (s8)*

This student tried to talk about the issues with his host but that led to conflict. Eventually, the student kept his distance from the homestay and chose to spend more time outside the accommodation. He left the homestay when he found something better:

> *"At first I tried to discuss the issues with him but he insisted that he had delivered what he promised. Then we started having arguments. After that I just tried to stay at uni as long as possible and spend less time at home. And when I'm at home I just stay in my room. I tried to avoid having any kind of communication with him. And I moved out after I found a new accommodation" (s8)*

Similarly, another interviewee had a bad experience with accommodation found through the Internet. The student communicated with the accommodation providers by e-mails and telephone calls. The problem was only revealed when the student arrived at the accommodation:

> *"When I contacted her, she just mentioned that it's a 2 bedroom apartment and we're going to share everything equally. So when I arrived I was so surprised that her room was so big and my room was quite small" (s24)*

The student felt this was unfair and was unhappy with the living conditions. She planned to find better living arrangements after she gained more knowledge about accommodation in Melbourne:

> *"I just tried to ignore the feeling of her being unfair to me about the room. And told myself that just get to know more about Melbourne and get familiar first then I can find a better accommodation" (s24)*

Table 5.4 shows that s7 had a high level of self-leadership and an average level of self-efficacy; s13 had low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy; s8 had a low level of self-leadership and a high level of self-efficacy; and s24 had an average level of self-leadership and a low level of self-efficacy. Early in their stay, those interviewees adopted a coping strategy which was passive rather than active, regardless of their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. That passivity can be explained by the ways in which they were stuck with their initial accommodation choices until they could search for alternatives. They did not have any friends at this early stage of their stay. They did not know where else to go. So in the initial situation, external factors were more important than their internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. However, after they had been living in Melbourne for awhile, their coping strategy became more active. Thus the internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy did come into play when external alternatives became available.

The data further indicated that s6's coping strategy was different from others. He was unhappy with his homestay living environment, but he developed positive thoughts about the views from his bedroom as a means of calming himself and staying in an unsatisfactory situation. The levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy

of s6 were respectively low and high, so it seems that he nevertheless tapped into the self-talk strategy of self-leadership to cope with his unsatisfactory accommodation, rather than seek alternatives, which would have required a higher level of self-efficacy than he possessed.

5.4.4 Living in overly expensive accommodation

Paying high rental fees for a small living space in the city was a problem for five students. This finding was not unexpected because accommodation costs are a major component of international student expenditure (Australian Education International 2005; Back, Davis & Olsen 1997; Humphrey et al. 1997). Further, Fincher et al. (2009) suggested that purpose-built housing in the city area is often poorly designed and expensive. Each unit comes with very little space for a single bed and a desk (Newton & Pryor 2006).

Four students complained about paying expensive rent for a limited living space.

> *"The accommodation in the city is very expensive and the space is very very small. It's not a very good living environment to me" (s1)*
>
> *"It's a small place just for myself. It's very expensive, very expensive" (s3)*
>
> *"The price is really expensive for a one small room apartment" (s22)*
>
> *"Living in the city is very convenience but it's expensive for a small space" (s25)*

One student further commented that imposing higher rent was the accommodation providers' common practice.

> *"The rental cost is very high and it keeps increasing" (s12)*

To counter the problem one student chose to find better accommodation outside the city:

> *"I started looking for other options. I found accommodation not far from the city which are less expensive with much more space" (s1)*

Some students planned to find more affordable accommodation:

"I will look for a cheaper place before I finish my contract" (s22)

"I plan to move out when the contact expired. I'll find a cheaper place" (s25)

Two students, however, decided to accept expensive rental fees:

"I want to live in the city so this is what I'm paying for" (s3)

"There is nothing I can do because I prefer to live in the city" (s12)

5.4.5 Facing difficulties in finding accommodation

A small of students (7/30) faced difficulties in finding accommodation. They explained that finding accommodation was not the issue. Instead, finding accommodation that matched their needs and preferences was the issue.

Some students suggested that searching for suitable accommodation had a negative impact on them emotionally and physically. The experience caused disappointment, tiredness, hopeless and exhaustion:

"It's not easy to find an accommodation that suits my need. I need the accommodation that near the university, close to grocery shops, with affordable price and also too with good security system. It took me 6 months to settle down and fully concentrate on my studies" (s4)

"I inspected so many places. But I couldn't find what I was looking for. I just wanted to live in a nice place with an affordable price. It took me 2 months to find this place" (s17)

"It's quite hard and tiring. I inspected a lot of accommodation. Basically I was running around for inspections and tried to get an accommodation that suited my needs" (s28)

"I spent so much time and energy on searching for accommodation. I lost 4 kgs because of running here and there for inspections. I was exhausted. I took me a month to find a suitable accommodation. One tiring month" (s29)

Dedicating time, energy, and being persistent helped the interviewees to resolve the issue:

"Fortunately I found a share accommodation through a website. I first rang them up and asked for an inspection" (s4)

"I found this place which it's not that far from the city. It takes 20 minutes on the tram. I'm now sharing with 2 friends" (s17)

"After so many inspections I knew more about the areas so I only picked the area that I wanted to live in" (s28)

"Basically I had no choice but to keep looking until I found what I was looking for" (s29)

One student complained about not being able to find better accommodation even though she had been spending considerable time and energy on it.

"We have been looking for a better place for more than 2 months and we haven't found it yet" (s11)

This interviewee chose to live in accommodation on monthly basis. She hoped to find better accommodation soon:

"We didn't renew a contract when it expired. So we are now staying there on month by month basis so we can leave this place at anytime we want" (s11)

Encountering a new housing system added more difficulties for international students:

"Looking for a new accommodation is really hard. The way we find accommodation in our country is totally different from here" (s16)

Receiving assistance from a friend helped this interviewee cope with a bad situation:

"We rent a unit from my wife's friend. It's much easier and it's not complicated at all" (s16)

Being a new student prevented one interviewee from accessing suitable accommodation. The situation forced her to accept inadequate accommodation:

"It's hard to sign a contract under my name. So I moved into a share accommodation. The house was really really old. Every furniture was broken. But I had no choice so I stayed there" (s30)

The student moved into a more suitable accommodation after accepting an offer from a friend; once again, we see the importance of social support as a factor additional to the individual student's level of self-leadership and self-efficacy:

"I was lucky. My friend asked me to take her room when she moved out. So I moved to a brand new apartment" (s30)

Difficulties in finding accommodation was a problem for students who had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy (s4, s16); high level of self-leadership and low level of self-efficacy (s17, s28, s29); low level of self-leadership and an average level of self-efficacy (s11); and low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. In spite of their difficulties, and in spite of differences in their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, the coping strategies adopted by all interviewees were active rather than passive. This is because they were forced to keep on looking until they found accommodation that suited their needs and preferences. So the external need for action was more significant than their internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Even s30, who had the lowest levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, managed to find accommodation that suited her preference. In coping with her accommodation issue, s30 took an active approach. She made use of both external sources of alternative accommodation and her internal self-leadership and self-efficacy. So in this case, the external need for action overrode and made irrelevant the low internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

5.4.6 Neutral and positive accommodation experiences

Although the majority of respondents (27/30) had problems with accommodation; some respondents (3/30) had positive experiences. They said:

"I haven't had any bad experiences about accommodation. It didn't take me that long to find this place. I live by myself and I'm happy there" (s14)

"I live in a one fully furnished bedroom studio. It's got everything. I live there alone. And my neighbour don't make any noises" (s23)

"I stay at a student share accommodation. Everyone knows what to do and what not to do. We don't have any problem at all" (s26)

These comments show that s14 and s23 had positive thoughts about their accommodation experiences. This is because they could afford to live on their own in the accommodation of their choice. They did not face issues and/or difficulties with accommodation. Further, they lived next to sensible and considerate neighbours.

Similarly, in s26's case, living with share mates who had a strong sense of responsibility, were reliable, respectful, and considerate created a positive shared living experience. The fact that these three interviewees had positive experiences within accommodation reminds us that external sources such as financial position, living arrangements, living environment and reliable house mates are crucial factors in providing international students with suitable accommodation.

5.5 Arranging accommodation after arrival

The question asked of the interviewees was: *How did you manage to find accommodation that suited your needs and preferences?*

The interview data in the previous section showed that most international students (27/30) had bad accommodation experiences and many of them (20/27) moved or planned to move to new accommodation. Thus this part of the study explores the ways in which international students managed to find accommodation that better suited their needs and preferences. Table 5.5 presents sources used by international students in helping them find suitable accommodation. Sources such as the Internet (13/20), personal contacts (5/20), real estate agents (1/20) and university notice board (1/20) helped students find better accommodation.

Table 5.5: Sources used in finding accommodation after arrival

Interviewee	SL -Rank	SE - Rank	Arrange 1st accm through	Find better accm through
High SL - High SE				
s27	1	1	contact	n/a
s15	1	13	contact	n/a
s4	4	6	contact	internet
s10	5	3	agent	internet
s16	6	2	agent	contact
s20	7	8	contact	internet
s7	8	13	contact	internet
s5	10	3	contact	internet
s22	10	13	plan	notice board
s26	14	13	internet	n/a
High SL - Low SE				
s29	3	17	contact	contact
s28	9	21	plan	internet
s17	12	21	agents	internet
s24	13	21	internet	internet
s1	15	24	contact	estate agent
Low SL - High SE				
s8	20	5	internet	contact
s6	18	6	agent	n/a
s9	22	8	plan	n/a
s14	28	8	internet	n/a
s11	17	11	contact	internet
s19	26	11	agent	n/a
Low SL - Low SE				
s23	16	17	contact	n/a
s3	18	29	plan	n/a
s2	21	17	contact	internet
s21	22	24	plan	contact
s12	24	28	contact	n/a
s13	25	20	agent	internet
s25	26	24	internet	internet
s18	29	24	internet	internet
s30	30	30	contact	contact

The table also shows the sources used by international students to locate their first accommodation.

5.5.1 Internet

13 out of 20 international students used the Internet as a tool for obtaining information and receiving guidance on accommodation and its options. When students found accommodation they liked, they made contacts, requested

appointments, went for inspections, made decision and applied for accommodation. If their application was not accepted then they had to go through all the steps and processes again until they managed to get accommodation that suited their needs and preferences. Some comments from interviewees are as follows:

> *"I looked at many websites then I contacted the landlord" (s2)*
>
> *"I checked on a couple of websites and contacted the agents" (s10)*
>
> *"I searched on the Internet and I asked for inspections" (s28)*

Direct sources of information helped some students to save time and energy:

> *"My friend recommended me a website. I contacted the landlord and then managed to get the house" (s7)*
>
> *"I got a website from my friend. It's a Chinese website. I phoned them to book appointments" (s13)*

5.5.2 Personal contacts

Sharing difficulties and problems with friends and personal contacts helped five students find better accommodation. Personal contacts allow students to shorten the time required for searching and making decisions. Uchino (2004) suggested that having contacts who can provide a person with support can reduce the intensity of the stress response and facilitate coping over the long term. Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) commented that friendship networks serve important psychological functions, which in turn help a sojourner overcome many difficulties.

