NESB SKILLED PRIMARY MIGRANT WOMENS’ EXPERIENCES, AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

28th of July, 2018
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Acknowledgements

The journey to my PhD has had its share of trials and turbulences. Amid my familial responsibilities, the research that I had started nearly 10 years ago has finally come to fruition and the reasoning behind the journey has made more sense now than it ever did before. This research was conceived during a time when I stayed home after the birth of our first child. However, it was actually triggered a few months before by a sentence from my then manager to me: it was October 2007 and I was negotiating my return back to work after giving birth to our first child. My manager told me that motherhood was going to be life changing and I needed to stay home. It must have come from a place of concern but I was facing unemployment after having our baby. What was irksome was the ease and normalcy in my manager’s deliverance of his patronising comments. Motherhood is a challenging feat, but it was the denial of my choice to work or stay at home, that was bothersome. Because of my ability to have children, I felt I was repudiated from work and sent to a life of isolation in suburbia.

With my foray into the domestic ‘housewife’ and ‘stay-at-home mum’ realm, my ‘foreignness’ was blatantly exposed and I was made aware of my cultural differences from the mainstream Australian social culture more than I had ever been in my life in this country. Life as a working migrant woman was easier, the workplace was a safe haven, where I was considered fit to be part of and I revelled in the shadow of my skills and qualifications in a relatively respectable technical position. The stay-at-home version of my life was different altogether, which my cultural upbringing had not prepared me for. This was especially so when I found myself chartering through a different ‘social’ sphere where my lack of locals social norms, lingo and mannerisms of the middle-class Australian society proved challenging. However, it has taught me a lot about myself in terms of resilience, flexibility and willingness to learn. I have finally started having a whole new appreciation of the strength of stay-at-home parents, and especially NESB women migrants who came to a place foreign to their own and decided to raise kids here. Motherhood has been the hardest role that I have undertaken and possibly more so because my husband and I are in a land away from our parents, with little day-to-day support.
My husband and I had started our careers around the same time and both of us had applied for our Australian permanent residency (individually) under the skilled migration scheme after our higher education in Melbourne. At the time of writing it had been nearly 15 years since we started our careers, though mine stopped mid-way after we decided to start a family. Amidst the excitement and anxiety of juggling a young family, reality also sunk in on the employment front where I went through a grievous time of losing trust in the system and questioning if the Australian work structure had room for women with dependents and minors. That was when I was keen to explore the disadvantages that came with my child-bearing to make sense of the career ‘rut’ I found myself in.

No-one was more aware of the loss of talent than my Indian mother – and perhaps more so than the Australian government and policy makers. She was relentless in reminding me of my ‘unemployment’ and wastage of the education, money and future that had been invested in me. My French in-laws, who enjoyed great public healthcare and support in their home country, were also puzzled to hear about our childcare woes and work place system, which appeared skewed against women. I was stuck between cultural ideologies, one (Asia/India) where women went back to work after 3 months of maternity leave and yet never progressed past a certain point and another (Australia), where a male superior lectured expectant mothers about staying at home with their children. The idea of success in my old Indian cultural space, which was through education, acquiring skills, working hard, paying the bills and contributing was at odds with me staying at home to raise a family in Australia. The initial meaning of success I had was becoming blurry, I was never raised to be the first women on Mars but I was taught to reach a certain position in my career, earn enough to pay off the mortgage and live a relatively wealthy stress-free life. So the situation after childbirth in Australia was one I had not planned nor anticipated.

My thoughts on my ‘unemployment’ situation and my wavering ideas of success became a proposal; I approached Dr. Val Colic-Peisker and Dr. Ling Dang in RMIT to be my supervisors. Dr. Colic-Peisker, in particular, was very involved in my progress and had given me the confidence to pursue my research goals. Both Dr. Colic-Peisker and Dr. Dang supported me the best way they could and I am very grateful to
them for letting me try my hand at something I had no experience with before. After encountering significant administrative difficulties in RMIT, I got to meet Dr. Melissa Parris and Dr. Uma Jogulu, who agreed very graciously to help and guide me through my journey. I am forever indebted to this two incredible women, who have been integral in helping carve meaning from my experience of being an NESB skilled primary migrant woman in Australia and guided me to express it in a research that has been life-changing for me. Without them, this research would not have taken the shape or the direction it has now. I thank them both from the bottom of my heart.

When women support women, the world is the limit and I have to thank my mother-in-law, Dr. Annik Guillas, who has singlehandedly raised two strong boys while juggling her own career. She dropped everything and came across continents to look after our children at critical phases of my thesis. Her help, support and debates about our cultural differences has added the much needed perspective in my thought-process. My sister, Diana Mutum, has been very encouraging and supportive. Her migration to Australia was challenging; she got tangled in the legislation changes in the Australian skilled migration when she applied for her residency in Australia. She pulled though and since then, has paved her way to great career success in Sydney.

I would like to thank my older brother, Dr. Adam Dilip Mutum, for his wisdom and resilience. His calm approach in dealing with stressful life situations has been inspirational. I would also like to express my gratitude to my ‘younger’ brother, Guillaume Blin, for his support.

My parents, Dr. Samarendra Singh Mutum and Mrs. Punyabati Khoirom, have been instrumental in my journey to Australia and in becoming the individual I am today. They have been the most forward and supportive parents; raising opinionated and sometimes irresolute daughters was not an easy feat, in a cultural context that had been vexed against women. However, they fought through, made sure we were treated as well, if not better, than our older brother, and had put education as a core element in our lives. I thank you, Ima and Baba, from the bottom of my heart. Without your support and encouragement, I would have never stepped out of my comfort zone, let alone leave you all behind for a foreign country to pursue my Masters and then eventually settle in.
Our children, Jade and Ayven, are my PhD babies as both of them are central in the development and writing of this research. Both of them have gone through phases of seeing their mother go into bouts of anger, stress, anxiety and sometimes, complete isolation to move forward with this research. I started this thesis after my time at home with Jade and what drove me primarily was to create gender awareness in the workplace so her future and success as a woman will be a lot better than mine was. My beautiful children are the reason that I do what I do and I thank them for all the joy, stress, tears and laughter, without which, I could not have had progressed in my journey.

Most successful men have relied on their wives and the reverse is also true in my case. My husband, Dr. Frédéric Blin, is the most incredible and open-minded person that I have ever met. Juggling a very intense career, he has been my rock and he has made sure I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. He has been with me in every step of the way into making this research happen. He is the epitome of the perfect partner, trying to fit me and our children in a system that required him to work long hours and network at crazy times, while also carrying the load of being the primary earner. He has been my personal advisor, editor, counsellor, babysitter, cook, and cheerleader and took on any role as required so I could work. He is a proud feminist and I thank fate or luck, or whatever it is women use to describe their good fortune, that we met and we chose each other to be partners in crime in this lifetime. Our children, Jade and Ayven, are some of the most fortunate children because we show them every day that differences can thrive with appreciation, support, love, challenge, respect and the willingness to explore the uncertain and unpredictable. Without Frédéric, I would not have gathered the strength or resource to embark on this journey. My utmost thanks and love goes out to him and I dedicate this work to his devotion, enthusiasm, flexibility, positive attitude and his willingness to challenge himself and others around him. Thank you for being you.
List of Publications and Recognition

In the course of my PhD studies, the following publications were produced:


I have also been humbled to be nominated as a finalist in the Academy of Management Careers Division 2016 Best International Paper award.
Abstract

The Australian skilled migration scheme has been designed to attract migrants who will contribute to Australia’s economic growth. While skilled migrants have provided in 2014 a substantial net contribution of almost $600 million to Australia's economy initially in their first year of migration by their participation in the labour force, and increasingly over time, there has been minimal information available on the career progression of skilled migrants – and how this has compared to individuals’ careers pre-migration.

This research project has aimed to answer the following research question: What are the individual experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia who are deemed ‘successful’ in their career, and how have these women navigated their career pathways? To answer this question, an interpretive phenomenological methodological approach, based on the Heideggerian philosophy has been followed. As such, in-depth interviews have been employed as the best tool for data collection. The key findings have been presented under three main headings: cultural fit; disadvantages and advantages of being a woman, ethnic and foreign; and success. It has been found that the home countries’ cultural influences, English, accents have been some of the important factors that have initially restricted my interviewees’ full participation in the Australian workplace. Unpleasant experiences have been downplayed to separate themselves from other NESB migrant women. My interviewees have faced multilevel issues at the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, migrant status and other group identifications. Social gender, limited exposure to women, gender role incongruence and a “womb ceiling” have also been found to influence their career success in Australia. It has also been found that NESB skilled primary applicants have high expectations regarding their career transition success post migration to Australia, similar to men. A multidimensional synergetic advantageous adaptation (MSAA) model has been proposed to better encapsulate my interviewees’ multi-dimensional elements of career success. The MSAA model has the key elements of and looks at the interaction of and between primary and secondary
factors of success. This comprehensive model has looked at interlinking dependencies and interdependence of the factors.

Some of the limitations of the research have been based on the subjective and exploratory nature of the semi-structured interviews, the generalisability and transferability of the data, themes, findings and analyses of this study to other skilled migrant women. Future research avenues could be extended to further complimentary qualitative inquiries (such as detailed narrative approach with one or two interviewees) and exploring the interviewees’ cultivation of cultural intelligence in their career success in Australia or across cultures. The research significance has been in its contribution to the literature of highly skilled women’s migration and women’s representation in organisational leadership in their host countries. This research’s novel contribution has been in its pivotal pervasion of the male-abound skilled migration literature, through the subjective experience-based perspectives of NESB skilled primary migrant women. More importantly, it has bespoken their construction of overarching career success at the intersectionality of profounder elements, such as gender, migrant status, ethnicity and culture, specifically in an Australian context. Its relevance has been in its timely interest to beneficiaries such as the government, diversity management initiatives, and future NESB skilled primary migrant women.

**Keywords:** Gender; Skilled migrants; NESB; primary migrants; Career success; Australia
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 An Introduction................................................................................................................10

1.1 Background to the Problem.................................................................................................10

1.2 Research Problem and Question..........................................................................................13

1.2.1 The Research Problem..................................................................................................13

1.2.1.1 Skilled Migration and Women .............................................................................14

1.2.1.2 Gender, Culture and the NESB Women Migrant in Australia ......................15

1.2.1.3 Gender, Culture and the Career “Success” of NESB Women Migrant in Australia ..................................................................................................................16

1.2.2 Research Question.........................................................................................................18

1.3 Research Design....................................................................................................................20

1.4 Significance and Contribution of the Proposed Research .............................................20

1.4.1 Government...................................................................................................................21

1.4.2 Diversity Management Efforts and Employers........................................................22

1.4.3 Future NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women.........................................................23

1.5 Structure of the Thesis.......................................................................................................24

1.6 Conclusion............................................................................................................................25

Chapter 2 Literature Review .......................................................................................................27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Introduction</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Setting the Context of the Research: Skilled Migration and Women</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Migration to Australia: a Background</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Skilled Migration to Australia</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Skilled Migration and NESB Women (Australia)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Theoretical Foundations: Gender, Culture and the NESB Migrant</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Gender and the NESB Migrant Women</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Culture and the NESB Migrant Women</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Career “Success”</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 “Success” and Gender</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 “Success” with Culture and Ethnicity</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 “Success” for the NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women in Australia</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Methodology</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Overview</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 An Interpretive Paradigm</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Methodology of Qualitative Research</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Design Framework: Phenomenology ................................................................. 79

3.4.1 The Interpretive/Heideggerian Phenomenological Perspective: A Philosophy, Methodological Research Paradigm and Research Framework..... 80

3.4.2 Rationale for Adopting the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach..... 81

3.5 Method of Data Collection .............................................................................. 82

3.5.1 In-depth Interviews...................................................................................... 83

3.5.2 Selection and Recruitment of Interviewees ............................................... 85

3.5.2.1 Description of Interviewees...................................................................... 85

3.5.2.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees................................. 87

3.5.2.3 Interviewees’ Work-Employment Characteristics................................. 89

3.6. Rigour, Authenticity and Research Findings ................................................. 90

3.6.1 Validity and Authenticity ........................................................................... 91

3.6.2 Reliability and Trustworthiness................................................................. 92

3.6.3 Sample Size, Generalisability and Resonance ........................................... 93

3.6.4 Additional Steps to Ensure Rigour............................................................ 94

3.7 Ethical Considerations...................................................................................... 94

3.8 Data Analysis .................................................................................................. 96
3.9 Limitations of Method .......................................................................................... 97

3.10 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 98

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion Part 1: Social and Cultural Fit....................... 100

4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 100

4.2 Findings 1: Social and Cultural Capital from Experiences of the NESB Skilled
Migrant Women in Australia ..................................................................................... 102

4.2.1 Experience of Fitting in/Adapting Culturally into Australia .................... 103

4.2.2 Experiences of English Language ‘Proficiency’ and Integration in Australia.
............................................................................................................................... 112

4.2.3 I Am Too Elite to Have Been Discriminated Upon................................. 117

4.3 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 122

Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion Part 2: Multilevel Disadvantages or Advantages,
NESB Women Celebrating Their Cultural Uniqueness........................................ 123

5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 123

5.2 The Multilevel Disadvantages of Gender, Ethnicity and Migration .......... 124

5.2.1 Disadvantage of Being a Woman................................................................. 124

5.2.2 Disadvantage of Being Ethnic, Non-White and Foreign ......................... 139
5.3 Perceptions of the Multilevel Advantages of Gender, Ethnicity and Migration


5.4 Conclusion


Chapter 6 Findings and Discussion Part 3: The Experiences of Success in Australia


6.1 Introduction


6.2 Defining “Success” – Perspectives


6.2.1 Gender and Success


6.2.2 Migrant, Culture, Ethnicity, and Success


6.3 Multidimensional Synergetic Advantageous Adaptation (MSAA) Process and Model


6.3.1 Success Factors in the MSAA Model


6.3.1.1 Primary and Secondary Success Factors


6.3.1.2 Factors Distinguished by Interviewees’ Definition of Success


6.3.1.3 Factors and their Dependency on Time


6.3.1.4 Factors – Direct and Indirect Links


6.3.1.5 Limitations


6.4 Conclusion


Chapter 7 Conclusion................................................................. 220

7.1 Introduction............................................................................. 220

7.2 Answering the Research Questions....................................... 221

7.2.1 Theoretical Contributions .................................................. 230

7.2.2 Future Research Avenues................................................... 237

7.3 Limitations ............................................................................ 239

7.4 Significance of this Research............................................... 240

7.4.1 Government........................................................................ 241

7.4.2 Diversity Management Efforts and Employers..................... 242

7.4.3 Future NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women ................... 242

References................................................................................. 244

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions.................................... 276
List of Tables and Figures

Figure 2.1: Overarching Structure of the Literature Review ..........................29

Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees ......................88

Table 3.2: Interviewees’ Work-Employment Details .................................89

Table 4.1: Structure of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 – Presenting Research Findings ......101

Figure 6.1: MSAA Model of Success Factors, Individual Definitions of Success, Time Dependent Variables and Links.........................................................205

Table 6.1: Table Representing MSAA Model of Primary and Secondary Success Factors .................................................................................................................208

Table 6.2: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success Factors Distinguished by Success Definition and Time-dependency.............................................210

Table 6.3: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success factors and their Links to Each Other..................................................................................................................214

Table 6.4: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success Factors, Individual Definitions of Success, Time Dependent Variables and Links ..................................................................................................................216
Chapter 1 An Introduction

1.1 Background to the Problem

Australia has been described as a multicultural migrant country, accepting and celebrating differences and welcoming minority ethnic groups into its society (Forrest et al., 2006; Hirst, 1994; van Krieken, 2012; Zubrzycki, 1987). The resulting bustling diversity in food, culture, people, and traditions has been seen through the country’s streets (Bailey, 1997; Boese & Phillips, 2011; Hirst, 1994) and its workplaces (ABS, 2017c; Colic-Peisker, 2011; Hawthorne, 2005). In a relatively short period of time, Australia left behind its longstanding “white policy” (Cropper, 1999; Forrest et al., 2006; Seitz & Foster, 1985; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b; S. Thompson, 2007; Trezise, 2011; van Krieken, 2012) to receiving asylum seekers (which instigated, at times, much anxiety-drenched public discussion) and welcoming large numbers of skilled migrants from around the world through the 457 Visa and the skilled stream of the Australian migration program (commonly referred to as skilled migration, as will be used for the remainder of the thesis) of the 1990s (Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b).

The skilled migration policy has resulted in an unprecedented economic growth with highly skilled professionals being selected to help address Australia’s economic needs and skill shortages (Connell & Burgess, 2009; Hawthorne, 2002, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Jackman, 1995; Ong & Shah, 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008; Stratton, 2009a). This has raised an interesting question as to the “return on investment” of this skilled migration scheme, both from the country’s perspective (that is, is it providing the optimum “value”? and the migrants’ (that is, have they achieved the success they strove for?) (e.g. Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Jackman, 1995; Parasnis et al., 2008; Ressia, 2010; Syed & Pio, 2010).