Three students found that having friends helped them move into more suitable accommodation:

> *"I have a couple of friends. They rent a house and they asked me to joined them" (s21)*
>
> *"I found my current accommodation through a friend because she's staying there" (s29)*

"One of my friends asked me. She was going back and she asked me whether am I interested in moving in" (s30)

Having personal contacts helped one interviewee find better accommodation:

"I found a new accommodation through my homestay's friend. We get to know each other and we become close friends" (s8)

A recommendation from a friend allowed another student find an accommodation directly an owner:

"My wife's friend gave a contact of her friend. So we rent a house from them" (s16)

5.5.3 Real estate agents

Visiting real estate agents in suburban areas helped one student find better living environments.

"I went to the real estate agent. I was very lucky because I applied for a property and I had the property right away" (s1)

5.5.4 University notice board

One student found accommodation through an advertisement on university notice board:

"I checked the notice board at the university. I made some calls. I went for inspections and I got the accommodation" (s22)

The interview data showed that instead of feeling stressed out when facing accommodation difficulties, international students tried to find their own way to suitable accommodation. They made use of all available resources and information. Their sources were Internet, personal contacts, real estate agents and university notice boards. This variety of sources shows that the students' determination together with access to a wide range of information sources helped students to find accommodation that suited their needs and preferences.

Exploring the ways in which international students arranged accommodation before and after arrival, indicates that social and instrumental supports were important in helping students find suitable accommodation. Prior to arrival, most students (70%) relied heavily on personal support sources such as personal contacts and educational agents. After arrival, all students arranged accommodation by themselves through the Internet (65%), personal contacts (25%), real estate agents (5%) and university notice board (5%). This finding indicates that over time, international students developed and improved their skills in managing accommodation.

The next section presents the opinions of international students about the university's housing support program. The interview data reveals the effectiveness of the program for the interviewees.

Part 2: International Students' Opinions of the university and its housing support service

5.6 Opinions of the housing support program

The questions asked of the interviewees were: *Do you know about the housing advisory service at the university? What do you think about the services provided?*

The housing advisory service is a support program provided by the university. The service provides information, advice and assistance on housing options and housing matters. The service helps students locate and choose accommodation that best suits them. The service also offers information on students' legal rights and obligations as a tenant. Students can access the service through visiting the student service centre and/or by browsing the housing website. The website provides information on accommodation and accommodation options. The website also provides an advertising section so accommodation providers can advertise their offerings through the service. Rice (1999) suggested that social support is a major resource for effective coping. Social support can help people cope with stress through indirect or direct actions (Cohen & Wills 1985).

As mentioned earlier, the support program was established to help students. Therefore it is important for this study to understand student opinions and perceptions of the service. Student interviews allow this study to investigate and evaluate the effectiveness of the housing advisory service. This study assumed that once students receive help and support from the service they would feel more in control of, and more able to cope with, accommodation challenges. Table 5.6 presents the overall opinions of international students interviewed as part of this research project, towards the housing support program provided by the university.

Table 5.6: Opinions of housing advisory service

Interviewee	SL - Rank	SE - Rank	Opinion of support service
High SL - High SE			
s27	1	1	never heard
s15	1	13	not fully effective
s4	4	6	not fully effective
s10	5	3	never heard
s16	6	2	never heard
s20	7	8	never heard
s7	8	13	not fully effective
s5	10	3	not fully effective
s22	10	13	useful
s26	14	13	useful
High SL - Low SE			
s29	3	17	never used
s28	9	21	not fully effective
s17	12	21	never heard
s24	13	21	never used
s1	15	24	not fully effective
Low SL - High SE			
s8	20	5	not fully effective
s6	18	6	not fully effective
s9	22	8	useful
s14	28	8	not fully effective
s11	17	11	never heard
s19	26	11	never used
Low SL - Low SE			
s23	16	17	never used
s3	18	29	not fully effective
s2	21	17	useful
s21	22	24	useful
s12	24	28	no comment
s13	25	20	not fully effective
s25	26	24	never used
s18	29	24	not fully effective
s30	30	30	never heard

The table shows that respondents are divided into two groups: first, respondents (17/30) who had some opinions about the housing advisory service; second, respondents (13/30) who had no opinions about the service. Within the first group, five respondents found the service was useful and 12 respondents thought the service was not fully effective. Amongst the second group, six respondents had heard of the service but did not make use of it and seven respondents had never heard of the service.

5.6.1 Useful

The housing advisory service was perceived as helpful and useful by only five respondents. The service was credited with providing information on the university website and through personal assistance:

> *"The database is useful. They provide good information. And the staff are helpful" (s2)*
>
> *"They provide useful information on accommodation details" (s9)*
>
> *"I have checked on the website. It was good in term of general information" (s21)*
>
> *"They are good and they are very helpful" (s22)*
>
> *"The service is really useful. They gave me good advices and great information" (s26)*

5.6.2 Not fully effective

Some respondents found the service was insufficient in meeting students' needs. In their eyes, the commitment levels of the service in providing help and support were not enough:

> *"I don't think they provide sufficient help and support. To me, we still have to deal with all the problems by ourselves" (s3)*
>
> *"Information wise is great but then again students are on their own" (s4)*

The service provided only limited accommodation options for these students to choose from:

"I don't think it works well because they don't have much accommodation options" (s5)

"They don't have enough accommodation sources" (s6)

Some respondents found the information provided on the university website had not been useful and helpful enough compared with public websites:

"I found it's not friendly. Because they have only like linking of web pages and that's all" (s1)

"I have a look on the website I found that they provide limited information" (s13)

"I looked at the website and I didn't get much useful information from there. So to me it's much easier to go to public websites and manage" (s14)

"I checked on the website. I didn't think it's useful" (s15)

"I checked the website but I found that using public website is more useful" (s18)

Difficulties in using the online service created an un-user friendly attitude towards the service:

"I found housing database on Internet but since it required password so I didn't use it" (s28)

Being unable to receive help and assistance personally made students feel negative about the service:

"They were not that helpful because the officer just directed me to the database" (s7)

Having only a small number of staff at the service prevented some students from getting advice and assistance:

"There are only 2 staff that are there to help students and there are thousands of international students here" (s8)

5.6.3 No comments about the service

Having only heard of the name of the service, but knowing no more about it, led six interviewees (s12, s19, s23, s24, s25 and s29) to say they could not comment:

"I know about it. I haven't been using the service" (s19)

"I've heard of the service but I'm not sure what does it offer" (s24)

"I heard about it but I haven't used it" (s25)

The service was not unknown to seven of the interviewees (s10, s11, s16, s17, s20. s27 and s30). They said:

"I haven't heard about this service" (s11)

"I have no idea about the service" (s17)

"I never heard any thing about this service at all" (s30)

The interview data showed that 17 out of 30 respondents had used and had opinions about the university's housing advisory service. Amongst those 17 users, only five found the service was useful. Twelve found the service had not provided sufficient help and support. A large group of interviewees (13/30) had no comments to make about the service. This is because six of the thirteen had heard of the service but never used it, and the other seven did not even know the service existed.

The interview data showed that amongst respondents who had used the service (17/30), 12 of them believed the service had not provided enough help and support. Five of the thirty interviewees thought the service was helpful and useful. This is a finding of great significance, given the importance role that social support can play in ameliorating the negative effects of stress.

In the next section suggestions from international students about how to improve the university's housing advisory service is presented.

5.7 Suggestions to improve housing support program

The question asked of the interviewees was: *What do you think is a better way to provide international students with a satisfactory accommodation support service?*

When students enrol at the university, they enrol for the whole experience - which goes beyond what happens in the lecture theatre. Therefore it is important for the university to provide accommodation support program that are useful and helpful for international students. Thus when the students are satisfied with the university's support, they feel more welcome to the university and to the new city. They feel that they are being looked after and taken care of.

As reported in an earlier section, most students who had used the housing support service were not satisfied with it. The suggestions about improvements that were provided by the interviewees should be useful in helping to improve the support service offered by any university, assuming that universities believe that their responsibility for the experience of international students goes beyond the educational aspect of their stay in the country.

5.7.1 Contact students

Contacting and offering help and support to international students immediately after they are accepted by the university was recommended by eight respondents (s1, s2, s7, s10, s17, s20, s23 and s24). This practice would make students feel welcome, protected, and looked after by the university. Interviewees suggested:

> *"Once students registered in uni they should start contacting students and offer help and support" (s1)*
>
> *"They should contact students and try to assist them as much as possible before they arrive" (s17)*
>
> *"They should contact students as soon as possible. They should ask if they need any help on accommodation issues" (s23)*

5.7.2 Provide more support

Some students suggested that there are a number of ways in which the housing advisory service should improve. This includes providing useful and helpful information:

> *"They should provide all sort of information that related to accommodation issues" (s11)*
>
> *"They should provide and give any and every information on accommodation to all international students" (s12)*
>
> *"They should be an information centre. They should provide all the important information" (s15)*

Adding more reliable and useful links on the website:

> *"They should provide more information on their website. They also should provide more links to private websites" (s13)*
>
> *"They should provide more public websites on their webpage not just what they are having now" (s14)*
>
> *"They need to provide more useful information on the website. They also need to provide more useful links to other websites" (s22)*

Running a workshop to help students settle down properly and faster:

> *"They should provide some kind of programs that help students settle down quicker on this issue" (s21)*
>
> *"They should run a workshop for students on how to find suitable accommodation" (s25)*

Providing personal assistance:

> *"Give advise personally especially to new students. So they can get a chance to ask questions if they have any" (s18)*
>
> *"They should consult and provide help when students have any issues" (s28)*

5.7.3 Provide more accommodation options

Six respondents (s4, s5, s9, s19, s26 and s27) recommended that the service program should provide more information and a wider range of accommodation options, especially affordable accommodation. Some of their comments were:

> *"Try to provide accommodation options as much as possible" (s5)*
>
> *"They should provide more options on accommodation. Not only those expensive accommodations in the city" (s19)*
>
> *"They should provide more contacts and more affordable accommodation options on their website" (s26)*

5.7.4 Increased promotion of the service

Promoting the service was inadequate in five interviewees' opinions (s3, s6, s16, s29 and s30). Promoting the existence and value of the housing advisory service would allow students to at least realise that it exists:

> *"They should promote the program to new coming students and current students" (s16)*
>
> *"They should tell students about this program. They should know that most students must find places to stay" (s30)*

However, imposing rules and regulations on advertisers within the service is crucial. This is because students are more likely to trust and rely on sources that provided by the university, so those sources of accommodation must be genuine and trustworthy:

> *"The university should set some kind of standard or rules to those people who advertise on its website" (s8)*

The next section presents international students' opinions about their responsibilities in regard to managing accommodation challenges.

5.8 Responsibilities of international students for management of their accommodation difficulties

The question asked of the interviewees was: *What kinds of responsibilities do international students have to manage their own accommodation?*

All interviewees believed that international students are responsible for managing their accommodation issues such as making their own living arrangements, being considerate when living with others, following rules and regulations of accommodation, understanding rental contracts and seeking help and advice when they are in need.

5.8.1 Make own living arrangements

Nine respondents considered that preparing, organising, arranging and managing accommodation are international student responsibilities. They also suggested that managing accommodation challenges included knowing about their accommodation preferences, arranging accommodation, managing difficulties and problems and getting prepared and organised to find accommodation is the responsibility of international students. Some of their comments are as follows:

> *"They have to be independent and be responsible on this issue. They should get this organise by themselves" (s12)*
>
> *"They need to try to manage everything by themselves. They should not just wait for help" (s23)*
>
> *"It's their responsibilities to find accommodation that suit them. They should know what's good and what's not good for them" (s29)*

5.8.2 Consideration of others

Being considerate and knowing one's responsibilities are the key responsibilities of those who live in shared accommodation in four interviewees' opinions. Unlike living alone, living in shares accommodation means sharing space, facilities, interacting and communicating with house mates. Interviewees stated that:

"They should watch themselves especially when they live in a share accommodation. Respect people they live with and pay attention to tidiness and cleanliness" (s8)

"Don't be noisy, clean, respect the place, and respect other people. Basically understand the culture of the accommodation" (s18)

5.8.3 Follow rules and regulations

Following accommodation rules and regulations was mentioned as important by seven interviewees. Obeying and following rules and regulations should prevent problems from occurring:

"They've got to study rules and regulations of accommodation. And they've got follow them" (s5)

"They should follow the rules and the regulations. Because there are some certain things that they can and they can't do" (s15)

"Follow rules and regulations. They should know how to behave when living with other people" (s26)

5.8.4 Understanding rental contracts

Seven students commented that entering into a rental contract is a serious matter. Thus it is the students' responsibilities to read, understand and follow every term and condition clearly before agreeing to be bound by legal documents:

"They need to read contract carefully. Stick with conditions on the contract. Don't break any conditions" (s3)

"Students should read contract carefully before they sign it. They should ask for help if they're not sure about anything" (s11)

"Read carefully before you sign anything. They should get all the information from direct sources" (s22)

5.8.5 Seek help, support and advice

To be proactive in communicating about problems, difficulties and bad experiences with other people was seen to be necessary by interviewees. Telling other people about their problems and difficulties would not only help the individual

but would also help other students. Communication also provides more opportunity for students to get help and support:

> *"They should say out and talk about their bad experiences to some friends, relatives, or anyone that they can talk to. So there might be some kind of help available" (s2)*

> *"If they face any kind of problems they should report immediately. By saying out may help them and help future students as well" (s4)*

> *"Don't hesitate to ask questions if they're not sure of. Don't get suffer when they face problems" (s24)*

The interview data showed that all respondents believed international students are responsible for the central issues relating to the management of accommodation challenges. First, students need to arrange accommodation that suits their needs and preferences. Second, they need to know what to do and what not to do when they live with other people. Third, following rules and regulations is a must in living in any type of accommodation. Fourth, students need to clearly understand rental contracts before entering into an agreement. Lastly, they are responsible for seeking help and support when they face difficulties, issues and problems.

In the next section, interviewees' advice and suggestions to new international students about how to prepare for accommodation challenges are presented.

5.9 Suggestions for new international students

The question asked of the interviewees was: *What advice in relation to accommodation would you give to new international students?*

All interviewees had some suggestions and advice for new international students in relation to accommodation. Their recommendations were mainly based upon their experiences. Having gone through bad accommodation experiences themselves, the interviewees were aware of better ways to handle accommodation challenges. Their advice and suggestions could be useful for students who have never encountered any accommodation difficulties before.

5.9.1 Be proactive

Six students suggested that having the initiative to seek information from all available sources, as early as possible, is the key in preparing and handling accommodation challenges. They said:

> *"Be prepared, be proactive, look at websites, try to make some contact and try to get information as much as possible" (s7)*

> *"Prepare and ask questions if they're not sure of anything. Then they should plan and do some studies on this issue before coming here" (s15)*

> *"They should get ahead and look on websites. They should get some ideas and some information before they get here" (s23)*

5.9.2 Seek support from personal contacts

Seeking help, support and advice from personal contacts was seen to be useful by seven interviewees. However if support was not available then students would be advised to be active in getting information and advice from any other source available. Interviewees suggested:

> *"If they know someone here then get them to help that would be much easier. And if they don't have any friends they should ask for some support from the university" (s21)*

> *"Get help from people they know and if they don't have any, internet is a good source" (s25)*

> *"The best thing is they ask from friends that might have contact in here. Do some research on Internet if they can't find any" (s27)*

5.9.3 Arrange temporary accommodation

Eight students suggested that studying and planning constructively are essential in handing accommodation challenge. Not rushing into accommodation but instead arranging temporary accommodation on initial arrival, allows students some time to find genuinely long-term suitable accommodation. These students commented that:

"Arrange accommodation for 2 or 3 weeks and then look around and make a decision" (s1)

"They should get a place to stay for a short time. They also should start searching for accommodation before they come here" (s20)

"They should try to arrange accommodation before they come here. Try to find information and do their homework" (s26)

5.9.4 Know accommodation preference

Students are advised to choose accommodation that suits their needs and preferences. Thus they need to study and evaluate their choice of accommodation options carefully before they make a decision:

"Every accommodation option has its own advantages and disadvantages. You need to choose what suits you most" (s2)

"You need to think about what kind of accommodation suit you best. Think carefully about your choice and be prepared" (s17)

"They should study on accommodation options before they arrive. They should know what would be good for them" (s18)

Living in unsuitable accommodation can have a negative impact on academic performance:

"They need to understand that there is an opportunity cost involved. So if they don't put themself in a good accommodation it will affect their studies badly" (s11)

Living in shares accommodation can help ease financial problems; but this living arrangement has its costs.

"Be aware that it's not easy to live in a share accommodation if they have no experience before. Because if they are unlucky then there will be lots of problems" (s6)

"Sharing accommodation really helps in term of rental saving but they might face some problems. They should follow rules and instructions" (s30)

Students also suggested being wise and realistic in choosing accommodation:

"Be realistic. They cannot go for cheap accommodation and expect everything to be perfect" (s16)

"They need to be prepared, the earlier the better. They should also aware of cheap accommodation" (s29)

Private rental requires signing a legal contract. So reading and understanding every single term and condition before signing a contract is crucial:

"Contract! They need to read very carefully before they sign a contract" (s3)

The next section presents interviewees' opinions of the university in relation to their accommodation experiences in Melbourne.

5.10 Students opinion of the university following accommodation difficulties

The question asked of the interviewees was: *In what ways has your accommodation experience in Melbourne influenced your opinion of the university?*

As section 5.4 revealed, most international students (27/30) faced problems, difficulties and issues with their accommodation. As a result, interviewees had to manage or overcome those challenges. One of the points made in Chapter One is that international education is a business, and like any business, marketing issues matter to universities. It is therefore appropriate for this study to inquire into the impact that negative accommodation experiences have on the opinions that international students come to form about the university at which they studied. Table 5.7 presents the opinions of international students towards the university after they had been living and studying in Melbourne for some time.

Table 5.7: International students' opinions of the university

Interviewee	SL - Rank	SE - Rank	Bad experience	Negative opinion of the university
High SL - High SE				
s27	1	1	being attacked	no
s15	1	13	being attacked	needs improvement
s4	4	6	finding accm	yes
s10	5	3	difficult people	yes
s16	6	2	finding accm	needs improvement
s20	7	8	difficult people	no
s7	8	13	misled & lied to	needs improvement
s5	10	3	being attacked	no
s22	10	13	expensive accm	yes
s26	14	13	no	no
High SL - Low SE				
s29	3	17	finding accm	yes
s28	9	21	finding accm	needs improvement
s17	12	21	finding accm	needs improvement
s24	13	21	misled & lied to	yes
s1	15	24	expensive accm	no
Low SL - High SE				
s8	20	5	misled & lied to	yes
s6	18	6	misled & lied to	no
s9	22	8	difficult people	needs improvement
s14	28	8	no	no
s11	17	11	finding accm	needs improvement
s19	26	11	difficult people	no
Low SL - Low SE				
s23	16	17	no	no
s3	18	29	expensive accm	needs improvement
s2	21	17	difficult people	yes
s21	22	24	difficult people	no
s12	24	28	expensive accm	yes
s13	25	20	misled & lied to	yes
s25	26	24	expensive accm	yes
s18	29	24	difficult people	yes
s30	30	30	finding accm	needs improvement

The data displayed in the table shows that levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy does not have any relation to whether students form negative opinions of the university.