In Australia’s global cities, led by Melbourne and Sydney, migrant workers have learned to settle into new workplaces as well as discover unfamiliar organisational cultures, management styles and specific perceptions. Amid these skilled migrants, a growing section of skilled women from Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) has been witnessed. These NESB women, hailing from countries
where English has not been spoken as the first language, have been migrating on their own merits (as primary migrants) and less as dependants to their spouses (as secondary applicants) (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002, 2010). A skilled “primary applicant” migrant has been referred to a migrant in Australia who has met the skilled migration criteria, based on employability factors of fulfilling particular occupational skills in shortage, outstanding talents or business skills (ABS, 2017b). These skilled primary applicant migrant women have been identified as facing unique challenges based on the societal gendered roles (in their own as well as in their host countries) (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Carrasco et al., 2015; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Le & Miller, 2010; Maccoby, 2000; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005) as well as stereotypes associated with their culture, ethnicity and country of origin (Cox, 1991; Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Sandhu, 2012). Examples could include a computer engineer being employed as a taxi driver or a highly skilled NESB migrant woman ending up as a stay-at-home parent because of the strong ‘gender’ roles in the society of her host country (Ho, 2006; Lee, 2013; Purkayastha, 2005). This has begged the rhetorical question as to how far have we progressed as a society in our views, judgements and perceptions against people of different ethnicities, country of origin and other differentiators since the “white policy” was abolished.

Thus, an opportunity has been presented to learn and understand how a number of these NESB skilled primary migrant women have managed to ‘successfully’ establish themselves in managerial and leadership roles in Australian organisations. The definition of what constitutes success has typically come from the government’s perspective (for example, have migrant women been finding ‘successful’ employment as indicated in government surveys?) (ABS, 2017c; Richardson et al., 2004) and not from their own (for example, have they been employed in a similar level of employment post-migration as they had in their home countries?) (Ong & Shah, 2012; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010).

The importance of investigating the careers in Australia of NESB skilled primary migrant women has also been informed by my personal experience. I have transitioned from an international student to a primary applicant skilled migrant and then to a woman manager in the professional white-collar sector. Having contributed
to the country as a skilled migrant and then as a manager in the Australian financial sector, my role transitioned to that of a ‘local’ non-working dependent because of childcare and household duties. This has made me reflect on the underutilisation potential of the human capital that has been “imported” under the skilled migration scheme. These questions have played out in my discussions with a number of friends and acquaintances who were NESB migrants. During our conversations, similar issues relating to home and family obligations as well as obstacles in our respective careers have been raised. This has highlighted the complexity of the intersection between diversity, cultural differences and gender, further complicated by personal perspectives (and thus multiple subjective realities), which has not been widely explored.

In summary, NESB highly skilled primary migrant women have come to Australia with the prospects of finding suitable employment and have been deemed eligible to fill skills shortages through their employability factors such as age, education, English proficiency and relevant work-experience (ABS, 2017d). As primary migrants, these women who have demonstrated their fluency in English, had decided on their own accord to migrate and have been motivated to pursue better career outcomes in Australia with skills to match (O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016); therefore they have every reason to experience career success post migration. However, the contribution of this growing minority group, which has been deemed important and worthy by the Australian government, has not appeared to be documented and their perspectives on their migration achievements and/or challenges has remained unrecorded or unused in informing government policies or lessons for future migrants.

Therefore, to provide depth, richness and context into the experiences of this important and growing section of migrants, this exploratory, qualitative study has looked through these women’s subjective and individual lenses. This study has also complemented the government’s quantitative migration studies and longitudinal surveys on migrant employment (ABS, 2015, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e; Richardson et al., 2004) by adding a human, personal layer and understanding of the context from the migrant women themselves. While the aspects of gender, culture and success have
been described and supported in more clarity in the following chapters, a brief analysis of the research problem and questions have been presented in the following sections.

1.2 Research Problem and Question

1.2.1 The Research Problem

Despite the growing importance and number of NESB skilled women migrating as primary applicants in their own right to Australia (ABS, 2017c, 2017d; Hawthorne, 1996; O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016), there has been little knowledge about them. The core research problem has stemmed from that limited knowledge about NESB skilled primary migrant women, particularly on their aspirations pre-migration and then on their post-migration experiences. This problem has been deemed to be rooted in the gendered role of women in society (Arendt et al., 2008; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Batalha et al., 2011; Demaier & Adams, 2009; Dewan, 2009; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Kalantari, 2012; Maccoby, 2000; Patel & Parmentier, 2005; Range & Jenkins, 2010; Ritter & Yoder, 2004), which has translated into organisations (Arendt et al., 2008; Budworth & Mann, 2010; Demaier & Adams, 2009; Dimovski et al., 2010; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Mason, 2000; Mavin, 2008; North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011; Stoker et al., 2012) as well as in Australia’s migration history that has placed barriers on NESB migrants based on their ethnicity, country of birth and gender (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Barnett, 1991; Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2005; Ho, 2006; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Huh, 2011; Lee, 2013; Liversage, 2009; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Torezani et al., 2008). These created hurdles for the NESB skilled primary migrant women in realising their full potential and thus affected their contribution to themselves and Australia. Subsequently, I have argued there has been a moral discussion that combined discrimination against women, against ethnic minority women from NESB backgrounds (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Darity & Mason, 1998; Dietz, 2010; Hawthorne, 1997; Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006) as well as an “external” definition of success (that has not been defined by NESB women
migrants themselves). However, despite these challenges, a number of NESB skilled primary migrant women have been employed as professionals and managers in Australian organisations (ABS, 2017b, 2017c; Hawthorne, 1996). It has, therefore, been important to understand their experiences through a migration perspective, their interactions in the Australian workplaces as well as their definitions and reflections on their successes.

A brief overview the key themes underpinning the research problem has been presented in the following sections. These key themes have been identified as skilled migration and women; gender, culture and the NESB women migrant in Australia; Gender, culture and the career “success” of NESB women migrant in Australia. These themes have been further developed in chapter 2 as part of the literature review.

1.2.1.1 Skilled Migration and Women

The Australian skilled migration has been designed to attract migrants who would contribute to Australia’s economic growth (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Connell & Burgess, 2009; Hawthorne, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Jackman, 1995; Millbank et al., 2006; Ong & Shah, 2012; Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b). Great diversity in the society and in the workplace has been enabled by migration, with 72,300 professionally skilled women among the 187,800 primary migrants and an increase representation in managerial and professional occupations (ABS, 2017c, 2017d). 60,800 of this skilled primary migrant women have been from NESB countries (ABS, 2017c, 2017d). However, their voices have not been heard in the skilled migration literature as a interviewee in a study on highly skilled migrants (Roberts, 2011) pointed out:

*Academics and government institutions tend to position skilled migrants as a global elite and this is not necessarily an accurate description. By lumping all mobile citizens into such a homogenous group actually works to disguise the voices of the people (p. 36).*

This has been evident in the current literature, where the outcomes of NESB skilled primary migrant women have been incorporated under the wider banner of a gender-neutral skilled migration (Al Ariss & Syed; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Boucher,
2007; Findlay & Gould, 1989; Hawthorne, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Iredale, 2000; Jackman, 1995; Mahmud et al., 2008; Mare & Stillman, 2010; Roberts, 2011; Skeldon, 2009) or results have been reported without reference to other complex factors such as country of origin, ethnicity and other dynamics (Aure, 2013; Kofman, 2000; Meares, 2010; Roberts, 2011; Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012; Van den Broek et al., 2016). When ethnicity, gender and country of origin have been referenced, the experiences of NESB highly-skilled primary migrant women have been intertwined with those of NESB spousal secondary migrants (Aure, 2013; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Ho, 2006; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Iredale, 2005; Lee, 2013; Marsden & Tepperman, 1985; Meares, 2010; Purkayastha, 2005; Robinson & Carey, 2000). While it has been important to further research efforts on migrants, it has been argued that more work has been needed in the gendered nature of highly skilled migrants (Kofman, 2000, 2013, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010; Purkayastha, 2005; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). Particularly it has been deemed important to investigate the experiences of different groups of migrants.

1.2.1.2 Gender, Culture and the NESB Women Migrant in Australia

NESB migrant women have represented approximately (and significantly) 84% of recent women migrants in Australia in November 2016 (ABS, 2017c, 2017d). Much of the current intersectional research in labour market participation has been argued to be focused on gender and colour, for instance, the ‘white’ and ‘black’ men and women (Browne & Misra, 2003). That focus has needed to move beyond this into the intersectionality for all groups, from an elaboration of multiracial and multiethnic perspective, as the ethnic groups’ dynamic labour market experiences could impart knowledge on “the complexity of labour market inequalities” (Browne & Misra, 2003, p. 507).

Has there been a thicker ceiling for NESB skilled primary migrant women than there already was for Australian women in general? Could there be a misalignment between the Australian skilled migration scheme and the society’s expectations (and hence employment outcomes)? The former has not discriminated migrants on gender, country of origin, or other areas such as religion or skin-colour, but primarily on skills, experience and qualifications (DIBP, 2017; Ruddock, 1997). However, NESB

1.2.1.3 Gender, Culture and the Career “Success” of NESB Women Migrant in Australia

NESB migrants made up a big portion of the professional, clerical and administrative occupations in Australia, and highly educated NESB skilled migrants have been increasingly holding managerial positions in Australia (ABS, 2017c, 2017d). While the Australian skilled migration program has operated on employability categories, such as skills in demand being aligned to Australia's skill shortages (Hugo, 2014), successful migration has been typically recorded as having secured employment or a professional position (that may not have required the actual skills in demand, may not have been in the field or at the level of responsibility the migrants could / should occupy) (Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). As an example, the skilled migration scheme has called for a English proficiency score of 6 points in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (DIBP, 2017; Hawthorne, 2010) for successful employability or social integration upon migration to Australia. However, English or accent challenges have been still reported to be an important factor in finding employment or societal assimilation for skilled migrants in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Azmat, 2013; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Berg, 2011; Bilodeau et al., 2010; Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Hawthorne, 1994, 1997, 2005; Lee, 2013; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Teicher et al., 2002; Timming, 2017).

There has been a range of multilayered issues to be recognised when considering the success of a NESB skilled migrant women’s career (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Khorana,
2014; Le & Miller, 2010; Parasnis et al., 2008; Roberts, 2011; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010). For instance, another complex dynamic could be the classification of migrants and self-initiated expatriates based on their country of origin (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Cao et al., 2012). To exemplify this point, an educated professional from Western Europe would be perceived or classified as a self-initiated expatriate and a person with the same merits and qualification from Asia would be considered a migrant (Cao et al., 2012).

Another example would be the push and pull factors of temporary residents wanting to stay permanently in Australia, based on whether their country of origin have been considered developed or not; pull factors for migrants from less developed countries have been described as better employment, education for the children and push factors have been poor social, economic or political conditions in their home countries (Khoo et al., 2008). However skilled temporary migrants from developed nations such as Europe, North America, and Japan have been described as likely to stay permanently in Australia because they enjoyed the Australian lifestyle (Khoo et al., 2008). This differing classification of migrants based on their countries of origin as stated above (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Cao et al., 2012; Khoo et al., 2008) and scaled on the ‘development’ level of those countries has been interesting given that all skilled migrants have been assessed through the same visa application process.

The underrepresentation of women in top and leadership positions has been a topic of much discussion (Furst & Reeves, 2008; Green & Cassell, 1996; Linehan, 2000, 2002; Linehan et al., 2001; Powell & Butterfield, 2003; Russell, 2011). Some of the reasons for such underrepresentation have included personal choices (Hakim, 2000), such as that of that of focussing on domestic roles, especially for NESB migrant women (Ho, 2006; Lee, 2013; Purkayastha, 2005; Russell, 2011), the lack of the skills required to reach heights of power, employment barriers not encountered by men despite having the skills, aptitude and motivation to pursue promotion and being marginalised by the omnipresent traditional “heroic masculinism” (Russell, 2011, p. 76) at executive levels (Mavin, 2008). It has been argued that the limited research, and therefore lack of knowledge and insight, on women’s experiences in senior positions has inhibited our ability to effectively advise women on success strategies for/in these positions (Weidenfeller, 2012).
It has remained to be seen if the glass ceiling experienced could only be addressed at the work-level, or whether the problem has been rooted in early socialisation, structures and roles within a society, which then crossed over onto the work domain. The societal expectations for women, especially when they became parents, could be at odds with having a full-time career, let alone in them trying to progress in the hierarchy. There has appeared to be more pressure on women, disproportionately to men, to make ‘choices’ between family responsibilities and their careers (Baker, 2010; Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kalantari, 2012; Lyon & Woodward, 2004; Mínguez, 2012). As such, advocating for gender parity at work only, without challenging societal values and constructs, would unlikely allow women to have as uninterrupted careers as their male counterparts.

Success has tended to be defined by parameters that were external to the actual women migrants in top-down quantitative surveys (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e; Richardson et al., 2004). As such how ‘successful’ have migrants, and particularly NESB skilled primary migrant women have felt? Has the decision to migrate lived up to their expectations? It would be important to explore whether they have realised their full potential (or felt they have) and if the parameters in the surveys and studies carried out have truly represented their individual definitions of ‘success’. On this note, their individual perceptions would need to be presented with the statistical surveys that have determined and explained the ‘success’ stories and figures of migration policies and migrants. Seeking individual and personal insights from the migrants themselves, as opposed to generalisations on the success of the migration scheme, could provide a meaningful feedback look and potential greater benefits to both Australia and migrants.

1.2.2 Research Question

The research problem identified above could be addressed by going directly to the source, which in this case would mean listening to successful NESB women’s perspectives. This would not only be valuable in learning about the opportunities and barriers they have faced in gendered and male-dominated work places, but this could also enhance our ability to develop effective policies (Demaiter & Adams, 2009). For
instance, this would be particularly important in understanding why less female than male primary applicants have been employed at a professional levels in Australia (ODwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). By sharing their career development strategies in the Australian workforce, the NESB skilled primary migrant women as managers and leaders would provide important insight into the issues they potentially faced, as well as the success factors that enabled them to integrate and thrive in the Australian work life.

This research has intended to study NESB skilled migrant women, who arrived as primary skilled applicants, in order to explore their ‘personal’ experiences of career ‘success’ in the Australian professional sector as working women and as NESB migrants. Therefore, the research has been guided by the following overarching research question:

“What are the individual experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia who are deemed ‘successful’ in their career?”

In this, “deemed successful” has meant that they held managerial or leadership roles. Whether they actually felt “successful” has been discussed with them. Drawing from the above has been the following secondary research question:

“How do NESB skilled primary migrant women navigate their career pathways while facing potential challenges associated with their migrant status, ethnicity and gender?”

To answer these questions, it has been important to know what career aspirations these women had when they arrived in Australia as primary applicants. This research has intended to study NESB skilled migrant women in order to assess their definition and importance placed on career ‘success’, as well as to provide an understanding of their individual experiences in the Australian professional sector as working women and as primary applicant NESB migrants.
1.3 Research Design

Much research for government bodies and other organisations has used a “top-down” approach, surveying people based on pre-determined concepts and definitions. However, to understand the experiences and meanings of the individuals involved, a “bottom-up” approach could enable novel insights, as (Budworth & Mann, 2010) argued:

*The intention of approaches targeting the individual is not to problematize the individual or encourage women to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their social context. Instead addressing bottom up approaches arms individuals with the skills necessary to overcome societal level obstacles (p. 178).*

The literature review (see Chapter 2) has led me towards an interpretive, qualitative study (Babbie, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) with a phenomenological approach, which has formed the most appropriate vehicle for these individual human stories and voices to be heard through their perspectives and experiences. This would indeed provide an insight into the nature and meaning of the lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kleiman, 2004; Langdrige, 2007; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Mackey, 2005; Vickers & Parris, 2006; Weidenfeller, 2012) of professional women (Weidenfeller, 2012). The interpretive phenomenology research framework proposed for this study would provide answers to the questions that had not been fully addressed by “top-down” approaches and studies. In fact no study has explored the individual ‘lived experiences’ of what individual ‘career success’ has meant to NESB skilled primary migrant women who secured management and leadership positions in Australia.

1.4 Significance and Contribution of the Proposed Research

This research has aimed to contribute to the study of highly skilled women’s migration and their representation in organisational management and leadership. The collection of qualitative data has helped gain insight into NESB primary applicant skilled migrant women’s experiences. It has also explored events based on their
perspectives in relation to their post-migration career pathway(s) as well as the barriers and success factors they faced in relation to career mobility and progression.

The relevance of studying this group has been timely and deemed to be of interest to beneficiaries such as the government, diversity management initiatives, and future NESB primary applicant skilled migrant women. This has been discussed in the following segments.

1.4.1 Government

For the government, studying this group could help evaluate the economic differences (benefits or losses) between the current skilled migration scheme’s intent and reality (based on actual experiences). While skilled migrants (from all streams) have provided a substantial net contribution of $84 billion total income to Australia's economy in 2013-2014 (ABS, 2017e), has that been the optimum contribution that skilled migration could bring? Using the same example as above, a skilled migrant working as taxi driver would not be expected to provide the same economic benefit (to herself and Australia) as if she has been employed in the profession she qualified for and has been employed at the level in her home country, say as a Senior/Associate engineer or medical doctor. The importance of migrants filling skills in demand to support Australia’s economic growth has been exemplified by a senate inquiry into the chronic shortage of engineers, (ASC, 2012). The figures measuring the “success story” has not actually detailed or comprehensively demonstrated what has it meant to be ‘satisfactorily’ employed or have a career and if the term ‘successful’ has defined the NESB skilled migrants’ career paths.