5.10.1 Experience-based negative opinions of the university

Feeling neglected was one of the attitudes that some students had towards the university. They suggested that the feeling of neglect occurred because the university had not paid enough attention to their troubles and had not in looked

after them. They felt they had to face and manage accommodation difficulties, problems and issues by themselves:

> *"I felt like if the university had some kind of accommodation for students then I wouldn't have to go through this bad experience" (s2)*
>
> *"I think the university should provide or manage accommodation for international students. So students don't have to face troubles" (s22)*
>
> *"I feel like the university should have some idea that most international students need accommodation and why don't they concern about this issue?" (s25)*
>
> *"When I couldn't find my accommodation I was thinking that if the university provided us affordable accommodation. Then I wouldn't have to face so much difficulties and problems" (s29)*

Some students commented that the university did not seem to care enough about their well-being:

> *"It's such a big university. It should have at least some facilities for on campus accommodation or at least they should do something about it" (s4)*
>
> *"I think as a proper university, a good ranking international university. I think students should get proper accommodation and the university should look after students better" (s8)*
>
> *"I felt that the university didn't care about us. They just want us to come and study here. But they don't care about anything else" (s10)*

The experience of being improperly informed made one student disappointed about the university and its services:

> *"I felt like they just chose to tell me something but not everything. They are more like doing their services from the surface they don't really care" (s12)*

Lack of help created a negative attitude towards the university for one student:

> *"I think that the university provides limited help. I should have some kind of department to send prompt response and give us advice on this area. They should look after us better, a lot better" (s18)*

5.10.2 Those who would like to see some improvements

Nine students did not find their accommodation experiences influenced their opinion of the university, but nevertheless would like to see some improvements in this area. They want to feel looked after. They want to feel that the university really cares for them and for future students. They wish to receive more support, information, and advice. The university needs to make sure that they have an effective support program if that's the only help the university can provide for students when it comes to accommodation. For instance they commented:

> *"I don't have negative feelings with the university. But I prefer the university to look after international students on this issue" (s9)*

> *"I don't have any opinion of the university. I just think that how come there is no service for students on this issue" (s17)*

> *"I think it's got nothing to do with the university. But as an institution, the university should emphasis on this issue" (s28)*

Providing accommodation was another suggestion:

> *"There is nothing to do with it. But if the university can provide accommodation for students that will be very very good" (s3)*

> *"I don't see any relation but I think that the university should have accommodation facility. Something like hostel or village" (s15)*

One student explained that her accommodation experience did not have any impact on her opinion of the university because she managed accommodation entirely by herself:

> *"It doesn't affect my opinion of the university because I have never asked for help" (s30)*

5.10.3 Those who saw no relationship between their opinion of the university and their accommodation experiences

Eleven students did not find their accommodation experience influenced their opinion of the university. They said that the university and their accommodation

are selected on entirely different bases. Therefore they did not connect the place where they live with the place where they receive education:

"I don't see any connection here" (s1)

"There is no relation between them" (s21)

"I can't see any links between them" (s23)

The interview data showed that negative accommodation experiences did not create negative opinions towards the university in 19 out of 30 students. Ten of them believed there was no connection between their accommodation experiences and the university. They perceived the university as a place that provides education. Whereas accommodation is a place where they live and they make their own decisions in choosing accommodation. Nine students commented that even though their accommodation experiences did not influence their opinions towards the university, they would like the university to look after student accommodation more than is currently the case.

Another group of students (11/30) had negative opinions towards the university. They thought the university had not cared enough about them and they were basically disappointed with the university.

The next section presents interviewees' opinions of the university's responsibilities in regard to the accommodation of international students.

5.11 The university's responsibilities for accommodation of international students

The question asked of the interviewees was: *In your opinion, what kind of responsibilities do universities have for the accommodation of international students?*

11 out of 30 interviewees had negative opinions towards the university in relation to their accommodation experiences. Another nine students considered that the

university needs to provide more services and support for international students. Therefore this part of the study was designed to further investigate the beliefs of interviewees in regard to university responsibilities for accommodation of international students.

5.11.1 Provide temporary accommodation

Six students stated that providing temporary accommodation is an essential service that the university should accept. Being looked after temporarily by the university allows time for students to adapt and adjust into new living environments. As a result students can settle down properly without having to rush into choosing accommodation. Interviewees said:

> *"They should have temporary accommodation for international students" (s21)*
>
> *"They should provide temporary accommodation for new comers. It doesn't have to be very nice. It can be just an okay/acceptable accommodation" (s23)*
>
> *"They should provide short term accommodation for all international students" (s28)*

5.11.2 Provide affordable accommodation

Nine students believed that providing affordable accommodation is the university's responsibility. They commented that if they were accommodated by the university then they would not have to worry about this issue. This would eliminate adjustment problems especially for new students. They mentioned that:

> *"The university should have an affordable on campus accommodation for every international student" (s4)*
>
> *"The university should provide a proper, a good accommodation for international students" (s15)*
>
> *"The institution supposes to provide accommodation to international students" (s30)*

5.11.3 Response to student concerns

Being able to rely on the university and its support services was important for 13 students. Reliable support such as providing prompt responses, useful advice, and assistance with accommodation matters make students feel safe and looked after. Interviewees suggested that:

> *"They need to be there to really help and support students on accommodation issues" (s3)*
>
> *"They should make it very easy for students to reach them and get help when students really need their supports or help" (s14)*
>
> *"They need to help internationals students as much as they can. They should always be there and help" (s26)*

Some students further suggested that promoting the housing advisory support service and is crucial in creating awareness amongst students:

> *"Promote more about their services, their office, and their database" (s13)*
>
> *"Promoting on where and how to get help" (s16)*

The findings were not surprising. This is because for international students, the community to which they have the closest link whilst living away from home is their education provider (Baker, G & Hawkins 2006). Therefore the expectation they should be "taken care of" by the host community and institution is prevalent amongst international students (Hellstén 2002). Baker and Hawkins (2006) argued that education providers and the general community need to build climates where international students feel they are able to seek assistance, and that if they do, the assistance will be appropriate to their needs.

5.12 Chapter summary

This chapter has reported the findings of the in-depth interviews of 30 international students regarding their experiences in managing accommodation challenges. The interview data revealed that all students were able to prepare and arrange some accommodation prior to arrival, although that did not always turn out to be

what they expected. They arranged pre-departure accommodation through sources such as personal contacts, Internet, and educational agents.

After arrival, most students (27/30) experienced difficulties, problems and issues with accommodation. Their reported bad experiences included being attacked, being misled and lied to, living with difficult people, living in overly expensive accommodation and facing difficulties in finding accommodation. As a result, students did have any choice but to cope and to overcome their problems. They usually tried to improve bad situations and tried to restore satisfactory living arrangements and living environment. However when they were unable to improve the situations, they started looking for new accommodation. Moving to new accommodation that better suited their needs and preferences was revealed to be the best solution for them.

In arranging more suitable accommodation, interviewees used the Internet, personal contacts, real estate agents, and university notice boards as sources in helping them find accommodation. These sources allowed interviewees to get to know more about accommodation details and options. That information also helped interviewees to get to know accommodation rules, regulations and procedures for locating accommodation that better suited their needs and preferences.

After exploring student opinions towards the housing advisory services provided by the university, the study discovered some disturbing results. Firstly, there were only five students satisfied with the service. Secondly, five students had not even known of its existence. Thirdly, 13 students believed the service was not fully effective and needed improvement.

The lack of positive opinions towards the housing advisory service led students to make suggestions about improving the service to achieve more satisfactory accommodation support. Their recommendations include contacting and offering help to students, providing more support, providing more accommodation options and increasing promotion of the service.

Exploring interviewees' beliefs about international student responsibilities for managing accommodation challenges revealed that the international students who were interviewed believe they should be responsible for most aspects of accommodation.

The interview findings also produced some suggestions for new international students so they can be better prepared for accommodation challenges. First, they should be proactive in searching and gathering information. Second, they should seek help, support and advice from personal contacts. Third, arranging temporary accommodation helps them in preparing to settle down more permanently.

Most interviewees (28/30) believed that the university has responsibilities to assist more with the accommodation difficulties of international students. The university's primary responsibilities were thought to be providing temporary accommodation, providing affordable accommodation, and responding helpfully to students who are in difficulty.

An analysis of the interview findings is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis of Interview Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the in-depth interview findings which were presented in the previous chapter. The chapter applies self-leadership, self-efficacy, and social support theories to deepen our understanding of the interview findings. The application of theory seeks to explore and explain the dynamic interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy, and university provided support. Above all though, this chapter considers the ways in which analysis of the data does or does not support the contention that self-leadership and university provided support contribute to self-efficacy, which in turn is expected to have a positive impact upon a student's management of accommodation challenges.

Self-leadership is "a process through which individuals control their own behaviour, influencing, and leading themselves through the use of specific sets of behavioural and cognitive strategies" (Neck & Houghton 2006, p. 270). It consists of specific behavioural and cognitive strategies designed to positively influence personal effectiveness. Self-leadership strategies encompass behaviour-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies (Manz, CC & Sims 2001; Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998). Mastering these strategies, individuals direct and motivate themselves to behave and perform in a desired way (Houghton & Neck 2002; Manz, Charles 1986; Neck & Houghton 2006).

Self-efficacy theory is conceived of not as domain-specific or situation specific cognition but as a trait–like general sense of confidence in one's own capabilities to master different types of environmental demands (Bandura 1986, 1990). Self-efficacy is a contextual-related judgment of personal ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain designated levels of performance (Bandura 1995). It refers to personal judgments of one's capability to act in a specific situation that may contain novel, unpredictable, and potentially stressful encounters (Bandura 1977). A strong sense of personal efficacy seems to reduce

the likelihood of negative appraisals of stressful life demands. As a result, it provides protection against emotional distress and health impairments (Trockel, Barnes & Egget 2000).

Although self-leadership and self-efficacy operate differently, they do operate in complementary ways. Self-leadership focuses on individual motivation in responding to the challenge required by the demands of situations. Self-efficacy focuses on individual's confidence in their abilities to overcome difficult situations. Thus if self-leadership or self-efficacy was only minimal that individual may not produce the most effective outcome to the situational challenge. Neck and Houghton (2006) argue that self-efficacy is of particular importance to self-leadership. This is because the enhancement of self-efficacy advances higher performance levels of individuals (e.g., Manz 1986; Neck & Manz 1996; Prussia, Anderson & Manz 1998). Further, high levels of task-specific self-efficacy lead to higher performance standards (Bandura 1991). It also leads to greater effort and greater persistence in the pursuit of goals and objectives, and ultimately greater effectiveness (e.g. Bandura & Cervone 1983, 1986). Hence without both self-leadership and self-efficacy, individuals may not able to achieve optimal outcomes to their challenges.

Another way to illuminate the complementarily of self-leadership and self-efficacy is to note that a person who is confident, he or she can manage difficult circumstances, is more likely to embark on proactive strategies which, once commenced, benefit from the positive cognitive and behavioral strategies of self-leadership. Conversely, a person with high levels of self-leadership strategies is more likely to use constructive thought patterns to foster high levels of confidence in their ability to cope with difficulties.

In Chapter Two, the researcher arrived at an explanatory framework by combining self-leadership theory with self-efficacy theory. That framework is re-presented here. The researcher assumed that there are four types of coping behaviour that international students would produce in relation to the differences in their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy: achieving, doing, aspiring, and accepting. Figure

6.1 presents the types of coping behaviour in respect to the levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

The figure shows that individuals with high levels of both self-leadership and self-efficacy are expected to produce “achieving” behaviour. This is because such an individual is capable of determining which actions and consequent outcomes are most desirable (Neck et al. 1999). When they face difficult tasks, they direct and motivate themselves to behave and perform in a desire way. The individual with strong self-leadership exercises goal orientation strategies in order to accomplish the most effective outcomes (DiLiello & Houghton 2006).

Self-efficacy depends not only on possession of task relevant skills but also on the belief that those skills can effectively be produced in difficult circumstances (Bandura 1977; Coffman & Gilligan 2002). High self-efficacy therefore produces more persistence in pursuing goals (Luszczynska, Gutierrez-Dona & Schwarzer 2005). As a result, individuals with high self-efficacy invest more effort and persist longer than those low in self-efficacy. When setbacks occur, they recover more quickly and remain committed to their goals (Luszczynska, Gutierrez-Dona & Schwarzer 2005).

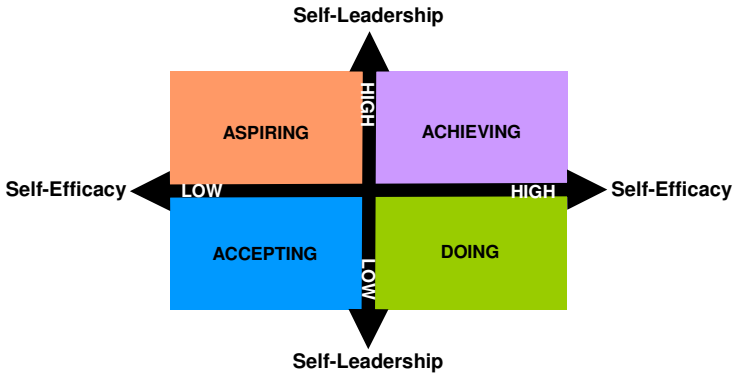

Figure 6.1: Levels of self-leadership, self-efficacy, and types of coping behaviour

International students who scored high on levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, therefore, should execute more effective coping methods and strategies in encountering their challenges. Moreover, they also should produce more

successful outcomes compared with students who scored low on levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Thus, we should find “achieving” behaviour among high self-leaders and high self-efficacious students. When challenges arise, these students would not easily give up. They would think, plan, and respond to the required challenges constructively, promptly, and effectively. They would persist in executing the most effective strategy in order to achieve optimal outcomes to the challenges.

Students with high level of self-leadership and low level of self-efficacy, however, are predicted to produce “aspiring” behaviour. Such students are able to think, plan, analyse, and choose the most effective coping strategy in encountering accommodation challenges but, lacking confidence in executing the strategy create hesitation in taking actions towards meeting challenges, and thereby produce less active coping behaviour. This is because students with low self-efficacy try to avoid challenges and do not have ambition in setting goals. When challenges occur low self-efficacious students have low expectations of being able to meet those challenges. Due to lack of self-confidence, students with low levels of self-efficacy perceive accommodation challenges as too difficult. Hence, although they aspire to reach better outcomes, they produce less effort and persist less than those with high self-efficacy.

“Doing” behaviour is predicted to be produced by students with low level of self-leadership and high level of self-efficacy. This is opposite to the “aspiring” behaviour. The “doing” behaviour can be found in students who have less constructive thoughts and plans in dealing with accommodation challenges but, never the less they have confidence in their ability to manage accommodation tasks. Therefore, they tend to take action quickly, rather than strategically. As a result, their doing may not lead to the best outcomes.

The least effective coping behaviour is “accepting”. This type of coping behaviour can be found in students with low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Students who fall within this category are unable to handle accommodation challenges. Since they have weak strategic thoughts and low self-confidence, when facing challenges, they tend to accept negative situations rather than trying

to make them better. Lack of ability in setting goals and confident in trying to improve or solve accommodation challenges, as a result, they produce ineffective coping outcomes.

In this study, therefore, international students who have differing levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were expected to produce different types of coping behaviour when encountering accommodation challenges.

6.2 Application of the explanatory framework

If we consider the overall accommodation experiences reported in chapter 5, the interview data showed that 27 out of 30 interviewees experienced difficulties with accommodation. Those 27 interviewees reported that they experienced signs of stress when they were in unsuitable accommodation. They developed at least one of the following negative emotions towards their accommodation problems: anger, disappointment, tiredness, frustration, irritation, worry, fear, sadness and unhappiness. Evans-Martin (2007) reminds us that negative emotions such as fear and anger are often caused by stress. Fatigue, insomnia, restlessness, irritability and a great diversity of somatic complaints are physical symptoms of people who experiences stress (Hislop 1991).

Although the interview data of this research showed that bad accommodation experiences generated stress for international students, this was not always long lasting. Stress often reduced considerably when accommodation problems were resolved.

The interview data also indicated that students adopted two types of coping. Firstly, they moved or planned to move into more suitable accommodation (20/27). Secondly, they continued living in the unsuitable accommodation, but adapted (7/27). There were various explanations given by the students who moved from unsatisfactory accommodation. Some students, such as s9 and s19, managed to obtain better living conditions by confronting noisy house mates. Another student, s6, focused on positive thoughts about his bedroom's views even though he was

unhappy with the overall living environment. Yet another student, s7, was able to feel safe and secure after receiving protection from a landlord. Lastly, s5 adjusted and adapted to an unpleasant living environment after being attacked by a housemate's husband. That adaptation, however, only occurred from necessity, because she was stuck with a rental contract.

Turning now to self-leadership and self-efficacy scores, Chapter 5 findings indicate that there was no clear link between interviewee levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy and the way they managed their difficulties. Overall, the findings suggest that most international students behaved as if they all had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. The interview data indicated that all international students actively tried to cope with or to overcome their difficulties and challenges, regardless of their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Thus, when it was possible to move out from unsatisfactory accommodation, students did so.

This investigation of the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy, social support and the differing approaches that interviewees took toward the management of their accommodation; has revealed that the ways international students handled their accommodation difficulties were primarily governed by situational imperatives. In other words, when students were in poor accommodation situations they had to find a way out so that they could have better living arrangements and living environments. Thus the situations forced them to manage accommodation challenges. Internal factors (levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy) were not shown to make a difference to the ways in which international students manage their accommodation challenges.

External factors (social and instrumental supports) proved to be crucial in overcoming required challenges. Without knowledge of support sources and without access to those sources, students were prevented from moving to better accommodation. This finding is relevant to the ongoing debate between proponents of Neoliberalism and Welfarism. Looking into interviewees' coping strategies in more detail, the interview data showed that external coping resources played the key role in deciding whether students would change or would accept their accommodation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that the way people

actually cope with difficulty depends heavily on the resources that are available to them and the constraints that inhibit use of these resources.

This finding, although surprising, does suggest that two key assumptions of Neoliberalism – the assumption that international students are rational, autonomous, social agents capable of informed, free choice, and endowed with internal psychological resources that they can call upon to manage their lives; and the assumption that when individuals experience difficulties in life those difficulties are an outcome of the individuals failing to fully exercise their capacities – overstates the case. Those students who were not able to improve their accommodation situations did not suffer from inadequate internal resources or from unwillingness to act responsibly. Their obstacles were external (shortage of money, shortage of friends), not internal.

Another surprise was that the interview data revealed that although most interviewees (19/30) felt that there was no connection (and should be no connection) between the nature of their accommodation experiences and their opinion of the university; every interviewee nevertheless believed that the university has a "corporate social responsibility" (McWilliams & Siegel 2001, p. 117) for central aspects of accommodation, such as providing temporary accommodation, providing affordable accommodation, responding to student concerns and making improvements on their current services. In other words, all interviewees thought that the university should do more, even though, paradoxically, they did not hold the university responsible for their troubles with accommodation.

This finding is of great importance, in two ways. First, it demonstrates how easily a researcher could arrive at false conclusions if she failed to ask the right questions of interviewees. We saw in chapter five that most international students, who were asked for their opinions about whether negative accommodation experiences had lowered their opinion of the university, said 'No'. It would be easy, but false, to conclude from that data that international students were quite satisfied by the accommodation support that universities provide. When we change the question to "*In your opinion, what kind of responsibilities do universities have for the*

accommodation of international students?" the answers that emerge point us toward a very different conclusion.

The second way in which this finding is important is that the apparent paradox embodied in the contradictory responses from interviewees can be resolved if we interpret the interviewees' contradictory beliefs in terms of the wider social debate mentioned earlier between Neoliberalism and Welfarism. If students have absorbed both points of view, then it is not surprising that from the Neoliberal positions that they are familiar with, they would hold that it is their responsibility, not the university's, to manage the difficulties of accommodation. Looked at from that position, students would not form negative opinions of the university - would not blame the university - if outside the university they had a miserable time.

On the other hand, from the Welfarist position which students have also absorbed and seem to hold contemporaneously with Neoliberalism, it is rational to believe that the university should be doing more to assist students with the central problems of accommodation. Some students felt they were left alone with the problems. Examples of their complaints were as follow; *"…it's such a big university… at least they should do something about it"* (s4), "…*the university didn't care about us"* (s10), *"… the university provides limited help …they should look after us better, a lot better"* (s18), and "…*the university should have some idea that most of international students need accommodation and why don't they concern about this issue?"* (s25). These comments indicate that when some international students enrolled, they expected to be looked after by the university throughout the journey of their degrees.

The notion of 'absorbed' has deliberately been employed during this discussion, because people who absorb a viewpoint do not necessarily have a conscious understanding, or even a conscious awareness of, that viewpoint. Consequently, it is possible for two contradictory viewpoints to be part of the background set of ideas and attitudes held by individual members of a society, without any felt contradiction.

6.3 Managing accommodation challenges prior to arrival

The interview findings presented in Chapter Five showed that all respondents successfully planned and arranged accommodation prior to arrival when they realised providing accommodation was not part of the university services. They executed their strategies constructively to meet the requirements of the challenges. They took the initiative in making use of all sources available to them. The findings revealed that 19 out of 30 international students arranged accommodation through personal contacts. Students without any personal contacts organised accommodation by themselves. Six students found accommodation through the Internet. Five students prepared and chose to stay at temporary accommodation on arrival.

The findings showed that all students employed similar methods in arranging pre-departure accommodation. As a result, they produced similar outcomes to their challenges. This suggests that there were only certain types of support available to international students in arranging accommodation while they were overseas. Consequently, the study did not find any significant differences between the ways in which international students managed accommodation challenges prior to arrival.

This exploration of behaviour produced by international students in arranging accommodation showed that all students produced “achieving” behaviour. Despite the differences between their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, they all were equally successful in countering their challenges. For instance, s30 who had the lowest self-leadership and self-efficacy scores, would be expected to produce “accepting” behaviour, but she achieved the same coping outcome as s27 who had the highest levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Thus they both produced “achieving” behaviour through seeking help and support from friends. Personal contacts were also used by students with differing levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Another example of “achieving” behaviour was arranging accommodation through the Internet. This method was used by students regardless of their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy; with low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy (s18 and s25), with high level of self-leadership and self-efficacy (s26), with high level of self-leadership and low level of self-efficacy (s24), and with low levels of self-leadership and high levels of self-efficacy (s8 and s14).

Further, the findings indicated that social support is most important in helping international students to overcome accommodation challenges prior to arrival. Without social support, such as family and friends and educational agents, international students would have been unable to meet this challenge.