There seemed to be two different perspectives: the top-down quantitative definition of success of the scheme (for instance, the measured contribution of ‘professional’ migrants) and the perspective of its participants (for example, whether the migrants have made the best contribution to themselves and Australia). In particular, the success of skilled migration programs has been generally measured by numbers in the labour force (or, at best, employed in their occupational area of choice and qualification) and an estimate of the revenue they have generated (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e). However, there could be a potential disconnect between the
optimum and actual contribution skilled migrants could make (Breunig et al., 2013; Jackman, 1995). The rigorous selectivity of skilled migrants in Australia with emphasis on employability factors such as skills and occupations in demand, age, English proficiency, Australian qualifications and relevant local or international work experience (ABS, 2017b, 2017c; Breunig et al., 2013; DIBP, 2017; Forrest et al., 2006; Hawthorne, 2002, 2005, 2010; Hugo, 2014; Ong & Shah, 2012; Teicher et al., 2002) should in theory, minimise the risk of such disconnect and thus maximise the contribution of the skilled migrant scheme. For example, a qualified doctor would be expected to generate revenue commensurate to their qualifications and not that of a lower paying role/profession.

If the government has been committed in continuing to attract highly skilled migrant women then there has been indicated a clear need to know how these women have ended up fulfilling their potential and thus provided their greatest possible contribution to Australia. In other words, it has seemed logical to want to know the outcomes of those migration policies, beyond the top-down surveys and studies (even to substantiate the numbers) by finding out what has happened to the highly skilled employable resources after they have settled in Australia.

As such, there has been identified an economic imperative for the government to understand and explore the career pathways of NESB skilled migrant women, who arrived as primary applicants in their own right and who have been considered normatively successful by having secured full time employment and even more so in management and leadership positions in Australia. As skilled migration has been a key contributor to Australia’s economic growth (ABS, 2017e), the success stories of women migrants could support the country’s efforts of being seen as a leading destination for migrants seeking economic and social opportunities (Breunig et al., 2013; Ong & Shah, 2012; Poole & Cooney, 1987), particularly in a highly competitive global environment.

1.4.2 Diversity Management Efforts and Employers

The management of gender and cultural backgrounds has been argued to be of importance within the diversity efforts in the workplace and at the top level of
companies (Fisher, 2011; NAB, 2011; Russell, 2011). As adaptability and flexibility have become required necessities for organisations and their business operations to survive and thrive, it has also meant employing diverse individuals in business and human resource decision-making, ensuring increased quality of problem-solving, better utilisation of talent and enhanced creativity (Bahn, 2015; Cox, 1991; Dellal, 1996; Hawthorne, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Jinsoo, 2007; Khoo et al., 2008; Kramar, 1998; Ong & Shah, 2012; Pearson et al., 2012; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010; Trauth et al., 2008). This has also translated in employers’ ‘human resource’ initiatives (looking to address skills shortage and talent retention), in their efforts to distinguish themselves in providing jobs that have aligned with potential employees’ needs in competing for skilled work-force (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Jackman, 1995; Kramar, 1998; Li & Campbell, 2009) and to cater for a larger customer base and international market (representing different migrant groups, language skills and having the required cultural understanding) (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Kramar, 1998). In fact with women’s increased representation in the professional workforce and in competing for skilled individuals, there has been an increasing drive for companies to become employers of choice for women (Mattis, 2001; NAB, 2011; WGEA, 2016). The findings from the ‘lived’ experiences of successful NESB skilled primary migrant women could thus assist with the further development of cultural and gender management policies and practices within Australian organisations.

1.4.3 Future NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women

The importance of mentorship and role models in reducing the barriers and helping women’s career progression and attaining higher organisational roles has been documented (e.g. De Janasz et al., 2003; Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Furst & Reeves, 2008). Addressing the identified research gap could thus be important for NESB skilled migrant women themselves, and especially for younger migrant women. The real life experiences and success stories of NESB skilled primary migrant women could be inspiring and help other make decisions on their migration and career pathways. Like me, other NESB migrant women could have wondered whether they have been making their best contribution to Australia, their employer, themselves and their families based on their skills and experience. The stories collected as part of this
research could challenge potential perceptions of the challenges associated with ‘furthering’ their career in Australia as a result of their gender and culture/ethnicity. The backlash in India resulting from violence against Indian students in Australia and the ‘racist’ label it attracted (Azmat et al., 2011; Khorana, 2012, 2014; Ramachandran, 2009) has been an illustration on the importance of perceptions and the power of information.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has been organised into the following chapters based on skilled migration, gender and culture (ethnicity) to draw out the main themes in the later discussion chapters of research findings.

The literature review chapter has articulated the key literature from skilled migration, gender, culture/ethnicity and other socio-economic subsets that have been relevant to the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career success in Australia. It has identified gaps in that particular context of a specific group of ethnic migrant women in Australia and has brought their voices in within the wider space of skilled migration literature in the cusp of gender, culture/ethnicity and career success post migration. The chapter has also discussed the contributions that my research aimed to bring by addressing that gap.

The methodology chapter has discussed the paradigm and selected methodological approaches guiding this research and their associated rationale. The ontological and epistemological stance that has informed the research and shaped the methodology, philosophical paradigm, design framework as well as the data collection method employed to best address the purpose of this research have been discussed. There has also been a description of the participants, their recruitment process and the nature of the fieldwork. The analysis methods employed and the ethical considerations for the research have been presented towards the end of the chapter.

The first discussion chapter of the research findings (chapter 4) has been based on the theme of cultural fit and adaptation in Australia. More specifically, the theme has been discussed in four main parts with discussions focused on their experiences of cultural upbringing in their home countries, the impact of English language proficiency
and cultural nuances on their adaptation process and their downplaying of unpleasant experiences in Australia.

The second discussion chapter (chapter 5) has been based on the theme of multilevel challenges faced by NESB skilled migrant women, which have mostly been discussed in the earlier theme, and in them drawing an advantage from these challenges. This theme has been structured in two parts: firstly it has discussed how gender has posed a unique proposition in carving out a place for the interviewees and secondly the discussion has delved on how migrant status has or could present a unique proposition for the interviewees.

The third discussion chapter (chapter 6) has been based on the theme of success and the interviewees’ construction of success markers, which have been drawn from their personal experiences at the intersection of gender, cultural backgrounds/ethnicity and migration. The discussion has continued on the cultural influence on the women’s career success and a reflection of how they negotiated their career success at the cusp of these important contexts has been presented. It has most importantly outlined an important adaptation framework called the Multidimensional Synergetic Advantageous Adaptation (MSAA) model, based on the findings and the success elements identified by the interviewees.

The concluding chapter has reflected on the key findings of this research to answer the research questions. The chapter has also discussed the theoretical contributions, future research avenues, limitations and significance of this research.

1.6 Conclusion

The greater participation of NESB women, and in particular first-generation migrants (referring to someone who was not born in Australia), in the Australian workforce has resulted in an increased prominence and research focus in recent years on cultural and gender issues. Since the 1960s women have enjoyed greater participation in the Australian workforce and there has been a shift from the need for a migrant worker to adapt to local perspectives to a more interactive inter-cultural setting. Companies have appeared to have become more aware of the importance to better identify, understand and adapt to the needs of its individual workers in a gender
and culturally diverse environment. This has allowed them to retain and recruit talent from a larger pool of skilled professionals and become more competitive. However, the personal experiences of NESB women migrant managers have received little attention despite the economic and moral significance of studying this population as suggested in this document and this has been the gap that this current research has aimed to fill.

The career “success” stories of NESB skilled primary migrant women could yield valuable lessons for the skilled migration scheme as well as diversity initiatives for organisations. Understanding their perspectives as managers and leaders in the Australian workforce could also assist those who have been settling or planning a career in Australia. With my research, a platform could be provided for voices and stories to be heard about the experiences and perspectives of NESB skilled primary migrant women who have been at managerial and leadership roles and thus, have been perceived to have had successfully bridged potential gender, employment and/or cultural barriers.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Australia over the recent decades has truly become more multi-cultural than ever before, with diversity in food, culture, people and traditions seen through its streets and workplaces; and the latter shifting to a more interactive and multicultural setting (Boese & Phillips, 2011; Colic-Peisker, 2011; Hirst, 1994; O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). Since the 1960s the Australian workforce has witnessed greater diversity especially in women and NESB skilled migrants enjoying a greater participation (Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002). As the awareness of gaining a competitive edge by retaining and recruiting talent from a larger pool of skilled professionals grew, so has the importance of better understanding the needs of its culturally diverse workers (especially skilled migrants) in a globalised world (Bahn, 2015; Carr et al., 2005; Cox, 1991; Dellal, 1996; Jackson et al., 2005; Jinsoo, 2007; Kramar, 1998; Pearson et al., 2012; Thermaseelan et al., 2010; Trauth et al., 2008).

As has been seen in chapter 1, the Australian skilled migration has led to an increase in diversity within the workplace due to an influx of professionally skilled migrants. Skilled migrants have represented about 51% and 31% of the permanent and total recent migrant intake in Australia in 2016 (ABS, 2017b). Approximately 76% of the recent skilled migrants in 2016 have hailed from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and 50% have been women (ABS, 2017b). NESB skilled women represented about 83.8% of the total women migrants in the skilled category (ABS, 2017b).

Indeed, there has been a growing number of NESB skilled women migrating as primary applicants in their own right in Australia (ABS, 2017b, 2017d; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002; Lee, 2013). Skilled migrants in Australia have been selected on the basis of their occupation skills, outstanding talents or business skills, age, English-language ability and family relationships (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; DIBP, 2017; Green et al., 2007; Hawthorne, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2010; Hugo, 2014; Iredale, 2000; Khoo et al., 2008; Ressia, 2010; Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009b). However, despite the economic and moral significance of skilled migrants and an ever
increasing multicultural workforce in Australia, the personal experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women managers and leaders have to date received little attention. The literature review presented here has explored and highlighted what has been known of the ‘research context’ as well as identified any gaps in the attention paid to highly skilled, NESB migrant women who arrived in Australia as primary applicants. Understanding their personal experiences of being managers or leaders and their conceptualisation of career ‘success’ at the intersection of gender and culture has informed the research problem, questions as well as the methodology proposed to address them. This chapter has been structured with that focus in mind.

As such the literature review (as depicted in figure 2.1) has started from the bigger picture by reviewing the literature on skilled migration of women and their subsequent employment in Australia. This has been followed by a consideration of the concepts of gender socialisation and culture, specifically, how these factors have influenced the work experience and career progression of NESB skilled primary migrant women in the Australian workplace. The literature on gender socialisation and national culture and specifically in the workplace context has been important to consider because they have informed the NESB migrant women’s social and organisational value sets and eventually their perspectives on success. That has provided a passage into the core of the research to find out what has been known and what needed to be known of the individual perspectives of NESB skilled primary migrant women and what has shaped their individual values of ‘success’ in Australia.
2.2 Setting the Context of the Research: Skilled Migration and Women

2.2.1 Migration to Australia: a Background

Over time the Australian story of human migration has followed different paths, ideologies and government policies. From the ‘assimilationist’ focus that prevailed till the mid-1960s (where migrants had to adopt Australian cultural practices) to the ‘integration’ phase of the mid-1960s/early 1970s, the late 1970s ushered the multicultural phase (Kramar, 1998; Ruddock, 1997; Trezise, 2011; van Krieken, 2012). From the late 70s to the mid-2000s, the Australian skilled migration has been predominantly responsible for Australia’s foray into multiculturalism (Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a). However Australia’s multiculturalism has been in the shadow of an infamous predecessor, one driven by what has been widely known as the White Australia Policy, which ended officially in 1973 (Cropper, 1999; Forrest et al., 2006; Seitz & Foster, 1985; S. Thompson, 2007; Trezise, 2011; van Krieken, 2012).

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, under what has also been unofficially labelled as the ‘White Australia Policy’, has been one grounded in citizenship, language and colour and directed at an exclusion of all non-European migrants; this has been so Australia remained a white country with Anglo origins (Ahlawat, 2012;
Cropper, 1999; Matthews, 2008; Seitz & Foster, 1985; Thompson, 2007; van Krieken, 2012). Under the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, Australia has actively campaigned to be seen as the land of opportunities for white Britons to migrate and help create an Anglo-Saxon workforce to serve the growing Australian economy of the 20th century (Matthews, 2008). Literacy, assessed by a Dictation Test, was used as the mechanism to restrict immigration because selecting overtly on ‘race’ was against Britain’s foreign affairs and dealings with Japan (Atkinson, 2015; Thompson, 2007). However, the English Test was disputed and thus altered to be given in specific European languages to encourage European migration and disadvantage others; this made it difficult for Asian and non-European migrants such as Japanese people, and Americans or British of African descent for instance (Cropper, 1999; Miller, 1999; Thompson, 2007). In that way, the White Australia Policy connected ideologies of colour to a rhetoric of national protection and aimed for assimilation through ethnic homogeneity by initially allowing only British or Northern European nationals (excluding non-white nationals) and later extending it to Central, Eastern and Southern European migrants (Ahlawat, 2012; Cropper, 1999; Damousi, 2013; Forrest et al., 2006; Hugo, 2014; Seitz & Foster, 1985; S. Thompson, 2007; Trezise, 2011; Walsh, 1985).

The highly anglophile nature of Australia and its preservation in the social identity (Young, 2010) has been evident from its early migration policies, clearly favouring a larger migration of Britons, Irish and Scots because of their cultural and traditional homogeneity with Australia, and including ethnic management of ‘new’ non-Anglo Australians (comprising of Eastern and Southern Europeans) through practices of enculturation, naturalisation, assimilation and adaptation into an Anglo hierarchy (Armstrong, 1997; Damousi, 2013; Hirst, 1994; Seitz & Foster, 1985; Trezise, 2011; Walsh, 1985). The latter was essentially achieved by advising the new non-English speaking Australians to practice cultural invisibility by avoiding any conspicuous ethnic behaviour such as speaking different languages or using hand gestures while speaking (Damousi, 2013; Trezise, 2011).

The implementation of new anti-discrimination amendments in public policies in the late 1970s has led to a wave of humanitarian migration (from Vietnam, Lebanon,
Cyprus, Chile) and an influx of Asian skilled migration has been seen on Australian shores (Cropper, 1999; Forrest et al., 2006; Hugo, 2014; Trezise, 2011). The Australian model of NESB migrants and refugee integration at the time has still been on cultural homogeneity— in that it has been considered a matter of time before migrants became ‘absorbed’ and forgot their cultural backgrounds (Cropper, 1999; Seitz & Foster, 1985; van Krieken, 2012). It has also been argued that the shift of the 1901 assimilationist policy to the multicultural phase in the late 1970s-1980s has been due to the importance of achieving unity through diversity and acknowledging its value (e.g. Armstrong, 1997; Forrest et al., 2006; Kramar, 1998). The shortage of skills in Australia has been indicated as another motive for its shift to multiculturalism (Ng & Metz, 2015). However multiculturalism has been a concept of much contention in Australia at the time (Bailey, 1997; Bennett, 2011; Carruthers, 2013; Forrest et al., 2006; Hirst, 1994; Noble, 2011; Patience, 1998; Ruddock, 1997; Seitz & Foster, 1985; Trezise, 2011; van Krieken, 2012; Wills, 2002; Young, 2010; Zubrzycki, 1987). Even in more recent times, multicultural policies have been argued to be espousing the ethnic hierarchy instead of accommodating difference (Trezise, 2011) where the integration of migrants has still remained largely based on continued assimilationist approaches to achieve cultural homogeneity (Boese & Phillips, 2011; Seitz & Foster, 1985; van Krieken, 2012; Young, 2010). Therefore multiculturalism has been argued to be a continued celebration of the ‘settler colonial’ British cultural heritage of Australia’s majority population as well as a statement of the country’s sufficient capacity to incorporate non-Anglo values in its national identity (Trezise, 2011). However, the non-Anglo diversity in values has been argued to be largely confined to the presence of ‘non-white’ people and ‘exotic’ culinary delights on the Australian streets (Boese & Phillips, 2011; van Krieken, 2012); its national identity has still remained endorsed by populist and traditional old-Australian cultural concepts and national symbols such as Gallipoli and the ‘Anzac’ spirit (Phillips & Smith, 2000; Phillips, 1996; Ward, 2009). Interestingly, Forrest et al (2006) has stated that multiculturalism in Australia has been deemed to be no more than a sophisticated ‘gentle form of assimilation’ of ethnic migrants, not dissimilar to the US, where assimilation has been enforced through official policies (a reflection of its values and prejudices towards the characteristics of ethnic migrant groups) (Forrest et al., 2006;
Seitz & Foster, 1985). Hence, multicultural and diversity principles have been argued to have been parked as ‘ideologies’ in Australia, presenting its failure in recognising migrant experiences in social and theoretical discourses (Patience, 1998).

The Australian history of migrants’ cultural assimilation into the main Anglo-Australian culture has still prevailed in current NESB migrant discourses; factors such as the ability to fit in Australia’s Anglo prevalent culture and the length of residence have been still discussed as important in migrants’ social assimilation and employment opportunities (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Forrest et al., 2006; Ramanathan, 2015). As the length of their stay in Australia increased, NESB migrants have been likely to increase their chances of being employed in high occupations (such as professionals and managers) (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Foroutan, 2008); their initial cultural disadvantages in Australia have been argued to dissolve over time and generations (Forrest et al., 2006). In contrast, migrants from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB) have been able to access, almost immediately, high occupations matching their qualifications (ABS, 2017b; Foroutan, 2008). Therefore how quickly a migrant has been able to relate and adapt culturally to Australia has been considered important in their career progression, as has been discussed in research on NESB migrant women in Australia (e.g. Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). However there has been little knowledge to see if the social adjustment in Australia has been similar/dissimilar for a select group of skilled migrant, namely NESB skilled primary migrant women. Therefore the purpose of this historical discussion in this section has been in providing a context and perspective for the current social adjustment and experiences of migrants in the Australian culture. This section has provided an important backdrop to my research question, and particularly, how the experiences of NESB migrant groups over time have related to my interviewees’.

It has also been stated that the NESB skilled migrant women from Commonwealth countries (such as Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong) have shared familiar qualifications, language proficiency and education to the dominant white-Anglo Australian culture (owing to their Anglo-colonial past) and have therefore, been more likely to secure professional or managerial positions (Hawthorne, 1996, 2002; Lee, 2013). Based on the sample of interviewees in her study, Lee (2013) has
extrapolated that NESB skilled primary migrant women from current/former
commonwealth nations have been more successful because of their cultural closeness
to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture in Australia. In many ways, the NESB skilled
primary migrant women who have been the focus of my research have been anglicised
by virtue of the colonial past of their countries of origin and associated education
system (Ramanathan, 2015). As such their adaptation process into the Australian
Anglo culture would have been expected to have easier and possibly faster compared
to NESB migrants culturally distant from Australia, such as from mainland China,
Japan or Korea. Therefore a literature gap has been identified, which my research has
aimed to fill and explore if my interviewees have indeed related and adapted better
culturally in the Anglo culture in Australia than other NESB women migrant groups.

In researching the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation process of
migrants in their host countries, assimilation and adaptation are terms which have been
often used interchangeably in literature (e.g. Belabas & Gerrits, 2017; Bennett, 2011;
Berndt, 1964; Blau et al., 2011; Brandon, 2014; Chiswick & Miller, 2011; Finnane,
2009; Grenier & Zhang, 2016; Inglis, 1975; Jones, 1967; Kostenko et al., 2012; Leung,
2001a; Lozanovska, 2008; Luo & Bouffard, 2016; McCarty, 2015; Noble, 2011;
Paxton & Mughan, 2006; Rumbaut, 2008; Sonderegger & Barrett, 2004; Sonderegger
et al., 2004; Taft, 1963; Tavan, 1997). However, the earlier conceptualisation of
assimilation emphasised during the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 has theorised
that eventually and over generations, the migrants would assimilate and be culturally
undistinguishable from the dominant culture (Cropper, 1999; Miller, 2007).
Assimilation has been defined as a ‘psychological process involving satisfaction,
identification and acculturation’ (Richardson, 1974 quoted in Inglis, 1975:336). To
that end, acculturation has been described as a main element of ‘migration-induced
adaptation’ (Iman, 2008, p.2).

Assimilation of early European settlers in Australia has been described as an
adjustment process, where their full socio-cultural integration and belonging into the
Anglo-centric language and culture have been considered important while the
identification to their native culture and ethnicity have been perceived to be negative
(Angelini et al., 2015; Damousi, 2013; Forrest et al., 2006; Seitz & Foster, 1985). In
expecting them to readily and seamlessly adopt Australia’s culture, they have had to forge a new identity by denying, concealing as well as relinquishing their past and history (including narratives, stories and memories, which have been considered essential in maintaining their identity and sense of self) (Armstrong, 1997; Damousi, 2013; Wills, 2002). Thus it has been argued that the early Australian assimilationist policies has not allowed for the development of multi-dimensional cultural identities, especially for the NESB European migrants who migrated in the early 1900s (Damousi, 2013; Trezise, 2011; van Krieken, 2012). More recently, it has been stated that migrants could identify with dual ethnicity or nationality, where their self-identity could be either be ascribed naturally through birth within a country or self-selected by a migrant born elsewhere and residing in a host country (Carruthers, 2013; Hodgins et al., 2016; Iman, 2008; Rosunee, 2011). Interestingly, there has been greater documentation on the multi-dimensionality of the identities of NESB migrants (Carruthers, 2013; Iman, 2008; Ramanathan, 2015; Rosunee, 2011; Seitz & Foster, 1985; Voigt-Graf, 2004). For instance, a study on acculturation on Indian migrant men and Iranian migrants (mostly men) in Australia has found that they considered themselves bicultural in their ability to identify with both cultures and did not have feelings of marginalisation because migrating to Australia has not entailed a sacrifice of their own culture and identity (Iman, 2008; Ramanathan, 2015). That has meant that they appeared to have well settled in Australia and have been able to integrate the two cultures, while internally they have been possibly still holding on to their cultural values (Ramanathan, 2015).

Numerically Indians have been strongly represented in the skilled migration category in Australia (ABS, 2017b; Forrest et al., 2006). Interestingly, the Indian middle class migrant has been described as the epitome of how duality has existed in the migrant identity between roots and routes; they have represented a privileged diasporic citizen who enjoyed the dual benefits of continued links with their homeland through the economic and cultural capital acquired in the host society (Khorana, 2014; Ramanathan, 2015; Sandhu, 2012; Voigt-Graf, 2004). What has not been known has been whether the Indian diaspora has been an atypical example and whether NESB skilled primary migrant women hailing from Indian backgrounds have had similar perspectives and experiences. It has also not been known as yet if NESB women
migrants from past Anglo colonies, such as India and Sri Lanka, who migrated by choice as adults and worked closely in inter-cultural settings with local Australians have acculturated or identified themselves as bi-cultural. Therefore the exploration of the bi-cultural identity adaptation process has been relevant in gaining a deeper perspective of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career journey in Australia.

Acculturation has been described to result from the process of individuals negotiating their multicultural presence where key aspects of a dominant culture have been internalised into their own culture (Dinç, 2010; Miller, 2007). As such, acculturation has been generally referred to as the adoption process of dominant host cultural norms (Thomas & Inkson, 2009; Zhang & Moradi, 2012) and has been a concept used in many studies of NESB migrants’ cultural patterns in host counties, such as the US, Canada and Australia (Dinç, 2010; Fer, 2015; Iman, 2008; Miller, 2007; Nesdale, 2002; Ramanathan, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2013; Schwartz et al., 2011; Sonderegger & Barrett, 2004; Sonderegger et al., 2004; Zhang & Moradi, 2012). An earlier conceptualisation of acculturation that has described it as a unilinear process has been disparaged because it led to a one dimensional outcome (Iman, 2008; Miller, 2007). Therefore a bilinear multidimensional model of acculturation has been deemed a more appropriate conceptualisation to describe the adaptation process of ethnic groups in their host countries, such as Asian Americans in the US (Miller, 2007). Following that argument, a better understanding of the migrants’ individual cultures has been required in order to gain a broader understanding of their adaptation process, especially in a multicultural context such as Australia, where defining a mainstream ‘Australian’ culture has been considered problematic (Ramanathan, 2015; Rosunee, 2011).

Though the ‘multicultural’ Australian society has been argued to be egalitarian in tone, with background considered irrelevant in social acceptance (Hirst, 1994), historically the ‘social inclusion’ of NESB migrants and their successful labour market participation have appeared to primarily equate to fitting into the majority’s Anglo-prevalent culture (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Foroutan, 2008; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b; van Krieken, 2012). Though the Australian skilled migration system has been intended to help fulfil the economic needs of Australia (Hugo, 2014; Jackman, 1995;
Kostenko et al., 2012; Millbank et al., 2006; Ong & Shah, 2012; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b), the process of migration and integration policies in Australia (though not pronounced manifestly) has continued to be based on the adherence to the dominant Anglo White culture and society. The mandatory nature of English proficiency tests (exempt for migrants who were citizens from United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand or the Republic of Ireland) at migration has been a good indication of this (e.g. DIBP, 2017a). The identification and celebration of individuals representing Anglo ‘Australianness’ have been described as a well-institutionalised symbolic process in Australian society, with ‘Australianness’ qualities embodied mostly by older white men and women represented as minorities (Phillips & Smith, 2000). Some NESB Australians have been occasionally cited for their ‘Australianness’, who seemed to identify and endorse Australian traditional symbols (Phillips and Smith, 2000). It has been argued that an honorary whiteness status in the hegemonic white Australian middle class has also been extended to an invisible ‘model minority’ of middle class ‘Asian’ NESB skilled migrants; however this has been conditional on them accepting the values of the white Anglo-Australian majority (Stratton, 2009a, p. 22). It has been argued that because of the ubiquitous ‘racial’ make-up of the Australian society, a need arose for the white middle class to make the new Asian-Australian migrants ‘invisible’ through an assimilation process (Stratton, 2009a, 2009b). Thus began the remaking of what ‘whiteness’ has meant to include people from different backgrounds who shared the same ‘Anglo’ values and excluding other groups who have not, as seen in the marginalization of asylum seekers and religious groups who have not shared the Australian values (Stratton, 2009a; Wills, 2002). This has been a different assimilation process compared to the one in Restriction Act of 1901 because the rhetoric of colour and ethnicity has been replaced by how one displayed and endorsed ‘Australianness’. However from the migrants’ end, we did not know if their social-cultural fit/adaptation has been easily explained through, what Stratton (2009a) has suggested, a mere assimilation process of them endorsing or being culturally close to the white Australian values, which has eventually rendered them invisible in the Australian society. Higher education has been described as the ticket for this new Asian Australian middle class inhabiting this demesne of probationary privileged status in the Australian society (Stratton, 2009a)
and many of this have arrived as international students or as educated and savvy skilled migrants (Hugo, 2014; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b). The next segment has explored the literature on skilled migration.

2.2.2 Skilled Migration to Australia

Skilled migration in Australia has been referred to the selection of migrants on the basis of their occupation skills, outstanding talents or business skills, age, English-language ability and family relationship and the categories under the skilled migration stream (ABS, 2017c; DIBP, 2017; Hugo, 2014; Ong & Shah, 2012). The categories have included: skilled migrants arriving independently; sponsored by a family member; and demonstrating business skills and sponsored by an employer or state (DIBP, 2017). It has been stated that the high-skilled migration literature has remained predominantly male focused (Inglis, 1975; Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2013, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004), which has inhibited our understanding and knowledge of highly-skilled migrant women around the world (Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Liversage, 2009; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Meares, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). It has also been stated that the male-focused skilled migration literature has been further reinforced by the gendered migration roles with NESB women’s under-representation in the primary skilled migrant applicant category (e.g. Boucher, 2007) and therefore, many authors have stated that emphasis needed to be paid to the disadvantages of skilled women spousal/dependent secondary migrants (Boucher, 2007; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996; Ho, 2006; Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Lee, 2013; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010; Purkayastha, 2005; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). However in some of the skilled migration research on women, I have found that primary migrant women have been generally grouped together on their experiences with other skilled migrants, such as spousal skilled migrant women (e.g. Lee, 2013; Ong and Shah, 2012; Purkayastha, 2005; Roberts, 2011) and without regard to other diversity dynamics such as ethnicity, education, culture, country of origin, ethnicity and background (Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012). I have stressed that these two groups of NESB secondary and primary migrant women have differed greatly in their
experiences and career outcomes in the host country (largely owing to skills, language screening, to mention a few, at the time of migration) (Hawthorne, 1996, 2002; Lee, 2013).

The literature on migrant professionals, particularly on skilled self-initiated expatriates, has a ‘white’/‘western’ focus and excluded skilled migrants from non-‘white’ backgrounds and developing countries (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Cao et al., 2012; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). The diversity inclusion initiatives (on national and organisational levels) have tended to have emphasised most on the gender dimension, and that has also been benchmarked against the mainstream ‘white’ women (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010), thus lacking a multi-ethnic feminist outlook and a consideration for the multi-level challenges faced by NESB women due to the intersection of gender, ‘race’/ethnicity and religion (Al Ariss et al., 2012; Cao et al., 2012; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010). In addition much of the current intersectional research in labour market participation has been focused on gender and colour, from ‘white’ and ‘black’ men and women (Browne & Misra, 2003). To further investigate the impact of migration on the career development of highly self-initiated migrant women in light of other complex factors, the study of skilled migrants needed to include other diversity dimensions and different national settings (Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012).

There has been limited analyses of skilled women migrants’ economic participation despite their increased proportion among skilled migrants as Iredale (2005) stated. Whilst there have been researches to rectify this limitation to include gender, ethnicity, background, family, gendered divisions of work and other social markers (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Ho, 2006; Kofman, 2000; Meares, 2010; Ong & Shah, 2012; Purkayastha, 2005), the influence of these socio-economic and cultural integration factors on their meaning of career success has not been widely explored. Migration has been responsible for some of the negative classification of NESB migrant women, who have often been looked down upon as illiterate, downtrodden and low skilled, such as seen in New Zealand (Pio, 2005, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014). More importantly, the topic of NESB skilled migrant women’s career experiences and
perspectives has remained under-researched as argued by some authors (Pio & Essers, 2014; Syed & Murray, 2009).

The holistic diversity initiatives needed to evolve from concentrating on the gender dimension into a more multi-racial and ethnic perspective for different individual ethnic groups, whose dynamic labour market experiences could impart knowledge on “the complexity of labour market inequalities” (Browne and Misra, 2003, p. 507). Therefore, any recommendations made on NESB skilled migrant women employment/labour participation issues or on other ethnic minorities would be inadequate without reference to the multitude of diversity facets that affected them (Syed & Ali, 2005, p. 53). This has been especially true in Australia, as in the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of professional immigration has been witnessed primarily from the current and former Commonwealth Asian countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore (Chiswick, 1988; Foroutan, 2008; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b; van Krieken, 2012) and more diversity has been seen in the white-collar section of the Australian workforce. From the mid-2000s the skilled migration point system has aimed at the economical and societal participation of migrants as soon and as fully as possible (Connell & Burgess, 2009; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Jackman, 1995; Millbank et al., 2006; Ong & Shah, 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008; Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b) and has seen skilled migrants from different parts of the world migrate to Australia (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Breunig et al., 2013; Forrest et al., 2006; Hugo, 2014; Iredale, 2000; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b).

2.2.3 Skilled Migration and NESB Women (Australia)

Predominantly driven by Australia’s labour market and economic needs, the point system has emphasised an increased selectivity on essential employability factors (such as skill, age, English language ability, occupations in demand, Australian qualifications, recent local or international professional experience) to align migration with labour market skill shortages (ABS, 2017b; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Breunig et al., 2013; DIBP, 2017; Forrest et al., 2006; Hawthorne, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Mahmud et al., 2008; Ong & Shah, 2012;
Parasnis et al., 2008; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b; Teicher et al., 2002), which have been continuously revised to reflect skill deficiencies in the Australian labour force (Hugo, 2014). Skilled migrants have provided a substantial net contribution to Australia's economy by their labour force participation, and increasingly over time. Based on the 2013-14 data, the total yearly income of skilled migrants has been reported to be approximately $3 billion (ABS, 2017e). It has also been reported that in 2013-14, 911,500 skilled migrant taxpayers have generated approximately $61 billion (an increase of 7% from the 2011-12 figures) of the $84 billion total income generated by migrants from all streams (ABS, 2017e).

The proportion of migrants born in Asia have increased from 24% in 2001 to 40% in 2016 with more representation from China (Cooke et al, 2013; Lu et al, 2013) and India (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d). China, India and Malaysia have been amongst the top 10 birth countries of the estimated resident population in Australia as of 30 June 2016 (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d). Representation from NESB Asian countries increased as the largest number of skilled migrants hailed from India, followed by China (Cooke et al, 2013; Lu et al, 2013), Malaysia and Sri Lanka ranking 3rd, 5th and 6th respectively in the figures from 2013-14 (ABS, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

All the changes stated above have impacted the ‘multicultural’ NESB profile in Australia, as NESB have risen from seen as ‘low skilled’ labourers to highly skilled professionals, with their increased representation from Commonwealth Asian countries in senior professional and management ranks (ABS, 2017b; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Cooke et al, 2013; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1988, 1996, 2005; Khorana, 2014; Lu et al, 2013; O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b). These NESB skilled migrants with superior English ability, recognised qualifications and expertise (Hawthorne, 1996, 2002, 2005; Ramanathan, 2015) have been increasingly forming part of a ‘middle-class’ that more frequently have inter-cultural mixing with the ‘local’ Australians at work or in other spheres (Colic-Peisker, 2011; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b) This has sparked an interest in the importance and practical implications of the multicultural and diversity study of the management of NESB skilled migrants.
In 2016, 437,700 NESB migrant women formed part of the 522,500 (approximately 84%) recent women migrants (ABS, 2017b, 2017d). Current trends in skilled migration has also suggested that Australian workplaces have been experiencing greater diversity with more NESB highly skilled migrant women gaining numerical importance (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002; Lee, 2013). It has been reported that 147,300 skilled women migrated in 2016, with approximately 83.8% from NESB countries (ABS, 2017b). Another trend has seen a growing number of NESB women migrating as primary migrants in their own right to Australia (ABS, 2017b; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002), in contrast to NESB spousal skilled women, who migrated as dependants to skilled primary migrant men. A skilled primary migrant has been defined as the person whose visa application was granted based on skills or proposed activities in Australia (ABS, 2017b; DIBP, 2017). In 2016, it has been reported that 72,300 of the 187,800 skilled primary migrants in Australia have been women; the skilled migrant women participation in managerial and professional occupations have also increased by 17% and 41% respectively (ABS, 2017b). It has also been stated that 79% of skilled primary migrants have had tertiary qualifications before arriving in Australia and more than half of them have been currently employed in a job using their qualifications (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d).