6.4 Managing accommodation challenges in Melbourne

Seven students faced a problem in living with difficult people: s2 and s21 were annoyed and irritated by their landladies’ stingy behaviour; s9, s19, and s20 were disturbed by noisy housemates; s10 was mentally disturbed from being monitored by the landlord and the landlady; and s18 was horrified by the violent and aggressive behaviour of a neighbour. Moving to more suitable living arrangements and living environments were the coping outcomes found by s2, s10, s18, s20, and s21. Continuing living in accommodation was available to s9 and s19.

The findings revealed that s2, s10, s18, s20, and s21 were in situations where they were unable to resolve their accommodation problems. They chose to improve their living arrangements and living environments through moving to accommodation that better suited their needs and preferences. S9 and s19 were in situations where they received cooperation from their housemates so they were able to continue living in the same accommodation. This showed that external (rather than internal) factors had a decisive influence on coping behaviour and coping outcomes.

S10 and s20 had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. This study would therefore expect that in managing bad accommodation experiences, s10 and s20

would cope well and produce effective outcomes. Surprisingly, their response to the challenges they faced were not different from s2, s18, and s21 who had low levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. In other words, although s10 and s20 were expected to produce “achieving” behaviour whereas s2, s18, and s21 were expected to produce “accepting” behaviour, they all produced “achieving” behaviour.

After going through adjustment periods, interviewees took a more active approach in managing their accommodation problems. s7, s8, s13, and s24 moved to more suitable accommodation. S6 created positive thoughts towards the accommodation and continued to live there. Despite the differences between their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy, they all produced “achieving” behaviour in managing their problems.

Looking at the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy, and social support of students who encountered overly expensive accommodation, the expected interplay did not occur. Students with lower levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy (i.e., s1 and s25) produced the same coping behaviour and coping outcomes as students with the highest levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Thus, the internal resources of students do not significantly add to explanations of the way students managed their accommodation problems and difficulties. On the other hand, external resources such as finance, information, guidance, and directions were of major importance to explanation.

Finding suitable accommodation was a problem for s4, s11, s16, s17, s28, s29, and s30. The students were looking for accommodation that offered safety, security, cleanliness, good living environment, easy access to public transportation, and a convenient location. To solve this problem, students spent a lot of time and energy searching for accommodation that matched their needs and preferences. Ultimately, s4, s16, s17, s28, s29, and s30 found accommodation. S4 and s16 had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. We would therefore expect that in finding suitable accommodation, s4 and s16 would cope well and produce effective outcomes. Interestingly, their response to the challenges were not different from s17, s28, and s29 who had high levels of self-leadership and low

levels of self-efficacy, and s30 who had low levels in both self-leadership and self-efficacy.

In other words, s4 and s16 were expected to produce “achieving” behaviour whereas, s17, s28, and s29 were expected to produce “aspiring” behaviour. Furthermore s30 with the lowest levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy was expected to produce the least effective coping behaviour, “accepting”. Nevertheless, they all produced “achieving” behaviour. As a result, they all achieved positive outcomes to their problems.

This study also examined whether university provided support, namely housing advisory services, help and support international students in managing their accommodation challenges more effectively. In relation to self-leadership and self-efficacy, this study assumed that internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy would increase after students made use of university support service. In other words, the external resource (university support service) should positively influence the levels of internal resources (self-leadership and self-efficacy) of international students. No clear connection was found.

By comparing opinions of respondents who had used the housing advisory service, it was shown that positive and negative opinions towards the service were more likely based upon compatibilities between students’ expectations of the service and the quality of the service perceived by students. For instance, s2 *(“They provide good information”)* and s21 *(“They provide useful information”)* were both satisfied with information about accommodation that was available on the university website. But s13 *(“they provide limited information”)* and s15 *(“I didn’t think they were useful”)* had the opposite opinions of the service. This suggests that s2 and s21 only looked for general information about accommodation. Meanwhile, s13 and s15 perhaps were looking for more detail and expecting more help and support from the website so they developed negative opinions of the service. In other words, when respondents did not receive help and support that matched their expectations, negative feelings towards the service occurred.

The phenomena can be compared further between the two groups of students who were satisfied and dissatisfied with the advisory service. For example, s2 *("The staff are helpful"),* s22 ("*They are good and they are helpful"*) and s26 ("*They gave me good advice and great information"*) were satisfied with the advisory service. This is because they were looking for someone to talk to and were seeking help and advice and they received them accordingly. Not receiving advice and assistance as expected created negative opinions towards the service. For instance, some students' complained: "*They were not that helpful because the officer just directed me to the database*" (s7) and "*There are only 2 staff that are there to help students and there are thousands of international students here"* (s8).

Investigating the connections between university provided support, self-leadership and self-efficacy; this study did not find evidence that the support helped to increase the internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy of international students. The findings only showed that s2 who had low levels of self-leadership and self efficacy found the service was useful; but similar comments were also made by s22 and s26 who had high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. They said "*they provide good information and the staff are helpful"* (s2), *"they are good and they are very helpful"* (s22) and *"they gave me good advices and great information"* (s26). This suggests that even students with high levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were seeking support to help them manage accommodation challenges.

Some suggestions were made by international students about how to improve the accommodation support program. First, contact new students to offer help and support on accommodation issues right after students have been accepted by the university. Second, provide more support than what is currently available. The support should include more useful information on the university website, more useful links to public sources, running a workshop to help students settle down more effectively, and providing personal assistance. Third, provide more accommodation options, especially affordable accommodation. Last, increase promotion on the support service to current and future students. Promoting accommodation should be done through accommodation providers and students.

This method would help increase numbers and types of accommodation options. It is notable that all of these suggestions are practical; none are psychological.

The findings of the in-depth interviews revealed that self-leadership and self-efficacy theories are not adequate to explain the differences between those international students who effectively managed the challenges of accommodation and those who did not. In fact, the role played by self-leadership and self-efficacy appears to be minimal. The findings of this study show that practical problem solving, in combination with the availability of institutional and social support, plays the largest role in explaining the ways international students manage accommodation challenges. Managing accommodation turns out to be more a matter of responding to the requirements of external factors in social situations than a matter of drawing upon internal, psychological factors

Given the host of previous studies reviewed in Chapter Two, studies in which self-leadership was shown to make a difference to performance across a wide range of human endeavours, and studies which arrived at similar conclusions about the importance of self-efficacy, the findings of this researcher's project require explanation. The analysis and discussion in this chapter has been epistemologically tied to the empirical data obtained from the online survey and the in-depth interviews – accounting for the central puzzle of those findings can only occur by moving further away from them and adopting a more speculative perspective. It is in the next and final chapter, the Conclusion, that the researcher considers she has some licence to provide a more speculative, but also perhaps a more insightful, discussion.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The primary research question for this study was *"in what ways does the interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy, and university provided support; help to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the challenges of accommodation and those who do not?"*. Thus, the central aim of this thesis was to explore the dynamic interplay between self-leadership, self-efficacy, university provided support, and the varying approaches that international students take to managing their accommodation challenges.

In order to adequately address the research question, the study was designed to collect data using two complementary methods. In phase one of the empirical research, quantitative data was collected through an online survey. The survey findings provided important contextual data about the accommodation challenges facing international students. The researcher was aware however, that quantitative data alone would not take us deeply into an understanding of the underlying relationships. Thus qualitative data was obtained in the second phase, through in-depth interviews. Those interviews enabled a focus on the personal, subjective level of the interviewees, which was where individual students were thought to make combinatorial use of situational, organizational, and intrapersonal factors.

This chapter discusses the main outcomes of the research and attempts to provide an explanation for the central way in which those findings appear to run counter to the explanatory framework that was derived in Chapter Two from a review of the theory and research on self-leadership and self-efficacy. The chapter also highlights the contributions this thesis makes to our understanding of the accommodation challenges facing international students, and it presents some proposals for improving the role played by universities. Research limitations are also acknowledged. The chapter concludes by outlining some future directions for research in this area.

The online survey generated 207 responses from the university's international students from 37 countries. To analyse the data effectively, regional groupings

were introduced, based on geographical locations. A majority of the respondents came from Asian regions (87%). Respondents were split fairly evenly between males (52%) and females (48%), with most aged in their twenties to thirties (83%), and only 17% older than the thirties. Most of the respondents (80%) had spent less than two years at the university at the time of completing the survey.

The respondents' age, gender, and region of origin did not influence preferences of their first accommodation, nor satisfaction with the first accommodation, nor satisfaction with current accommodation. The results showed that international students from different regions did not need or require different kind of accommodation.

Respondents did complain that Melbourne does not have a wide enough range of accommodation for international students. Rental cost was their most common concern. Despite all the problems, concerns, and bad experiences with accommodation, respondents suggested that they viewed their accommodation experience in Melbourne as a positive one.

In terms of finding somewhere to live and dealing with accommodation issues, international students are predominantly a homogenous group. There appears to be little need for the housing service to be tailored by demographic variables (age, gender, and region of origin).

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 respondents (16 males and 14 females). All the international students who were interviewed chose similar coping strategies. They adopted successful coping strategies for overcoming their accommodation challenges despite having different levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

The interviews did reveal however, that social support played a major role in helping students overcome their challenges. Through social support, students were able to plan and arrange accommodation prior to arrival. Internal levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy were not relevant to explaining the ways in which international students managed their pre-departure challenges.

After arrival, many of the interviewees were psychologically and/or physically affected by bad experiences within accommodation. Living in unsuitable accommodation produced negative feelings and bad experiences for most of the international students who were interviewed (27/30). However, students were not able to freely choose coping approaches and coping strategies in attempting to resolve their issues. They were constrained or controlled by external factors. Thus, lacking power in difficult accommodation situations negatively affected students, regardless of their levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

Social support theory was useful in explaining how international students managed their problems and difficulties. The findings indicated that social support from friends and family provided practical help, guidance, support and solutions to students. Social support reduced psychological distress. Interviewees were not so impressed however, by the institutional support provided by the university's housing advisory service.

Having briefly summarized the key findings of this research, the author needs to turn now to a troubling question: How can we explain the fact that the data collected for this research did not support the contention that self-leadership and self-efficacy combine with social support to enable international students to effectively manage the challenges of accommodation? The previous chapter ended with the observation that although a host of research studies reviewed in Chapter Two, showed that self-leadership makes a difference to performance across a wide range of human endeavours, and a host of studies arrived at similar conclusions about the importance of self-efficacy, the findings of this research project do not provide any significant contribution from self-leadership and self-efficacy. The interviewees adopted coping and problem solving strategies wherever and whenever possible, regardless of the fact that the interviewees differed in terms of their individual levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy.