On a significant note, out of the 72,300 skilled primary women in Australia in 2016, approximately 60,800 have hailed from NESB countries, with 77.2% skilled primary migrant women from South-East Asia, North-East Asia, Southern and Central Asia alone (ABS, 2017b). The former British colonies in South-East Asia, North-East Asia and Southern Asia have been represented by Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka (Commonwealth, 2017) and there has been an increased representation of NESB women from Commonwealth Asian countries in senior management ranks (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Breunig et al., 2013; Connell & Burgess, 2009; DIBP, 2017; Hawthorne, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Iredale, 2000; Jackman, 1995; Millbank et al., 2006; Miller, 1999; Ong & Shah, 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008; Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b). Other relevant developments in Australia have been reported to be the increasing prospect for NESB skilled migrants to be selected over
traditional ESB migrants as well as the noticeable increased female representation in higher skilled fields, traditionally deemed ‘male’, such as medicine, engineering, IT and Finance (Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Hawthorne, 1996). For skilled migrant women from NESB origins, such as India, where the social role of women has been considered secondary to men (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Dewan, 2009; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Kakar & Kakar, 2009; Murray, 2004; Patel & Parmentier, 2005; Pio, 2005; Purkayastha, 2005), applying for migration and qualifying as primary migrants in their own right have been important to consider. That has been a reflection of progression in their choices, aspirations, and expectations in their employment in managerial and leadership positions in Australia.

Its economy and labour market conditions have been argued to have made Australia an attractive destination for skilled migrants, which in turn has yielded significant returns from the ‘investment’ in migration (ABS, 2017e; Breunig et al., 2013; Poole & Cooney, 1987). The Australian skilled migration policy’s selection of high human capital has been argued to have resulted in the migrants’ higher education, longer periods in paid work and higher-skilled occupations compared to their Australian born counterparts (Ong & Shah, 2012). However, I have argued that the prevailing economic and quantitative discourses in the global skilled migration employment literature showcasing success migrant stories through economic centric research on returns from migration (e.g. Breunig et al., 2013) or government surveys and research on migrants’ employment (ABS, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e; Richardson et al., 2004) has not been an adequate portrayal of the complexities and context of the migrants’ experiences (Roberts, 2011). Such portrayal of the ‘satisfactory’ employment outcomes for skilled migrants could indeed mask the ‘real’ experiences, including both issues or advantages that impeded or helped migrants achieve their optimum employment. For instance, loss of skills in Australia have been reported due to NESB skilled primary migrants’ unemployment post migration owing to their lack of the recruitment culture (Jackman, 1995) or gender and ethnicity influencing migrants’ level of job security satisfaction, where ESB migrant women reporting higher levels than those from NESB countries (Ong & Shah, 2012). The gender and culture elements have been discussed in the following section.
2.3 Theoretical Foundations: Gender, Culture and the NESB Migrant

In this section, the literature pertaining to the variations and disparity in gender socialisation and national culture has been reviewed in the context of their impact on the NESB migrant women’s labour outcome and interpretation of their career success in Australia. The vast range of research on culture and gender has been acknowledged and appreciated; however, for the purposes of this research, the focus has been on how the culture and gender of the NESB migrant women have helped and influenced their value sets, socially and professionally and helped define their career success in Australia. The review of cultural and gender literature in the NESB migrant women context has been important as these factors have influenced the NESB migrant women’s labour participation in Australia (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Barnett, 1991; Brandon, 2014; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002, 2010; Hewagodage & O’Neill, 2010; Ho, 2006; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Lee, 2013; Ong & Shah, 2012; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010; S. Thompson, 2007) and hence their career pathways to becoming leaders and managers in Australia.

Male or female traits have been stated to have influenced how certain roles and positions have been perceived to be associated and this has been documented as a social and psychological phenomenon with deep societal roots (Kalantari, 2012). Therefore the next section has outlined the interplay of gender socialisation and culture, in providing meaning and appreciation of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s definition, value and understanding of career success, in navigating their career pathways and attaining managerial roles in Australia.

2.3.1 Gender and the NESB Migrant Women

As mentioned earlier, because of the vastness and variety of different gender theories in the literature, the review has been focused within the context of how gender has shaped and influenced the value sets of the NESB primary migrant women socially, professionally and, later on in the chapter, in defining career success in Australia. Therefore in this segment, some of the key theories and material have been based specifically in the context of women’s role in the workplace are discussed.
Evolutionary biology theory has argued that biology determined diverse innate gender skills (Costa et al., 2001) and specified how men’s innate ‘assertiveness’, skills and interests, as opposed to women’s empathic tendency to be interested in cooperation, connections and networks made them better suited for management roles (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008), assuming the traditional male qualities and stereotypes (for instance, strong, assertive, result-driven, risk-taking) as leadership and managerial ideals (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Dimovski et al., 2010; Stoker et al., 2012). While I have agreed that there have been biological and physical gender differences, my perspective is that ‘gender’ skills have been less ‘innate’ and more influenced by socialisation into gender roles. The next segment has looked at social role theory to explain the role of socialisation and social roles on the gender discussion.

On a different argument to evolutionary theorists of gender, social role and social construction theorists have argued that gender has been socially constructed from early socialisation into gendered social roles (Arendt et al., 2008; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Batalha et al., 2011; Kalantari, 2012; Maccoby, 2000; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008), which has contributed towards a gendered division of labour (Arendt et al., 2008; Budworth & Mann, 2010; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Garcia-Retamero et al., 2011; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Mavin, 2008) and leadership emergence (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). The definition of gender differences has been profoundly influenced by history (Bach, 2012), socio-cultural norms and social information gender difference (Range & Jenkins, 2010), with women’s traditional roles of child-bearing, nurturing and household duties restricting their ‘true’ labour force participation (Baker, 2010; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Kalantari, 2012; Mínguez, 2012; N/A, 2008). The traditional perception of women as men’s subordinates has still prevailed in the job market (Foroutan, 2008; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Kalantari, 2012), facilitated by their role at home (Demaiter & Adams, 2009) or working as complementary earners in lower employment levels (Foroutan, 2008). Therefore gender differences and norms on men and women’s behaviour have been indicated in the descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes (Budworth & Mann, 2010). These stereotypes have dictated women’s participation in the labour
market and then in their careers, progression and satisfaction in seeking or being in managerial positions.

However, these gendered role stereotypes could alter in the same way social phenomena could vary (Kalantari, 2012) according to the Expectancy Violation theory, leading to a realignment of group members’ views to accommodate new evidence (Joardar, 2011). It has been also reported that the number of women completing college education has been growing in the US because of changes such as declining gender discrimination (more parental support towards the higher education of women) and women’s growing interest in being more autonomous in the pursuit of opportunities in both the labour and marriage markets, while also protecting themselves against adversity in both realms (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). Similar patterns have been seen in Australia, where it has been reported female graduates have outnumbered males (Martin, 2015a, 2015b). Such changes could alter gender stereotypes into women being accepted as more autonomous individuals (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). Another study of employees in the Netherlands has suggested that an increase in women managers has influenced the traditional ‘male and masculine’ leadership stereotypes, and has led employees to describe leadership roles as having androgynous rather than masculine qualities (Stoker et al., 2012). Even so, many male-dominated jobs have historically drawn on masculine characteristics for the “ideal worker” (Demaiter & Adams, 2009), leading to women acquiring and/or adopting ‘masculine’ traits (Stoker et al., 2012).

There have been two main positions in feminist theories: liberal and radical leftist; the former has posited that men and women have to be judged on merit, not on characteristics and it has emphasised that the change would occur within the system (Green & Cassell, 1996; Thompson, 2003). Thompson (2003) has discussed two main liberal feminist theories, namely, socialisation and gender difference theories. Socialisation feminist theories have construed the differentiation of genders problematic and proposed incremental gender-neutral approaches to reach a state of equity between the sexes (Thompson, 2003). Gender difference theory has called for the celebration of female and feminine traits and has therefore required gender sensitive approaches attuned to women as they believed men and women have
different approaches to achieve the same result (Thompson, 2003). On the other side, leftist feminist approaches, such as structural theory (gender as a power arrangement between the dominant and the subordinate gender) and deconstructive theory (gender viewed as a fixed category, which were not natural but socially constructed and maintained therefore the assumptions about them needed deconstructing) have proposed a radical change of the system (Green & Cassell, 1996; Thompson, 2003). It has been argued that radical feminist theories have been better suited to lend a useful paradigm for discussing gendered organisational processes (Green & Cassell, 1996).

While some of the theories on gender discussed above have differed from each other, they have remained landmark studies and initiatives in understanding women’s roles especially in an organisation. It has been argued that these gender theories have not been mutually exclusive as social and environmental roles could alter innate biological qualities, calling for caution and awareness in the use of any single method of measurement (Costa et al., 2001). Therefore, women’s participation in the workforce has seemed informed by feminist structural and radical theories, in light of social role construction and expectancy violation theories (seeing more women in leadership roles). With a combination of these approaches, the NESB primary migrant women’s labour participation and success construction could be better understood. The way gender has been approached in the spheres of the social roles and socially constructed theories has been found to be the most influential factor in NESB women work aspirations, attitude and opportunities (Barnett, 1991; Purkayastha, 2005). Early socialisation has dictated how different genders have to be treated accordingly to their different capabilities (Arendt et al., 2008; Huh, 2011; Maccoby, 2000) and in them understanding and accepting the power stratification between men as the dominant gender and women as subordinates (Green & Cassell, 1996). Women have experienced structural barriers to their promotion (i.e. lack of opportunities to act in more senior positions and lack of promotional prospects) and lack of decision-making prospects as a result of exclusion from important ‘networks’ (Barnett, 1991). The socialisation into structural power arrangement has been argued to be pivotal in shaping women’s perception about their individual capabilities in entering male-dominated spheres and occupations and the general social stigma resulting from making that career choice (Arendt et al., 2008). It has been reported that these gender schemas and embedded
sex-role stereotypes internalised sexism in women themselves, leading to their own gendered perceptions in organisational contexts and roles, where they themselves have found it hard to relate to other women in higher positions and vice versa in male-dominated organisations (Mavin, 2008).

The feminised roles and societal expectations have also proved hurdles especially when ‘prevalent’ gender issues such as the ‘norms’ of after-hours socialising, work injury and illness, being secondary to a husband’s careers, retrenchment or pregnancy and child rearing, have been reported to have interrupted a NESB women’s employment leading to their roles being below their qualifications (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Liversage, 2009). The difference between pre-migration roles and the feminised social roles expectations in Australia have created impediments for the NESB skilled migrant women in career advancement possibilities as well as access to better conditions, training and promotion (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993). Unlike Australian professional women, who have combined careers with childrearing, middle class women in South-East Asia, South Asia, North East Asia and Central and South America have been reported to be relatively free of domestic and childrearing responsibilities (with inexpensive domestics providing secure home-based childcare and household support) in their home countries (Hawthorne, 1996). NESB migrant women, raised and trained in highly competitive environments, often have had strong expectations in justifying their professional training and have pursued full-time careers; however, the expanded housework demands and lack of and/or cost of childcare in Australia have impeded them in pursuing any qualification upgrade or professional rewards (Hawthorne, 1996). A decade later, the association between family characteristics and the NESB skilled migrant women’s employment in Australia has been reported (Foroutan, 2008). Even in industries such as IT, where NESB women have been as successfully integrated as their male counterparts, inflexible work-child care arrangements and career reinstatement have created a more difficult transition to Australian life for them than men (Alcorso & Ho, 2006). In contrast, child-care has not been found to impede the labour integration of skilled migrant women in France and Denmark as they had state-sponsored childcare (Liversage, 2009). Having no young children has offered substantial opportunity for
women migrants of both NESB and ESB to work outside the house; similarly, the older the children, the greater the likelihood of employment for women (Foroutan, 2008).

In that way, the feminised roles of their home country’s culture influenced the NESB women’s life and how they met the societal expectations of being ‘Australian’ women. The gendered roles affecting NESB migrant women have been deeply intertwined with the socialisation in their home cultures, especially when differences in social gender roles from the country of origin and the host country have been taken into consideration (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Huh, 2011; Kostenko et al., 2012; Reilly, 2012). The social and cultural aspects of their countries of origin and their implications on the NESB skilled primary migrant women in their aspirations to be in managerial positions in Australia have been important to consider. For instance, in line with social role theory, it has been suggested that the patriarchal culture in Indian society has influenced the power distribution in the male-dominated Indian corporations where educated Indian women have struggled to get past their maternal and subservient societal roles for them to be accepted as effective managers and leaders (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). It has also been discussed that NESB South Asian migrant women tended to accept employments in lower occupations as they served as mostly complementary income earners to their high-earning husbands (Foroutan, 2008). However if that would be also indicative in the context of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia, who could possibly be the higher or equal earner to their dependent spouses, has not been known. These gender perceptions and differences could vary across diverse countries and cultures; therefore national culture values and the early involvement in it could help understand the experiences of societal and professional leadership roles (Halpern & Cheung, 2008) of the NESB skilled primary migrant women. The role of the national culture values of the different countries of origin and the NESB women’s experiences have been discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 Culture and the NESB Migrant Women

It has been argued that understanding the variations in cultural norms will help appreciate their importance on gender roles (Halpern & Cheung, 2008) and the values that NESB skilled primary migrant women placed on concepts or constructs, such as
on their definition of success. National culture has not been something easy to observe or measure; therefore breaking it down into dimensions has proved helpful (Tayeb, 2001). For instance, Hofstede’s study (Carrasco et al., 2015; de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Devinney & Hohberger, 2017; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Hofstede, 1998, 2010; Hofstede et al., 1990; Jackson, 2011; Kirkman et al., 2006; Madhavan, 2012; Magnusson et al., 2008; Signorini et al., 2009; Smith, 1992; Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Venaik & Brewer, 2013) teased out five dimensions according to which countries have been positioned. The five dimensions have been, namely, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and long vs. short term orientation (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Hofstede, 1998; Hofstede et al., 1990; Madhavan, 2012; Magnusson et al., 2008; Mazanec et al., 2015; Smith, 1992; Yoo et al., 2011).

Criticisms of Hofstede’s paradigm has been cited in its simplicity (Hofstede, 1998, 2010; Signorini et al., 2009), validity and relevance (Devinney & Hohberger, 2017; Hofstede, 1998; Kirkman et al., 2006; Magnusson et al., 2008; Smith, 1992) design (Orr & Hauser, 2008) and statistical meaning (Magnusson et al., 2008; Orr & Hauser, 2008; Signorini et al., 2009). The tendency of dimensional cultural paradigms to reduce national culture into cohorts, creating a myopic picture of national cultures (Tayeb, 2001) and the empirical extraction and emergence of dimensions issues (Hofstede, 2010; Magnusson et al., 2008; Signorini et al., 2009) have been argued not to provide a full appreciation of the causal relationship between the individual and the socio-structural level (Orr & Hauser, 2008; Venaik & Brewer, 2013, 2016). Therefore, more refined, contemporary cultural frameworks such as Schwartz and Trompenaars’ and the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) models have been proposed in literature (Magnusson et al., 2008; Orr & Hauser, 2008; Tayeb, 2001) to conceptualise, operationalise, test and validate relationships between culture and leadership effectiveness (Magnusson et al., 2008). Some of these contemporary cultural frameworks have been discussed in the following segment.

Schwartz’s theory of universal structure of values has been used to cluster cultures into different groups (Leung et al., 2005; Tayeb, 2001) and it has identified seven dimensions of values (conservatism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy,
hierarchy, egalitarian commitment, mastery and harmony) to predict cultural
differences (Leung et al., 2005). In Trompenaar’s cultural model five of the seven
dimensions have been grouped under relationship with people and the other two related
to attitudes towards time and towards the environment (Tayeb, 2001). The GLOBE
model have nine national cultural dimensions, namely, performance orientation,
assertiveness orientation, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional
collectivism, family collectivism, gender egalitarianism, power distance and
uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2010; Leung et al., 2005).

These contemporary national culture paradigms have been created to expand
and refine the national culture research; however, they have been argued to be
essentially lending support to Hofstede’s paradigm (Hofstede, 2010; K. Leung et al.,
2005; Tayeb, 2001). For instance, Trompenaars has differed with Hofstede on the
exclusivity of cultural dimensions (in that individuals could display both individualism
and collectivism) and arrived at his dimensions to overcome the issues with Hofstede’s
cultural paradigm. However, though they differed on how the core values of different
cultures have been measure, Trompenaars and Hofstede both have stated individual
cultures consisting of common main value that directed their people’s behaviours
(Magnusson et al., 2008). Trompenaars’ dimensions of Individualism and
communitarianism and achievement-ascription have been argued to be conceptually
related to that of individualism and power distance respectively (K. Leung et al., 2005;
Tayeb, 2001). Further, responding to criticisms, Hofstede (2008) has emphasised the
validity and reliability of his dimensions in guiding many cultural (Malach-Pines &
Kaspi-Baruch, 2008) and cross-cultural studies (Carrasco et al., 2015; Hofstede, 1998,
2010; Hofstede et al., 1990; Magnusson et al., 2008; Mazanec et al., 2015; Reilley,
2012; Smith, 1992; Yoo et al., 2011).

Hofstede’s cultural framework has been a relevant in understanding the context
of national culture, and thus the NESB skilled main migrant women’s labour
participation beyond national borders and across cultures. For instance, Hofstede’s
dimensional measures has been argued to be the best proxy for culture and their
relevance was shown in a cross-cultural study of women accessing board directorship
roles (Carrasco et al., 2015). The cultural findings in a study on cultural and gender
differences in choosing a management career has also indicated significant cross-cultural differences in the career choice and aspirations (in support of Hofstede) (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). The gender results have shown large cross-cultural differences (in support for the social construction theory) and found that both genders looked for similar things in a career including salary increase and promotion opportunities (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). Therefore Hofstede’s framework has been relevant in my study as well as in unearthing cross-cultural elements and their influence on the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career success.

The cultural diversity and magnitude of change in social gender roles has determined how women accessed male-dominated roles in different cultures and countries (Dewan, 2009; Dimovski et al., 2010; Garcia-Retamero et al., 2011; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Huh, 2011; Patel & Parmentier, 2005). It has been found that organisational cultures in countries such as Malaysia have been unsupportive, inhibiting women’s promotions by not supporting necessary career advancing opportunities or provision in areas such as networking, mentoring and family-friendly initiatives (Dimovski et al., 2010). Another example has discussed the social role of Indian women in India (Dewan, 2009; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Patel & Parmentier, 2005), who has held a paradoxical status of being highly respected in mythology and yet perceived to be humble, docile and best suited for care-giving roles and household chores in the family (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). The Indian society’s patriarchal culture has deemed men to be better suited for the bread-earner family role, which continue to influence the higher education streams (Dewan, 2009) and employment roles such as in defining the ideal Indian manager role (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012), even in skilled sectors such as Engineering (Patel & Parmentier, 2005). This context of social gender roles in their home countries has been important to consider to provide a background to NESB skilled migrant women’s labour participation in Australia beyond their own national cultures. That has provided a context as to why NESB skilled migrant women have/have not chosen careers below their qualifications or experience levels to become supplementary earners to their high earning husbands (Foroutan, 2008) or how/why Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia have been still impeded by their cultural orientations, gender and family duties (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). We have not seen this explored in the context of NESB skilled primary migrant
women in Australia at the intersectionality of important elements such as ethnicity, religion, culture, language, colour or migrant status. In light of this, the findings from my study will be important in adding value to the literature through its exploration of important areas of intersectionality that will explain in greater depth, the different values placed by women of different NESB backgrounds in Australia on their success criteria and definitions in their experiences.

From the argument above, culture has been an important element to consider when exploring the construction of success of the NESB skilled primary migrant women. Literature has stated cross-cultural orientations and behaviour that proved impediments for NESB women succeeding in the Australian workplace, such as difficulty with informal socialising (a critical factor in personal acceptance and professional mobility), lack of cultural insider knowledge (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996, 2002; Ho, 2006; Lee, 2013; North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011; Ong & Shah, 2012; Syed & Murray, 2009) and performance in public contexts (such as speaking up in meetings from fear of English errors) (Hawthorne 1996; Lee 2012). Not having appropriate local job-seeking knowledge, where self-promotion and capabilities have been central to employment, could also prove a barrier to achieving optimal success for NESB women, especially from Asian cultures where modesty and signs of respect (for instance, no eye contact, downplaying skills) could be misinterpreted/perceived/stereotyped as passive, stupid or submissive (Hawthorne, 1996). These signs have been characteristic of collectivistic cultures, as has been indicated in Hofstede’s framework, where people’s consciousness and identities have been based on the social system to which they belonged and where maintaining ‘face’ value has been regarded important (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Kemp, 2009). Gender and cultural influences on the career success of NESB migrants has been discussed in the following section of success.

2.4 Career “Success”

The external parameters and perceptions of success of skilled migration from the Australian government’s perspective has been discussed in this section alongside an examination if these skilled migration ‘success’ stories in the literature could be a
true reflection of the full utilisation of these NESB skilled primary migrant women’s skills and potential. It has been clearly stated officially that highly skilled migrants have been targeted under the Australian Government’s skilled migration programme to contribute directly to Australia’s economic, demographic and social well-being (ABS, 2015; Ruddock, 1997). Therefore most skilled migration literature in Australia has focused on how increased human capital would ensure higher labour participation from migrants (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Breunig et al., 2013; Hugo, 2014). Two different perspectives of the skilled migration scheme has been thus examined, that of the top-down definition of success of the scheme (for example, a skilled migrant having found employment in Australia as a ‘professional’) and that of its participants (for example, whether the person has been employed at the same organisational level held before migration and/or the level they have felt they deserved to be employed at). Potentially the top-down view has attempted to represent objective success while the personal accounts have exemplified subjective facets of success. In discussing these two facets of success, private fulfilsments and personal meanings have been argued to be subjective constructs, identifiable by introspection and not by observation or consensual validation (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). On the other hand, objective success constituents have been described as verifiable, observable and valued outcomes of the career journey (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). Subjective success has been described as the psychological accompaniment, instrument and indicator to objective success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). The relationship between objective and subjective facets of success has been complex and symbiotic. Without the perspectives of the migrants themselves, the ‘success’ parameters of the skilled migration contribution has painted an incomplete picture of success of the skilled migration scheme in Australia. My research thus has aimed to present a narrative, experience-based perspective to the theory of subjective and objective facets of success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005) and on the success parameters, as has been described in the Australian skilled migration. As a potential consequence, the Australian government could be missing out on an opportunity to maximise the economic returns it has initially aimed to realise with its skilled migrant policy, by the way those ‘benefits’ have been measured and assessed.
Such increased returns have been argued to be achievable through the better utilisation of skilled migrants (Hugo, 2014), making it important to understand what their ‘real’ experiences have been. The NESB skilled primary migrant women, unlike secondary applicants, would not be expected to have faced issues associated with their visa or skill and qualification assessment (these having been screened as part of the migration process). In fact, it has been documented that NESB skilled migrants would ultimately achieve successful employment outcomes in Australia because their decision to migrate has been one based on choice, career prospects and they possessed higher human capital than other migrants (through meeting the criteria) (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). For instance, a study of professional transition programs for migrants into Australia has reported that that primary skilled applicants held higher expectations regarding their career transition post migration as their human capital have been deemed to have high potential in terms of professional success post-migration (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016).

However, the gender of the NESB skilled primary migrant has mattered in achieving career success post migration to Australia; it has been observed that migrant men have been more likely to be in an employment matching their professional background than primary migrant women (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). Compared to the skilled primary migrant men, a higher proportion of female skilled migrants has been reported to be in part-time jobs or 'not in the labour force', with a large proportion looking into requalifying (by studying) or gaining local experience (by volunteering) (ABS, 2017b), which has not been dissimilar to refugee women trying to gain access to the UK labour market by expanding on their voluntary work experiences (Tomlinson, 2010). However, it has also been argued that possessing Australian or overseas assessed qualifications did not necessarily translate to advantageous labour outcomes for NESB skilled migrants (Jackman, 1995; Kostenko et al., 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008), as seen in the case of International students turned skilled migrants in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Birrell & Healy, 2008b; Bullivant, 1976; Hawthorne, 2010; C. Leung, 2001a; Parasnis et al., 2008). There has been then a problem identified, when highly employable migrant with relevant qualifications in demand have not been able to secure adequate and ideally optimum positions post migration. Therefore, there could be a potential disconnect between Australia’s skill
shortage (that migrants were brought in to fill) and the actual contribution of these skilled migrants. As such, we do not know whether opportunities have been available (or not) to NESB skilled primary migrant women for them to fully utilise the skills they have migrated with. The research on NESB skilled primary migrants in Australia has continued to be focused on ethnicity (NESB) (Kostenko et al., 2012) and studies such as Jackson (1995) or Ong and Shah (2012), while discussing women in the category of primary migrants along with men, has not specially focused on NESB skilled women as primary migrants. It has been thus important to understand how NESB skilled primary migrant women has experienced labour integration in Australia, and whether their experiences are similar or diverse to that of NESB skilled primary migrant men. This has been another gap in literature that my research has aimed to fulfil.

The NESB primary migrant women’s definition and individual understanding of ‘success’ would differ tremendously from NESB primary migrant men and possibly, from one another. What has not been known is where their experiences and understanding have actually differed and if so to what extent. The topic of the NESB women skilled primary migrants’ visibility and experiences as managers or leaders in Australia has been rarely explored. Syed and Murray (2009) have argued that NESB women’s workplace experiences and perspectives has remained under-researched. Their employment movements might not have been of interest partly because of their status as a minority professional group by ethnicity and gender; thus the literature thus far has focused on employment challenges and the difficult career fulfilsments encountered by the significantly larger number of NESB migrants in Australia (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Berg, 2011; Bilodeau et al., 2010; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Breunig et al., 2013; Connell & Burgess, 2009; Duncan 2015; Dunn et al., 2004; Finnane, 2009; Foroutan, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Hawthorne, 2010; Hewagodage & O’Neill, 2010; Ho, 2006; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Hodgins et al., 2016; Khorana, 2014; Mahuteau & Junankar, 2008; Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Ngo, 2008; Ong & Shah, 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008; Richardson et al., 2004; Syed & Murray, 2009; Teicher et al., 2002). A good context in understanding the NESB skilled primary migrant’s experience of migration and career success pathways in Australia could be through their cultural background and
early experiences. Yet, there has been little research done on how cultural specific rules/perceptions and experiences around gendered roles in their respective cultural context in home-countries has impacted on their entry, participation and rise in the Australian workforce.

Understanding the NESB skilled primary migrant women in managerial and leadership positions has required an acknowledgement of the multi-layered complexity of their realities, informed by their personal values and experiences at the cusp of gender, culture, ethnicity, migration, socialisation and workplace identity as they have achieved career ‘success’ in their country of migration. Career has been described as performing a fundamental function in the continuous construction and maintenance of a healthy self-concept, consistent with individuals’ changing strengths and weaknesses, shifting beliefs and attitudes and future aspirations (Adamson & Doherty, 1998). Therefore, it has been conceived as a way to one’s continuous learning towards self-fulfilment (Adamson & Doherty, 1998). As has been discussed earlier, while subjective success has included constructs identifiable by introspection and not by observation or consensual validation (such as private fulfilments and personal meanings), objective success has been argued to be verifiable, observable outcomes of the career journey (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). The literature on women’s success has been discussed in this section by presenting gender and cultural elements.

2.4.1 “Success” and Gender

It has been reported over the past decades that women have been graduating in higher numbers than men in the United States (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006), U.K (Mangi, 2016) and Australia (Martin, 2015a; 2015b. It has also been reported that women and men have been entering the workforce in roughly equal numbers as has been seen in Britain, Germany and Sweden (Lyon, 1996), the U.S. (McKinney, 2013) and in Australia (Frazer, 1982; Russell, 2011). However, more recently it has been reported that men have had better chances of reaching executive level than women in Australia (Russell, 2011).

Women’s underrepresentation in top and leadership positions has been widely discussed over the years (e.g. Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly et al.,
Eagly & Karau (2002) have proposed that there has been potential for prejudice when social group stereotypes have been inconsistent with the attributes perceived to be required for success in certain social roles. Social gender role stereotypes have been prominent in the workplace discrepancies assigned to men and women, with men ascribing more significance to values such as achievement, ambition, dominance, self-direction, decisiveness etcetera (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005) and such values have been considered to be congruent to higher paid provider status positions (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Vinkenburg et al., 2011). ‘In general, prejudice towards female leaders has followed from the incongruity of women’s perceived characteristics of and leaders requirements (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Mavin, 2008; Powell & Butterfield, 2003). It has been argued that women displayed more transformational leadership styles, however a combination of leadership styles, such as being vision orientated and yet, displaying prescriptive female congruent behaviours, has been argued to be important in women attaining top leadership positions, (Vinkenburg et al., 2011).

It has been reported that in India, women’s business skills and sensitivity to human relations have been perceived to be a weakness instead of strength when it came to making objective business decisions (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). Sadly, this perception has not been confined to India as the social stereotype of women as warm, nurturing, and caring while men having being perceived as cold, competitive, and authoritarian, have contributed to the popular belief that women made less effective leaders than men (Kawakami & White, 2000). It has been stated that in positions strongly associated with masculine traits, women needed to adopt masculine characteristics to be perceived as effective and be favourably evaluated (Kawakami & White, 2000). However, the paradoxical situation women faced has been evident; if they chose a masculine leadership style, displayed agentic or assertive behaviour, they faced being loathed by their male subordinates (Kawakami & White, 2000), being seen as too aggressive (Scandura & Williams, 2001) and could face ‘backlash in their promotion to higher roles (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Vinkenburg et al., 2011). And yet
if they have adopted a stereotypically warm and nurturing feminine style, they would be liked but not respected (Kawakami & White, 2000).

It has been argued that another issue in women’s promotion has been in the attribution of their success to luck, contrary to men who have attributed success to sheer hard work (Fisman & O’Neill, 2009; Levy, 2009; O’Neill, 2007; Swim & Sanna, 1996). Some of the reasons for women putting success to luck have been because they did not perceive the workplace as a level-playing field (Crowley, 2013; O’Neill, 2007; Vinkenburg et al., 2011), or that they have not enjoyed being competitive and have been displaying stereotypical gender role of being modest and self-effacing (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Their early socialisation has been also argued to have influenced and impacted on women’s own perceptions of gender differences on their career choices (Arendt et al., 2008). This has been reflected in their increasing qualification in traditionally feminine fields such as liberal arts, education, nursing and social work over technical and financial areas (Tan, 2008; A. Thompson, 2003), their reluctance to aspire to male-dominated top management roles (Mavin, 2008; Powell & Butterfield, 2003) and their own internalised sexist perception of organisational roles, have often affected their relationship with other women in male-dominated organisations (Mavin, 2008). It has been reported that even if women succeeded in male-roles and male dominated industries (Arendt et al., 2008; A. Thompson, 2003), they have encountered social stigma (Arendt et al., 2008), hostility to their success, faced isolation (Mangi, 2016; Thompson, 2003) or have been labelled negatively by other women, upholding prevailing misogynist behaviour both for survival and improvement on individual positions in relation to all other women (Mavin, 2008).

The discussion above has suggested that socialisation in gender roles and the association of women with ‘softer’ behaviours, such as in the attribution their success to luck, not being competitive, modesty or self-efficacy, have been considered incongruent to leadership roles. However it has also been stated that adopting assertive and agentic ‘male’ behaviour have not been conducive for women in their promotion to higher positions, thereby arguing that women playing to the descriptive stereotypical social female behaviour could actually work in their favour of being promoted to higher positions (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). The increase of women presence in higher
positions has been argued to be important in the deadening of gender stereotypes detrimental for women in the workplace (Skaggs et al., 2012). It has been reported in a study done on US Fortune 1000 companies based in Texas that having women in both executive and board roles has had a positive influence on female managerial representation through increased mentorship, access to better social networks, and the muting of negative gender stereotypes (Skaggs et al., 2012). However, though there has been progress, albeit slow (Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005), under-representation of women at the highest levels has led to them taking on a token status in an unequal playing field of deeply entrenched masculinity domain, affecting their abilities to advance and to succeed at high levels (Mangi, 2016; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). The slow progress has also been responsible for creating negative views of management careers among women, with them opting out of programs (which reduced their career advancement pathways) and leaving mid-career to choose other ventures or concentrate on their family (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). This gender factor affecting the success of women in management and leadership positions could be due to the glass ceiling effect.

The glass ceiling effect has been referred to the invisible but impermeable barrier that confines women’s career advancement and affects their success in management and leadership positions (Beauchemin et al., 2010; Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Dimovski et al., 2010; Schreiber et al., 1993; Shambaugh, 2008). It has been suggested that the glass ceiling effect has been evidenced in the US labour market by a wider gender pay gap identified in higher levels (Le & Miller, 2010) and also in Malaysia and Singapore organisations, which have been found to be unsupportive and causing barriers on career development opportunities for mid-level women managers (Dimovski et al., 2010). The glass ceiling effect combined with the glass border, which has been referred to the barrier that limited women’s career advancement across borders, have contributed to the smaller pool of expatriate women compared to men (Bruning & Cadigan, 2014). It has also been discussed in context with migration and ethnicity, where highly skilled migrant and second generation ethnic minority women in France have felt they have hit a glass ceiling, which prevented them from accessing senior positions (Beauchemin et al., 2010) or in conjunction with the ‘Bamboo ceiling’, which has been pushing Chinese
women into working for themselves and pursuing entrepreneurial ventures in the US (Tan, 2008). The bamboo ceiling has been referred to the subtle bias against Asian people, in them being perceived as hard-working but showing little interest nor possessing the right aptitude to be good leadership material (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). Unlike migrant women from English speaking backgrounds (ESB), NESB migrant women in the US have experienced a double disadvantage, more apparent among highly skilled and well paid workers (Le & Miller, 2010). The double disadvantage effect has been discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

It has been important to consider the career trajectories of women, in general and the intersectionality of factors that would have impacted on their idea of success. It has been argued that men and women had different measures of success, where men tended to focus on external measures such as status and women focused more on internal measures such as personal recognition, accomplishment, and achieving balance in their lives (Dimovski et al., 2010). For instance, in a German study on career of older women, it has been found that their identification and understanding of ‘true’ biographical success has been a combination of different lasting values in different areas of life (such as family and professional self-actualisation) (Riach et al., 2015). This research has reported that work & life success resulted from balancing private responsibilities, financial needs and wishes for social integration and self-actualisation (Riach et al., 2015).

The above study (Riach et al., 2015) has been interesting in that the research has been conducted through biographical narrative interviews with women, who ranged from having middle to high level qualifications (Riach et al., 2015). However, it has been conducted in a particular context, in Germany and more specifically in the public sector. The experiences and careers of middle-aged women in Germany in the public sector would not be expected to be representative of women in Australia, let alone of NESB migrant women born in a South-Eastern Asian culture. Another point of difference has been in the intersectionality elements explored in the study, based on age, qualifications and work-life trajectories, leaving out others factors such as ethnicity, religion, culture, language, colour or migrant status. In light of this, the findings from my study have been deemed important in adding value to the literature.
through its exploration of key areas of intersectionality that explained in greater depth the different values placed by women on their success criteria and definitions in their experiences.