One possible explanation is that the interviewees responded to the questions they were asked in ways that focused on problems and actions, rather than entering into discussions about their self-talk or their beliefs about their capacity to take effective action. In other words, the interviewees did call upon self-leadership

strategies and did call upon their underlying self-efficacy, but did not realise they were doing so; and consequently were not able to provide the researcher with any interview data suggestive of the role played by those internal resources. This explanation, however, ignores the fact that all interviewees completed a self-leadership and a self-efficacy instrument which measured their ongoing levels of SL and SE, prior to interviews commencing. Armed with the results of those assessments, the researcher was able to compare those results with each interviewee's account of their challenges and the ways in which they responded. Differing levels of SE and SL were not correlated with differing degrees of success or effectiveness in dealing with accommodation challenges.

A more promising explanation comes from the work of Ewart (1991), who argued for a comprehensive social action theory to provide us with an understanding of public health psychology. Ewart argues that self-efficacy is not sufficient to motivate change in the behaviour of people who are in the grip of unhealthy lifestyles. He proposes that understanding the difference between those who manage to adopt more healthy self-regulation of behaviour, and those who fail, requires an understanding of goal structures which "are action scripts directed toward some greater goal" (Ewart 1991, p. 6). Ewart (1991) emphasizes the difference between behaviours that contribute to moving forward with a larger project, and those behaviours which lack a project-based meaning. He writes, "for example, after a heart attack, patients are more likely to follow a rehabilitative exercise regime if they strongly want to recover energy needed to resume a challenging career than if they are concerned with minimizing discomfort or avoiding work stress" (p.6).

Ewart's comments are directly relevant to the life situation of international students studying abroad. Their accommodation can deleteriously affect their studies if that accommodation is unsuitable, so their motivation to take effective action to improve accommodation is linked to the importance of a larger life project of becoming an educated professional. This is a motivation that applies equally to all international students, regardless of whether they have differing levels of self-leadership and self-efficacy. Here, then, is an explanation for the fact that those

differing levels seemed to make no difference to the problem solving behaviour of the interviewees.

The author accepts that this explanation is speculative. She has not attempted to support the explanation through empirical research because her design of the research for this thesis was informed by the literature on self-leadership and self-efficacy. It was only after her findings threw the importance of those internal factors into doubt that she searched more widely for an explanation of those findings. With hindsight, she would have conducted in-depth interviews which were designed to surface the putative connections between the management of accommodation challenges and the importance of the students' life goals and projects. Future research by this author will explore the explanatory value of applying Ewart's social action theory to the topic of this thesis.

Contributions and implications of research findings

Findings from this thesis contribute significantly to understanding the importance of social and institutional support for managing the accommodation challenges of international students. Social support has previously been explored in the context of accommodation challenges facing international students. The findings of this research show that social support was significantly associated with reduced psychological distress and with positive outcomes of psychological wellbeing.

Findings from this study have highlighted and detailed the accommodation situations of international students. The findings show that lack of power to control accommodation situations, financial problems, and the shortage of affordable accommodation are the key factors which contribute to bad accommodation experiences.

International students require assistance in finding suitable temporary and permanent accommodation on arrival. Accommodation assistance should be provided through the mainstream housing office with additional staff funded by international programs at the beginning of each semester to provide the high level of assistance and information that international students require. If the provision of

such assistance is not possible through the mainstream housing service a housing officer is essential at the beginning of each semester based in the international student services or international programs area depending on the structure of services provided. The centralisation and coordination of the university's housing provision for both resident and international students would be the most effective way to proceed. Some funding of purchase or leasing of accommodation may be necessary.

This research study has not only identified and analysed the key factors which contribute to bad accommodation experiences but it has also tried to penetrate deeper on the social and psychological factors which may affect the level of satisfaction of international students.

Research limitations

There are significant limitations to this study. Firstly, this study only focused on international students. Secondly, the sample of international students studying at the university may not be representative of all international students in Australia. Thus a larger sample size might increase the likelihood of representativeness. Thirdly, the scope of the research only included the accommodation assistance programs offered by one university.

The study would have been better if the researcher were able to interview two different groups of participants: group one with students who have not faced difficulties and a second group with students who have experienced problems with accommodation. Comparing two different groups of students would enable the researcher to double check the interplay between self-leadership and self-efficacy theories to explain the differences between those international students who effectively manage the accommodation challenges and those who do not.

The researcher wants to emphasize that the students chosen for interview were not intended to be a representative sample from which empirical generalizations could be made. Sampling was purposive, not random. Interviewees were selected on the basis of signalling in their responses to the online survey that they had

experienced accommodation problems, and that they were willing to meet with the researcher and give up their time to discuss the research topic. Nevertheless, although this approach does not allow for empirical generalizations, it does lead to in-depth understandings of this crucially important part of education as a business and as part of a major life project.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey questions

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age: ☐ under 20 ☐ 21 – 25 ☐ 26 – 30 ☐ 31 – 35 ☐ 36 – 40 ☐ over 40

2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Country of citizenship: _____

4. How long have you been a student at the University?

☐ Less than 6 months ☐ More than 6 months but less than 1 year

☐ 1 – 2 years ☐ 2 – 3 years ☐ More than 3

SECTION 2: ACCOMMODATION

5. **Before coming to Melbourne**, where did you first find information about accommodation?

☐ Australian embassy/consulate in my country

☐ IDP centre

☐ Educational agents

☐ Education fairs

☐ Family/friend/relative who has been in Australia before

☐ Internet

☐ Other (please specify) _____

6. **When you first arrived in Melbourne,** what type of accommodation did you stay in?

☐ Homestay

☐ Share accommodation (share a house, share a flat etc.)

☐ Rent a flat/a unit/an apartment/a house by yourself

☐ Student accommodation (e.g., UniLodge)

☐ Other (please specify) _____

7. How satisfied were you with the accommodation that you chose? (please choose appropriate one)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied

8. Have you changed your accommodation since arriving in Melbourne?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8.1 If YES, how many times have you changed? _____ times

8.2 If your answer was NO, is that because (tick all that apply)

☐ I am happy where I am
☐ I do not have time to look for better accommodation
☐ I cannot afford better accommodation
☐ I do not want to offend my housemates
☐ I am not sure what to do
☐ I do not know who to ask for help
☐ Other (please specify) _____

After completing Q8.2 Now go to Q13

9. **In Melbourne**, when you started looking for new accommodation, where did you seek help for accommodation options? (you can choose more than one)

☐ Internet
☐ Family or friends
☐ Newspaper
☐ Real estate agents
☐ University's notice boards
☐ University's housing website
☐ University's housing advisory service
☐ Other (please specify) _____

10. How useful were these sources to you when looking for accommodation options?

Sources	Extremely useless	Very useless	Useless	Not Sure / Neutral	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
a. Internet							
b. Family or friends							
c. Newspaper							
d. Real estate agents							
e. University's notice boards							
f. University's housing website							
g. University's housing advisory service							
h. Other							

11. What were your main reasons for moving to new accommodation? (you can choose more than one)

- ☐ To pay lower rental
- ☐ To look for a better conditions of accommodation
- ☐ To live with friends
- ☐ Had disagreements/conflicts with share mates
- ☐ To live closer to the university
- ☐ To live closer to the city
- ☐ To live further away from the city
- ☐ To seek for a better living arrangements/environments
- ☐ To be able to concentrate more on my studies
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

12. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with **your current accommodation**? (please circle appropriate one)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied

13. How many people are you sharing your current accommodation with?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ More than 4

14. **In the last 6 months**, how often have you experienced the following at your current accommodation?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Annoyed / irritated by housemate/share mate					
b. Fought with housemate / share mate					
c. Faced sleepless problem					
d. Worried about security					
e. Lost privacy					
f. Housemate made noises					
g. Neighbour made noises					
h. Felt isolated or lonely					
i. Felt homesick					
j. Felt you were being treated unfairly					
k. Felt you were being trapped in this accommodation					
l. Too hot or too cold					
m. Too expensive					
n. Too small					
o. Too noisy					
p. Too smelly					

15. How much do you agree or disagree with statements below about suitable accommodation for students?

Statements	Extremely strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure / Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Extremely strongly agree
a. I have no problem finding suitable accommodation for my needs in Melbourne							
b. Melbourne has an adequate range of accommodation for international students to choose from							
c. Accommodation for international students comes at a reasonable rental cost							
d. Living in suitable accommodation helps me to focus better with my studies							
e. Living in suitable accommodation helps me avoid homesickness							
f. Living in suitable accommodation makes me feel safe and secure							
g. I regard my accommodation experience in Melbourne as a positive one							
h. My accommodation experience in Melbourne influences my opinion of the University							

16. Please rate each of the following factors in terms of how much they matter to your choice of accommodation?

Reasons	Extremely unimportant	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Not Sure / Neutral	Important	Very important	Extremely important
a. To feel safe							
b. To live with friends							
c. To live closer to campus							
d. To live in better environment							
e. To feel like home							
f. To gain privacy							
g. To escape from noises							
h. To pay cheaper rental cost							
i. To find better share housemate							
j. To live in better quality of accommodation							

SECTION 3: HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

17. Have you heard of the housing advisory service at the University?

☐ Yes ☐ No (now go to Q. 21)

18. Where did you hear of the housing advisory service at the University? (you can choose more than 1)

- ☐ Orientation day
- ☐ University's website
- ☐ Brochures
- ☐ Posters
- ☐ Direct e-mail
- ☐ ISIS (International Students Information Service)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

19. Have you been using the housing advisory service support program at the University?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (now go to Q. 21)

If no, why not? _____

20. Were you satisfied with the advice you received?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, why not? _____

21. Have you ever used the online housing service database at the University?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (no more questions to complete)

22. Did you find the online housing service database at the University useful?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, why not? _____

23. Overall, what did you think of the housing advisor service support program for international students at the University?

☐ Very poor ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☐ Excellent

24. Would you recommend the housing advisory service support program at the University to your friends?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, why not? _____

We are currently recruiting respondents to obtain more detailed experiences and perceptions about accommodation issues in Melbourne. The contribution to this study will help deeper understanding on challenges and situations on accommodation that international students face.

If you would like to participate in this follow-up study, please leave your contact details:

Email address:

Mobile phone:

We will contact you as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix B: Interview questions

What preparations did you make for accommodation before arriving in Melbourne?

Have you had any bad experiences with student accommodation in Melbourne – if so, can you please tell me about what happened?

What did you do to try and improve the situation? How successful were you in trying to improve things?

How did you manage to find accommodation that suited your needs and preferences?

Do you know about the housing advisory service at the university? What do you think about the services provided?

What do you think is a better way to provide international students with a satisfactory accommodation support service?

What kinds of responsibilities do international students have to manage their own accommodation?

What advice in relation to accommodation would you give to new international students?

In what ways has your accommodation experience in Melbourne influenced your opinion of the university?

Appendix C: Self-efficacy and self-leadership measures

General self-efficacy measure

Please state how much you agree or disagree to the following statements.