It has also been argued that women have been embedded in their broader life contexts and played multiple life roles, therefore their careers unfolded differently than men from their and to study women’s careers separately from men’s (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). An age-related women career development model, comprising of three phases (namely: idealistic achievement, pragmatic endurance and reinventive contribution), characterised by differences in career pattern, locus, context and beliefs integral in each phase has been suggested in literature (i.e. O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). What has been interesting has been the recommendation of giving women the recognition and support for their broader life roles by investing in the individuals that will identify necessary resources to make their best contribution; this would also provide a competitive edge and ability for the organisation to draw on the women’s experiences and careers, which will support the organisational objectives (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). From a counter argument, gender has been stated to have had no influence on individual preferences for work values and the continued research focus on small observed gender differences has been accused of allowing justification of social inequality and hence, responsible for workplace discriminations (Rowe & Snizek, 1995).

Bringing back the argument to O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) model which has been created specifically for women, it has not been adequate in discussing the NESB skilled migrant primary women’s broader life context without the additional dimensions conferring to migration, ethnicity or culture. There needed to be more research done on NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia and especially in the multitude of roles played in conjunction to their career trajectories in order to understand their pathways to career success; those roles have been played within the context of gender, ethnicity and migrant-specific dynamics (e.g., “English proficiency, family roles, skill recognition, societal stereotypes, cross-cultural and religious differences, and gaps in social capital)” impacting their career experiences (Syed & Pio, 2010, p.133).
One such context affecting the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s successful ascent to higher roles would certainly be the gender differences internalised by socialisation into gendered roles (Carrasco et al., 2015; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). However, it has been more pronounced in traditional societies, where the gender distinctions have been more prominent (Carrasco et al., 2015; Maccoby, 2000) and therefore one of the many roles NESB skilled women have embodied have been their earlier socialisation in their home cultures. It has been discussed earlier that Indian women’s organisational roles reflected their subservient societal role in patriarchal India (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012); the NESB skilled primary migrant’s cultural background and early socialisation thus provided a good context in understanding their migration experience and gave a deeper perspective into their meanings of career success and pathways in Australia. Yet, there has been very little research done on the influence and experiences of cultural specific rules/perceptions around gender social roles in their respective countries and how that impacted their entry, participation and experience of career success in the Australian workforce. The following section has discussed the influence of culture on the women’s career success in Australia.

2.4.2 “Success” with Culture and Ethnicity

There has also been well-known and broadly agreed status markers in societies that were classified as success criteria, such as educational attainment and occupational category (Nicholson and De Waal-Andrews, 2005, p. 141). Culturally relevant values, such as collective conformity and sense of duty, influenced American Asian’s social relationships, their propensity to succeed or their meanings of life (Yu et al., 2016). It has been found that culture and family of origin played a pervasive and influential role (higher expectations) in career choices of individuals from vertical collective cultures, where they have viewed themselves as interdependent of a group (Fouad et al., 2010; Fouad et al., 2008). The cultural values of a country have been found to influence women’s successful ascent to high level roles as well, as has been revealed in a cross-cultural study (using Hofstede’s cultural model) that certain aspects of a country’s culture contributed in determining how women have been represented on corporate boards of directors (Carrasco et al., 2015). Specifically, firms operating in countries with high “power distance” and “masculinity” tended to have a lesser proportion of
women represented on their corporate boards (Carrasco et al., 2015). It has also been stated that the gender roles and culture of the source country of migrant women influenced their assimilation in the US labour market, for instance, growing up in a home country with less traditional gender roles expedited the labour integration of women (Blau et al., 2011). Therefore, it would be interesting to see how the NESB skilled primary migrant women have constructed their success markers in Australia from their early cultural socialisation. What has not been known has been the influence of their home country’s culture on their criteria and markers of success in negotiating their career pathways in Australia.

The country of origin effect on the human capital transferability of skilled migrants in Australia has been discussed to be more evident in the initial first two years of the migrants’ transition to Australia (Kostenko et al., 2012). It has been argued that NESB skilled migrants have been more disadvantaged than ESB skilled migrants and less likely to be in higher level jobs which led them to accepting lower occupations in order to enter the Australian labour market (Kostenko et al., 2012). Therefore Kostenko et al. (2012) have argued that the migrants’ success in Australia depended on their homogeneity in language, culture, labour market structure, institutional settings and specific skills (Kostenko et al., 2012). Whilst this has wide implications for the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s retention in high professional roles, gender has not been discussed in this quantitative study. It would be interesting to know how much of the barriers to my interviewees’ career success have been due to ethnic stereotyping and perceptions associated with their ethnicity. Stereotypes and perceptions associated with ethnicity have been argued to be an important barrier in career success, as has been reported in the underrepresentation of Asians in North America in higher top positions in the higher education sector (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). Besides facing a ‘Bamboo’ curtain, there have been other impediments such as culturally ingrained aspects on speaking up or being in the public eye, making highly visible decisions, which have been culturally intimidating for some of them (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). Asians, born in America have been considered different, as they have been still stereotyped and perceived by some white people as hard-working, result-oriented but with no aspirations in pursuing leadership opportunities (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). Asian Americans have been assumed to be universally
successful because of their classroom and workplace achievements and hence, that has taken them off the radar as groups that have been in need of diversity initiatives (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). It has also been reported that a triple package theory where three traits of superiority complex, sense of inferiority and impulse control explained why certain cultural groups have been considered to be more successful than others (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014). While Asians have had to endure image and perception issues of being Science and Maths “nerds”, they have, however, not been considered good leadership material as ‘the men have not been perceived to be masculine enough and the women have been seen as feminine, submissive and subservient’ (Oguntoyinbo, 2014, p. 10). Indian migrants in North America have also related their share of negative stereotyping that they have been socially inept and mainly interested in economic dealings, lacking communication and leadership skills, which has proved disadvantageous for them (Sandhu, 2012).

On the other hand, it has also been reported that Indian elites have worked cultural stereotypes to their advantage; for instance, the general belief and reputation of Indians being smart have been reported to be especially helpful when it has come to the field of Medicine (Sandhu, 2012). The Elite Indians have cited that insider knowledge, social and cultural capital (i.e. knowledge of their host country) on top of their technical capital have been critical in their success in the US; however, they considered themselves isolated and atypical stories of success in the Silicon Valley in California (Sandhu, 2012). While this study has been interesting in that it explored the Indian middle class migrants’ construction of success in the US, it has still been focused on men as the interviewees have been primarily Indian migrant males and more specifically members of an Indian Professional Skilled Club in California (Sandhu, 2012). Therefore that would not be indicative of the advantages or disadvantages of social and cultural capital as well as the technical skills (screened during migration) of the NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia in their experiences of success.

Social and cultural capital could be extended to include important aspects of host culture such as language. Professional English fluency has been important for NESB women migrants in accessing successful employment in higher occupational
levels because a lack of command and/or a ‘sophisticated’ professional fluency of the English language have been cited as obstacles for NESB skilled migrants’ employment in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Hawthorne, 1994, 2010; Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010; Lee, 2013; Ressia, 2010) and similar experiences have been reported in the US (Carliner, 2000; Xi, 2013), Canada (Chiswick, 1988; Chiswick & Miller, 2011; Grenier & Zhang, 2016) and New Zealand (Li & Campbell, 2009; Pio, 2005, 2007). The greater the cultural distance of the migrant from the host country, the more important the role of English has been on women migrants’ cultural adaptation, settlement and economic life in Australia (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Berg, 2011; Foroutan, 2008; Lee, 2013; Leung & Karnilowicz, 2009; Nesdale & Mak, 2003). Following this argument, the cultural distance from the dominant Anglo-Australian culture might prove a cultural and career impediment or a facilitator.

Mandatory English requirements have been a core component of the Australian skilled migration; however, it has been questioned whether this has been guided by labour market protectionism rather than by an economic productivity concern (Hawthorne, 1994). This has been particularly interesting as fluency in the host language alone has not necessarily provided access to the labour market post migration (Csedo 2008, cited in Aure, 2013: 280). For instance, in New Zealand ethnic minority women’s visible characteristics such as skin colour, accents or not having Anglo-Saxon names have all impacted on how their skills, qualifications or their ability to speak/understand or function in English have been perceived (Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010).

The fluency in English as a second or supplementary language, also, have not necessarily equated to proficiency in the English used in Australia. The differences in the ‘Aussie’ vernacular English from English spoken in other countries have been described in its ‘aggressively- vulgar’, ‘self-mocking’ humour and its tendency to formalise people’s names, even that of ‘blokes’/ ‘sports’/ ‘Larrikin’ in leadership positions (Walsh, 1985)- that could render general conversations potentially incoherent to a non-native, especially from Asia. Language has been found to be a barrier for NESB professional migrants in New Zealand in understanding ‘local’ humour, jokes and cultural implications and therefore, hindered their identification and
integration in the workforce (Li & Campbell, 2009). ‘English’ as a language has been contextual, reflecting the cultural meanings and norms of the country in which it has been spoken; British English, American English, Canadian English and Australian English (to name a few) have all differed in some parts of speech and manner of delivery, as does Singlish, a version of English spoken in Singapore (Wong, 2005). The emphasis and importance on speaking ‘Australian’ to socially assimilate in Australia has been stated in the Guardian (Duncan, 2015), where migrants from parts of the UK, such as Scotland, have been taunted because of their accent. This was illustrated in a recent example in the Australian senate, where a politician was asked by a fellow senator to speak ‘Australian’ most likely because of his Scottish background. The author of the Guardian article stated that, while she has struggled as a white person from an English speaking country, it would be more difficult for a non-white person from a different language and culture (Duncan, 2015). Accents have been a potential recruitment impediment identified in NESB skilled migrant’s employment in Australia (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Ganguly, 1995; Timming, 2017), similar to the US (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010). Gender has been an added complexity as women speaking with an accent have been perceived more negatively than men (Timming, 2017) and ethnicity/country of origin have been related to favourable/unfavourable perception (the French accent has been preferred over the Japanese), especially in the employment context (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010).

Another factor in understanding the success of migrants in their host countries could be to view it through their migration from less developed NESB countries to the more socio-economic advanced Australia. For instance, a study conducted in Albania, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia, and further tested in the US, has found that migrants who moved from economically troubled regions to more socio-economic advanced societies scored higher on motivation to achievement and power than non-migrants, and that this motivation has been associated with hard work, efficiency and competitiveness (Boneva et al., 1998). The study has brought to light the challenges of migrants ‘switching’ cultures through migration as indicated in Boneva et al. (1998). However, one main difference has been that most of the migrants in the research were from Eastern Europe and the US and therefore could be assumed to be ‘white’,
although this has not been mentioned in the study. The propensity to succeed has been explained by migrants’ movement patterns from less fortunate to developed destinations and in doing so, the psychological drive of certain individuals to succeed outside of that paradigm/context have not been explored. Therefore, my study would contribute by adding the voices of a set of driven women who migrated with skills and motivation to achieve career success in Australia, regardless of their country of origin’s socio-economic conditions.

2.4.3 “Success” for the NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women in Australia

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career success, it has been important to look at the literature on their labour market participation in Australia. The skilled migration literature documented the barriers/disadvantages faced by NESB women migrants, especially for the spousal skilled ‘secondary applicant’ woman (Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2013; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Lee, 2013; Purkayastha, 2005), which has led to underutilisation of skills and under-employment of skilled migrants (Jackman, 1995; Pearson et al., 2012) or “psychological” brain waste from the failure by host countries’ capitalisation of the migrants’ skills (Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). The failure of NESB migrant women to achieve success in the Australian labour market has been attributed to entry barriers such as local employers’ negative cultural and ethnic stereotyping, devaluation of ‘real’ skills and competence (Tharmaseelan et al., 2010) and NESB education credentials (B. Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008b; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1997, 2002; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010), even by professional associations (Torezani et al., 2008), sometimes reflecting “automatic devaluing” of NESB country skills and credentials (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Hawthorne, 2005; Torezani et al., 2008). Lack of Australian work experience and local referees have also been identified as employment barriers for NESB migrants (Hawthorne, 1996, 1997; Torezani et al., 2008). Perceived ethnicity through physical features, language or a foreign accent, in addition to a low ‘cultural fit factor’ by Australian employers have impeded NESB migrants’ employment chances (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006; Torezani et al., 2008), with a general preference for employers in hiring culturally
close ESB migrants or Australian-born workers (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008b), similar to New Zealand (Li & Campbell, 2009; Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014).

What has not been known has been the extent/degree of acculturation or adaptation to the host country culture migrants would have to undergo to ensure career success. The process of adaptation of Asian migrants in their ‘success’ journeys have been explored from different angles such as that of ‘active’ assimilation in describing the identification of rich, successful (predominantly male) Indian migrants as elites in Southern California and the Silicon Valley in the US (Sandhu, 2012). While it has been suggested that cultural adaptation of highly skilled migrants to the Australian way of life and culture were important (Balasubramanian et al., 2016), that has not been fully explored in the context of highly skilled NESB primary migrant women and the different elements of the Australian culture they have had to adapt to so as to be considered successful.

A study has examined cultural and gender differences in choosing a management career among 390 male and 357 female Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students from seven countries using Hofstede and Schneider’s Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) models and three gender theories (biological evolutionary theory, social role theory and social construction theory) (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). Schneider’s ASA model has proposed that people tended to be attracted by similar characteristics of work environments, based on their needs and abilities (Doms & zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014) and subsequently attracted similar individuals through three interacting processes of attraction, selection and attrition (Doms & zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Slaughter et al., 2005; Van Hoye & Turban, 2015). Cross cultural variations in career choice and aspirations influencing a management career choice have been in support of Hofstede. Despite looking for similar salary and opportunities at work, women in traditionally male dominated careers have faced salary disparity and less compensation for comparable skills, effort and responsibility to men (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008) and more so at higher roles (Le & Miller, 2010). Though the results of the study (Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008) could translate into macro-organisational level
recommendations and occupational gender parity, the limitation of the study has been in the use and unfair comparison of Schneider’s ASA model to conventional career theories. The ASA theory has also been used in suggesting that migrants’ employment success required identification to the New Zealand culture and that the emphasis placed has been on similarity than diversity (Mace et al., 2005 as quoted in Li and Campbell, 2009:374).

Downward social comparison theory has stated that individuals have compared themselves to less fortunate others; when they have negative experiences, their subjective well-being could be improved by lowering their reference points and comparing their outcomes with others who have worse outcomes (Bonifield & Cole, 2008; Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Keum, 2016). For example the group of US ‘Elite’ Indian migrants identified themselves as atypical and suggested their essential success elements have distinguished them from poorly perceived and stereotyped ‘lowly’ Indian migrants, who spoke in heavy accents and struggled to fit in to the American ‘white’ culture (Sandhu, 2012). Closer to home, in Australia it has been reported that respectable middle-class Indian Australians also acted effectively as a ‘white’ middle class by scrupulously distinguishing themselves from recent Indian arrivals on account of their self-imposed geographical and ethnic segregation, their lack of local knowledge and ‘their allegedly uncivilised roots and everyday behaviour on Australian streets’ (Khorana, 2014, p. 259). What has not been known is if career success, as defined by the NESB skilled primary migrant women, have been relative to other NESB migrant women who arrived as refugees or spousal migrants and were potentially in lower employment roles than them.

A qualitative study on overseas-qualified dentists in Australia has suggested a cultural adaptation process continuum called “newness-struggle-success” that led to them having a better understanding of the Australian culture (Balasubramanian et al., 2016). There has been appreciation for the multiculturalism, freedom and relaxed lifestyle of Australia (Balasubramanian et al., 2016), similar to the experiences of NESB migrant women entrepreneurs in this country (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016) and migrants from developed countries like Europe, North America, and Japan who have ‘chosen’ to stay in Australia permanently (Khoo et al., 2008).
The literature on Elite Indian migrants (Khorana, 2014; Sandhu, 2012) discussed their ‘active’ assimilation of middle class migrants in the US and Australia; in the US, they have relayed their eagerness in displaying their mastery of ‘white’ hobbies/interests over native ones (Sandhu, 2012). However, an important difference in Sandhu’s (2012) research has been that, while the successful Indian in the US have been keen to show how Americanised they have been, they also distanced themselves from the locals and considered themselves unique from everyone else (i.e. migrants and locals alike). Their assimilation has been in part a very conscious, meditated and self-absorbed process in that they have only assimilated to certain ‘white-American’ cultural elements into their own that proved particularly beneficial in their career success.

There has been no literature that has similarly documented the adaption identification process impacting on the success of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia. The idea of how cultural history, inheritances of linguistic and cultural capital, belonging to an ethnicity, country or community and gender has played a part has been sparse and fragmented in the literature (Rosunee, 2011). We do not know if NESB skilled primary migrant women have felt like the selected ‘model minority’ in a predominantly white Anglo culture, if their success experiences have been atypical and if there have been conscious efforts in countenancing Australian cultural values with their own in negotiating career success. The NESB skilled primary migrant women have not seen their experiences and career pathways well documented in the literature and as such more focus has been required to relate their experiences in Australia, particularly on how they have negotiated their career pathways to managerial positions.

Understanding NESB skilled primary migrant women and the management of their career in their host country have required an appreciation and acknowledgement of the multi-layered complexities in their realities, opportunities, restrictions and experiences within the context of socio-cultural inclusion/exclusion, ethnicity, residency; education issues (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Khorana, 2014; Parasnis et al., 2008; Roberts, 2011; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b; Syed, 2007) including family role dynamics, especially for NESB skilled migrant women in Australia (Alcorso & Ho,
Ethnic minority women in Australia belonged to more than one disadvantaged social group of gender and faced multilevel discrimination (Syed, 2007; Syed & Pio, 2010). Illustrating this multilevel disadvantage faced by NESB migrant women, Indra Nooyi (Murray, 2004), the fifth (and first NESB) CEO of PepsiCo shared the following (Khaleeli, 2011):

"Immigrant, person of colour, and woman, three strikes against you . . . So I would work extra hard at it. More hours, yes. More sacrifices and trade-offs, yes. That had been the journey."