Note: please use the following scale to rate your perceived level of self-efficacy.

Scale: **Strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 Strongly agree**

1.1	I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	_____
1.2	When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	_____
1.3	In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	_____
1.4	I believe I can succeed at most any endeavour to which I set my mind.	_____
1.5	I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	_____
1.6	I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	_____
1.7	Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	_____
1.8	Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	_____

Source: Chen, G, Gully, SM & Eden, D 2001, 'Validation of a new general self-efficacy scale', *Organizational Research Methods*, vol. 4, p. 79.

Self-leadership measure

Please read each of the following items carefully and try to decide how true the statement is in describing you.

	Not at all accurate 1	Somewhat accurate 2	A little accurate 3	Mostly accurate 4	Completely accurate 5

2.1 I use my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks. _____

2.2 I establish specific goals for my own performance. _____

2.3 Sometimes I find I'm talking to myself (out loud or in my head) to help me deal with difficult problems I face. _____

2.4 When I do an assignment especially well, I like to treat myself to some thing or activity I especially enjoy. _____

2.5 I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation. _____

2.6 I tend to get down on myself in my mind when I have performed poorly. _____

2.7 I make a point to keep track of how well I'm doing at work (school). _____

2.8 I focus my thinking on the pleasant rather than the unpleasant aspects of my job (school) activities. _____

2.9 I use written notes to remind myself of what I need to accomplish. _____

2.10 I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it. _____

2.11 I consciously have goals in mind for my work efforts. _____

2.12 Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations. _____

2.13 When I do something well, I reward myself with a special event such as a good dinner, movie, shopping trip, etc. _____

2.14 I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with. _____

2.15 I tend to be tough on myself in my thinking when I have not done well on a task. _____

2.16 I usually am aware of how well I'm doing as I perform and activity. _____

2.17 I try to surround myself with objects and people that bring out my desirable behaviors. _____

2.18 I use concrete reminders (e.g., nots and lists) to help me focus on things I need to accomplish. _____

2.19 Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task. _____

2.20 I work toward specific goals I have set for myself. _____

2.21 When I'm in difficult situations I will sometimes talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to help me get through it. _____

2.22 When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like. _____

2.23 I openly articulate and evaluate my own assumptions when I have a disagreement with someone else. _____

2.24 I feel guilt when I perform a task poorly. _____

2.25 I pay attention to how well I'm doing in my work. _____

2.26 When I have a choice, I try to do my work in ways that I enjoy rather than just trying to get it over with. _____

2.27 I purposefully visualize myself overcoming the challenges I face. _____

2.28 I think about the goals that I intend to achieve in the future. _____

2.29 I think about and evaluate the beliefs and assumptions I hold. _____

2.30 I sometimes openly express displeasure with myself when I have not done well. _____

2.31 I keep track of my progress on projects I'm working on. _____

2.32 I seek out activities in my work that I enjoy doing. _____

2.33 I often mentally rehearse the way I plan to deal with a challenge before I actually face the challenge. _____

2.34 I write specific goals for my own performance. _____

2.35 I find my own favourite ways to get things done. _____

Source: Houghton, JD & Neck, CP 2002, 'The revised self-leadership questionnaire: Testing a hierarchical factor structure for self-leadership', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 17, no. 8, pp. 690-91.

Appendix D: Further ANOVA tests

Table 4.23: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of family or friends as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	8.351	4	2.088	1.032	0.396
- Gender	0.271	1	0.271	0.134	0.716
- Region	10.473	4	2.618	1.294	0.280
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	9.846	4	2.461	1.217	0.311
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	12.958	4	3.239	1.601	0.183
- First accommodation in Melbourne	6.058	4	1.515	0.749	0.562
- Used the university's housing advisory service	8.306	1	8.306	4.106	0.046
- Used the university's online housing website	9.488	1	9.488	4.690	0.034
Residual	149.692	74			

Table 4.24: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of newspaper as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	13.034	4	3.259	2.694	0.037
- Gender	0.079	1	0.079	0.066	0.799
- Region	3.568	4	0.892	0.737	0.569
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	10.313	4	2.578	2.131	0.085
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	4.382	4	1.095	0.906	0.465
- First accommodation in Melbourne	7.151	4	1.788	1.478	0.218
- Used the university's housing advisory service	1.020	1	1.020	0.844	0.361
- Used the university's online housing website	0.920	1	0.920	0.760	0.386
Residual	89.514	74			

Table 4.25: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of real estate agents as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	8.281	4	2.070	1.073	0.376
- Gender	1.741	1	1.741	0.902	0.345
- Region	12.794	4	3.198	1.657	0.169
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	6.114	4	1.528	0.792	0.534
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	3.155	4	0.789	0.409	0.802
- First accommodation in Melbourne	6.480	4	1.620	0.839	0.505
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.927	1	0.927	0.480	0.490
- Used the university's online housing website	4.093	1	4.093	2.121	0.150
Residual	142.807	74			

Table 4.26: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of university's notice boards as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	3.411	4	0.853	0.497	0.738
- Gender	0.485	1	0.485	0.283	0.596
- Region	7.206	4	1.802	1.050	0.387
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	14.201	4	3.550	2.070	0.093
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	8.084	4	2.021	1.178	0.327
- First accommodation in Melbourne	7.615	4	1.904	1.110	0.358
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.208	1	0.208	0.121	0.729
- Used the university's online housing website	0.268	1	0.268	0.156	0.694
Residual	126.920	74			

Table 4.27: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of university's housing website as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	4.033	4	1.008	0.850	0.496
- Gender	0.001	1	0.001	0.001	0.973
- Region	6.549	4	1.637	1.381	0.245
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	8.908	4	2.227	1.878	0.119
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	3.855	5	0.771	0.650	0.662
- First accommodation in Melbourne	1.380	4	0.345	0.291	0.883
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.587	1	0.587	0.495	0.483
- Used the university's online housing website	0.000	1	0.000	0.000	0.985
Residual	141.102	119			

Table 4.28: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of university's housing advisory service as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	7.143	4	1.786	0.942	0.444
- Gender	0.218	1	0.218	0.115	0.735
- Region	12.543	4	3.136	1.655	0.170
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	1.946	4	0.487	0.257	0.905
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	4.947	4	1.237	0.653	0.627
- First accommodation in Melbourne	11.532	4	2.883	1.521	0.205
- Used the university's housing advisory service	7.185	1	7.185	3.792	0.055
- Used the university's online housing website	0.022	1	0.022	0.012	0.915
Residual	140.229	74			

Table 4.29: ANOVA Analysis of usefulness of other service as a source for accommodation options against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	16.590	4	4.148	4.422	0.003
- Gender	0.854	1	0.854	0.910	0.343
- Region	2.400	4	0.600	0.640	0.636
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	6.795	4	1.699	1.811	0.136
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	10.843	4	2.711	2.890	0.028
- First accommodation in Melbourne	4.992	4	1.248	1.331	0.267
- Used the university's housing advisory service	2.941	1	2.941	3.136	0.081
- Used the university's online housing website	3.93E-05	1	3.93E-05	0.000	0.995
Residual	69.402	74			

Table 4.30: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'There was no problems finding suitable accommodation for my needs in Melbourne' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	24.738	4	6.185	2.723	0.033
- Gender	0.671	1	0.671	0.295	0.588
- Region	19.557	4	4.889	2.152	0.079
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	12.184	4	3.046	1.341	0.259
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	38.053	5	7.611	3.350	0.007
- First accommodation in Melbourne	13.658	4	3.415	1.503	0.206
- Used the university's housing advisory service	9.637	1	9.637	4.242	0.042
- Used the university's online housing website	0.992	1	0.992	0.437	0.510
Residual	270.320	119			

Table 4.31: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'Accommodation for international students come at reasonable rental cost' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	5.327	4	1.332	0.729	0.574
- Gender	1.80E+00	1	1.80E+00	0.983	0.323
- Region	10.238	4	2.559	1.401	0.238
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	16.362	4	4.091	2.240	0.069
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	4.470	5	0.894	0.490	0.784
- First accommodation in Melbourne	24.228	4	6.057	3.316	0.013
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.251	1	0.251	0.137	0.711
- Used the university's online housing website	0.148	1	0.148	0.081	0.777
Residual	217.336	119			

Table 4.32: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'Living in suitable accommodation helps me to focus better with my studies' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	7.808	4	1.952	2.225	0.070
- Gender	0.517	1	0.517	0.590	0.444
- Region	7.585	4	1.896	2.161	0.078
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	11.376	4	2.844	3.241	0.015
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	3.860	5	0.772	0.880	0.497
- First accommodation in Melbourne	7.313	4	1.828	2.084	0.087
- Used the university's housing advisory service	1.772	1	1.772	2.019	0.158
- Used the university's online housing website	3.546	1	3.546	4.041	0.047
Residual	104.411	119			

Table 4.33: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'Living in suitable accommodation helps me avoid homesickness' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	11.220	4	2.805	1.747	0.144
- Gender	1.168	1	1.168	0.727	0.395
- Region	3.923	4	0.981	0.611	0.656
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	17.092	4	4.273	2.661	0.036
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	5.961	5	1.192	0.742	0.593
- First accommodation in Melbourne	15.082	4	3.770	2.348	0.058
- Used the university's housing advisory service	1.337	1	1.337	0.833	0.363
- Used the university's online housing website	2.678	1	2.678	1.668	0.199
Residual	191.096	119			

Table 4.34: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'Living in suitable accommodation makes me feel safe and secure' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Demographic factors					
- Age	4.033	4	1.008	0.850	0.496
- Gender	0.001	1	0.001	0.001	0.973
- Country or region	6.549	4	1.637	1.381	0.245
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	8.908	4	2.227	1.878	0.119
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	3.855	5	0.771	0.650	0.662
- First accommodation in Melbourne	1.380	4	0.345	0.291	0.883
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.587	1	0.587	0.495	0.483
- Used the university's online housing website	0.000	1	0.000	0.000	0.985
Residual	141.102	119			

Table 4.35: ANOVA Analysis of agreement/disagreement with a statement of 'I regard my accommodation experience in Melbourne as a positive one' against demographic and situational factors

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Demographic factors					
- Age	6.540	4	1.635	0.744	0.564
- Gender	1.988	1	1.988	0.904	0.344
- Region	17.370	4	4.343	1.976	0.103
Situational factors					
- Number of years at the university	18.137	4	4.534	2.063	0.090
- Sources of information before arrived Melbourne	28.707	5	5.741	2.612	0.028
- First accommodation in Melbourne	25.092	4	6.273	2.854	0.027
- Used the university's housing advisory service	0.013	1	0.013	0.006	0.939
- Used the university's online housing website	0.004	1	0.004	0.002	0.967
Residual	261.572	119			