Ethnicity, migrant status and gender could indeed be disadvantages for NESB migrant women (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Hawthorne, 2002; Khaleeli, 2011; Le & Miller, 2010; Purkayastha, 2005; Syed, 2007). However, they could also serve a dual purpose in creating advantages (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). The importance of NESB migrants helping organisations distinguish themselves have been argued in their service to varied customer groups (representing different migrant groups, language skills and having the required cultural understanding) and catering to a more international and global market (Kramar, 1998; Pearson et al., 2012; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). A study on past, present and potential migrants in New Zealand has argued the importance of migrants in ensuring human resource availability and the benefits of their experiences and their international expertise gained through migration and working globally (Carr et al., 2005). Another qualitative study of NESB skilled migrants in New Zealand has explored their employment challenges through a spectrum of interviewees hailing from different parts of the world (including China, Europe and Africa) and expanded on that value proposition argument of migrants as human resources with ‘professional experiences and extensive range of networks in the international market’ (Li and Campbell, 2009 p.288). The reversing of the double or triple disadvantage to become a benefit has been illustrated by some NESB migrant women entrepreneurs who have capitalised on their gender, ethnic knowledge/contacts, linguistic skills and cultural characteristics to achieve success (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016).
The NESB skilled primary migrant women’s definition and individual understanding from their experiences could differ from the government’s prescribed parameters in their quantitative surveys of migrant settlement and employment success (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e; Richardson et al., 2004). There has been literature on women negotiating their career pathways to managerial and leadership positions (Bruning & Cadigan, 2014; Budworth & Mann, 2010; Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Carrasco et al., 2015; Chinyamurindi, 2016; Demaeter & Adams, 2009; Dimovski et al., 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Furst & Reeves, 2008; E. Green & Cassell, 1996; Grissom et al., 2012; Halpern & Cheung, 2008; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Kawakami & White, 2000; Khaleeli, 2011; Linehan, 2000, 2002; Linehan et al., 2001; Lyon & Woodward, 2004; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Markham et al., 1985; Mattis, 2001; Mavin, 2008; Moreno & McLean, 2016; N/A, 2008; North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; O’Neill, 2007; Powell & Butterfield, 2003; Riach et al., 2015; Ritter & Yoder, 2004; Russell, 2011; Schreiber et al., 1993; Shambaugh, 2008; Skaggs et al., 2012; Stoker et al., 2012; Tharenou, 2005; Vinkenburg et al., 2011; Weidenfeller, 2012). The importance of mentorship and roles models in reducing the barriers and helping women’s career progression in attaining higher organisational roles has been emphasised (Davis, 2008; De Janasz et al., 2003; Demaeter & Adams, 2009; Dreher & Chargois, 1998; Dworkin et al., 2012; Furst & Reeves, 2008; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Tharenou, 2005). Hearing what other women from similar backgrounds had experiences and achieved, could inspire and assist future NESB skilled primary migrant women who have been settling or planning a career in Australia. As such a gap has been identified in exploring their career mobility/progression, lived experiences of being successful in a different cultural setting, both as NESB, skilled primary migrants and as ‘women’ in Australia. The NESB skilled primary migrant women’s voices and their employment experiences in aspiring or achieving managerial positions in Australia has been missing, particularly their personal negotiation of their career pathways in their host countries at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and migration.
2.5 Conclusion

Migrants have been emphasised as a source of competitive advantage for their host countries, in that they help address demographic changes such as an aging workforce, provide skilled labour as nation building blocks, create natural trade links for the host country with the continued links with their countries of origin and also contribute to a reverse 'brain flow' for the countries of residence and origin (Ng & Metz, 2015). The importance of skilled migrants have been highlighted in the Australian point skilled migration system, which has been designed to attract people who would contribute to Australia’s economic growth (ABS, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Connell & Burgess, 2009; Hawthorne, 2005; Hugo, 2014; Jackman, 1995; Millbank et al., 2006; Ong & Shah, 2012; Ruddock, 1997; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b).

The greater participation and contribution of NESB skilled primary migrant women in the Australian workforce has led their issues to gain greater prominence in recent years. However, despite their importance, the experiences of “successful” NESB skilled migrant women as primary applicants and their career pathways to managerial roles has to date received little attention. Skilled migration has remained a key contributor to Australia’s economic growth (ABS, 2017e) and in committing to attract and accept highly skilled migrant women, there has been a need identified to know how these women have ended up fulfilling their potential and if they have provided their greatest possible contribution to Australia.

The inadequacy of the prevailing discourses in migration research and the lack of migrant experiences and stories to capture the complexities involved in the experiences of migrants has been reported (Carruthers, 2013; Damousi, 2013; Roberts, 2011; Rosunee, 2011). The NESB skilled primary migrant women’s economic and other contributions have been diluted in within the dominant narratives of skilled migration, (e.g. Chiswick, 1988; Hugo, 2014; Roberts, 2011). There appeared to be no recent exploratory study available on understanding the experiences of NESB skilled migrant women in Australia, especially the women who have arrived as primary applicants in their own rights, who have secured full time employment in Australia with aspirations of being in leadership/managerial positions and therefore, perceived
to have successfully bridged potential gender, employment and/or cultural barriers. Therefore, the current skilled literature in Australia has not informed us on important issues pertaining to the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s skills and talents to aspire to managerial positions in Australia.

It has been argued that more work has been needed in the gendered nature of highly skilled migrants (e.g. Aure, 2013; Iredale, 2005; Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2013, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004; Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012), to mention a few. A further argument has been that much of the current intersectional research in labour market participation has been focused on gender and colour, from the ‘white’ and ‘black’ men and women and it needed to move beyond, into the intersectionality to elaborate the multiracial and multiethnic perspective, as the ethnic groups’ dynamic labour market experiences could impart knowledge on “the complexity of labour market inequalities” (Browne and Misra, 2003, p. 507). The need for further research at the intersection of gender and ethnicity coupled with other diversity issues such as religion and language has also been argued (Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010).

There have been diversity efforts in the local workplace realising the need to include the management of gender and cultural backgrounds (Fisher, 2011; NAB, 2011; Russell, 2011) and in employing diverse individuals in business and human resource decision-making, to ensure increased quality of problem-solving, better utilisation of talent and creativity (Bahn, 2015; Cox, 1991; Dellal, 1996; Hugo, 2014; Kramar, 1998; Ong & Shah, 2012). With women’s increased representation in the skilled professional workforce, there has been an increasing drive for companies to become employers of choice for women (NAB, 2011; WGEA, 2016). The significance in addressing the literature gap on the NESB skilled primary migrant women has been primarily because it has been timely and would be expected to be of benefit to the diversity management initiatives, researchers and future skilled NESB women migrants and the government. In addressing this literature and research gap, a platform could be provided for voices and stories to be heard about the experiences and perspectives of NESB skilled primary women migrant managers and leaders, who
could be perceived to have successfully bridged potential gender, employment and/or cultural barriers. Their stories of their career pathways would be a significant contribution to the literature of skilled women’s migration and migrant women’s representation in management and leadership ranks.

The importance of addressing this gap will be beneficial to the government in reflecting on the potential economic benefits/loss between the current skilled migration scheme and reality. In other words, it could seem logical to want to know the outcomes of the migration policies, beyond the top-down surveys and studies, by finding out what has happened to highly skilled employable resources after they have settled in Australia. By accessing the individual perspectives from an interpretive standpoint, it will be important to substantiate the ‘success’ story of the Australian skilled migration scheme through the contributions of the NESB skilled migrant women leaders and managers. Addressing this literature gap has been equally important for NESB skilled primary migrant women themselves, and especially for younger migrant women, who would have wondered as to whether they have been making their best contribution to the country, their employer, themselves and their families based on their skills and experience. It has also been critical that future NESB skilled primary migrant women have been able to make informed decisions based on real experiences of migration to Australia.
Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter has discussed the paradigm and selected methodological approaches guiding this research and rationale. As outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1998), the methodology has been the way in which problems have been approached, answers have been sought and research has been conducted. The qualitative methodology and design framework for this phenomenological study on NESB migrant women have been shaped by my ‘assumptions, interests, purposes, theory and perspectives’ (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 3) as well as the rich insight that has been sought. Through phenomenology, the individual stories and perspectives of these participating women have been related through a process of listening, writing, identifying, analysing and interpreting. The data collection method employed for this study has been semi-structured in-depth interview.

This chapter has also outlined the ontological and epistemological stance and positioning that informed the research. That stance has also determined the methodology, philosophical paradigm, design framework as well as the method employed to best address the purpose of this research. The rest of the chapter has subsequently discussed the data collection method and explained the medium of in-depth interviews. It has also described the participants, their recruitment and the fieldwork. The analysis methods employed and the ethical considerations for the research have then been presented.

As per Chapter 1, the purpose of this research and the question that it sought to answer has been:

“What are the individual experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia who are deemed ‘successful’ in their career?”

This has been followed by a secondary research question:
“How do NESB skilled primary migrant women navigate their career pathways while facing potential challenges associated with their migrant status, ethnicity and gender?”

3.2 An Interpretive Paradigm

This research has been directed by an interpretive/constructivist philosophical paradigm. Paradigms have been defined as the fundamental models or frames of reference for managing our observations and reasoning outlining different explanations on the nature of social realities or theories (Babbie, 2010). A philosophical paradigm has been described as a ‘basic belief system or world view’, which has guides and defined a research as well as outlined the boundaries for a legitimate investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 2003, p.105).

Philosophical paradigms have been argued to be fundamental, more so in qualitative research, as they have offered a research study continuity and consistency in its conduct and results by determining the appropriate methodological processes, guided the data analysis approach and established the importance of different issues/concepts to the research field and presenting the discussion (Mackey, 2005). Philosophical paradigms have guided the researcher’s approach to data analysis, established the importance of different issues and concepts to the research area as well as helped drive the presentation of the discussion (Mackey, 2005).

The interpretive philosophical paradigm has explored the nature of reality and relation through addressing the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions in the following ways. The ontological stance of this paradigm has argued that there have been multiple realities and that reality has been socially constructed by social actors though their actions and interactions (Babbie, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In the current research context, for example, such a stance has argued that the definition of “success” could vary between the generalisations made by top-down surveys as well as among the NESB skilled primary migrant women interviewed. The epistemological question, under this interpretive philosophical paradigm, has been based on subjective meanings with no right or wrong construction and its avocation relying on ‘persuasiveness’ and value rather than hard proof such as in quantitative
research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The women interviewed for this study have provided their individual perspectives of their construction of their ‘reality’. The aim has thus not been to draw general assumptions from figures but instead to obtain a final product that has been rich in context and brought depth and meaning to the women’s individual construction of what they have experienced.

The methodology of qualitative research has been discussed in the next section.

3.3 Methodology of Qualitative Research

The overarching strategy for this research has been qualitative because I have aimed to avoid a top-down statistical analysis of a ‘reality’ and instead to explore the richness of human experiences from their subjective individual perspectives. This section has provided a general overview of the key concepts that underpinned my methodology, which have been explained in relation to my research in later sections.

Every facet of social life and perspectives from different point of views have been important in qualitative research, as there has been much to be learned from social settings and people (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative research and researchers approach reality through the meanings people attach and how they act in their everyday life; therefore empathy and identification with the participants have been deemed imperative in understanding their perspectives (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The nature of qualitative research has been considered inductive in that concepts, insights and understanding have been developed from data and the researcher has warranted a close fit between the data produced to the participants’ words and actions to outline the significance of their research (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative research has been guided by flexibility in conducting research with ‘guidelines but never rules’ as ‘the methods have served the researcher, but never has the researcher been a slave to procedure and technique’ (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 10).
3.4 Design Framework: Phenomenology

This research on the experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women managers and leaders has followed an interpretive phenomenological methodological approach based on the Heideggerian philosophy.

Humans have been described as social beings whose behaviour, words and actions have been yields of their social construction of their social reality; as such they have report their realities as it has made sense to them (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, there has been a need to understand and attempt to depict/analyse the social actors’ stories from their points of view, to capture their perceptions of the reality (Babbie, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Phenomenology has been referred to a qualitative tradition in social sciences concerned with understanding the social actor’s frame of reference (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), with the purpose of offering and describing full accounts of a lived experience and understanding the meanings of an experience from someone who have lived it (Mapp, 2008).

Phenomenology has been considered as much a philosophy as it has been a research design framework in influencing knowledge development (Mackey, 2005). The two arms of phenomenology have been associated with the discourses of two German philosophers, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological philosophy has been aimed at understanding the ‘being’ itself as opposed to Husserl’s epistemological philosophy of revealing ‘descriptive’ understanding beyond experience (Mackey, 2005; Schacht, 1972).

The Heideggerian phenomenological approach has advocated the researcher’s interpretation and analysis of the data collected by bringing in her or his own understanding, knowledge and experience to the research process (Mapp, 2008). By contrast, Husserl has stressed on researchers to ‘bracket’ or suspend their own beliefs/ideas/prejudices on the phenomenon so as not to influence their interviewees’ interpretation of their lived experiences (Mapp, 2008). Heidegger has contested the authenticity of descriptive information without interpretation and his phenomenological concept and method has focused on revealing understanding and meaning through a ‘hermeneutic’ interpretive process (Mackey, 2005). This present
research has drawn from this interpretive branch of phenomenology, which has been explained further in the following section.

3.4.1 The Interpretive/Heideggerian Phenomenological Perspective: A Philosophy, Methodological Research Paradigm and Research Framework

Interpretive/Heideggerian phenomenology has been described as both a design framework and philosophy (Vickers & Parris, 2006). It has recognised the subjective value of the individual’s ‘lived experience’ of the physical, sociological and psychological phenomena that have come together to create a life-world” (Vickers and Parris, 2006, p. 119).

The interpretive phenomenological methodology has often been confused as a simplistic, highly flexible and descriptive approach (Husserlian phenomenology has emphasised on description) with its continual association of representing perspectives or voices of ‘unheard’ groups, where the mere recording, collecting and representation of these voices would be deemed sufficient (Larkin et al., 2006). However, far from this perception, the Heideggerian interpretive approach has been reported to be more constrained than the Husserlian phenomenological method as it has required the researcher to have detailed first-hand knowledge on the subject matter in order to provide interpretation and analysis (Mapp, 2008).

Research steered by the Heideggerian/Interpretive methodology has required hermeneutical methods (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004) in the interpretation and understanding of the individual constructions from interviews, analysed through a dialectical interchange to produce a refined, informed and sophisticated consensual construction (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). It has also needed engaging in interpretive ways, drawing from the richness of the narration of lived experience, with the emphasis being on interpretation and understanding of the meaning of that description (Mackey, 2005).

The locus of the Heideggerian/interpretive phenomenological study has been in situating the crux of meaning through interpretation and understanding beyond descriptive data (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The participants’ descriptions have been valued as their personal reality or understanding of the phenomenon and the
interpretive researchers have not only been mere recorders of facts as they have gotten involved with their prior awareness (fore-structure) with interpretation continuing with the listening/reading/immersing in data and descriptions of the participants’ lived experiences (Mackey, 2005).

Interpretive phenomenology has not been a mere production of the selected participants’ ‘descriptive’ accounts, but rather has been a very meticulous analysis of their experiences and viewpoints, providing a suitable medium of exploration, understanding and communication of these voices (Larkin et al., 2006). The interviewees’ lived experiences have not been referred as ‘factual or as psychic, social or historical events needing explanation’ but instead the focus has been on interpreting and understanding these lived experiences (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p. 146). Understanding has been in fact achieved when the researchers have leaped beyond the literal descriptive meanings of the participants’ words ‘to uncover the fore-structures and thematic meanings immersed in the data’ (Mackey, 2005, p.182).

The interpretive/Heideggerian phenomenology methodology has been particularly useful in challenging or extending the boundaries of knowledge, by allowing researchers to gain insights and interpreting the interviewees’ subjective experiences through their lenses of ‘lived experience, sharing and understanding their perspectives of the situations they have encountered in organisational life’ (Vickers and Parris, 2006, p. 119). This quotation has articulated why this method has been deemed particularly useful in my research, as it has aimed to capture the richness of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s perspectives of their lived experience in Australian organisations. More explanation on the rationale behind adopting the interpretive phenomenological approach for this research has been presented in the next section.

3.4.2 Rationale for Adopting the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach

Individual social constructions in an interpretive paradigm can ‘only’ be obtained through a method where the researcher has interacted with the interviewee to understand the individual’s construction and interpretation of social reality (Esterberg, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The interpretive approaches have provided depth and
diversity in this study by allowing for research aimed at understanding rather than explaining human phenomena, conducted in a natural setting and which has utilised the knowledge embedded in experience (Mackey, 2005).

The interpretive/Heideggerian phenomenological approach has been best suited for this research on NESB migrant women’s individual work-life experiences in Australia as this qualitative methodology has been well suited for exploring the ‘reality’ of employees in companies and interpreting the depth of the individuals, particularly in “unknown and little-understood experiences in organisational life” (Vickers and Parris, 2006, pp. 119-120). My experience in the Australian workplace as an NESB migrant woman manager has assisted me in understanding the meaning and depth of the phenomenon and my role as the researcher provided clarity in interpreting and understanding the richness of the participants’ reality and sharing their life experiences with others (Vickers & Parris, 2006).

Basing my rationale on Mackey (2005) and Vickers and Parris (2006), the appropriate research design for this study has been Interpretive Phenomenology. This has been done to enable me to obtain NESB primary skilled migrant women’s individual perspectives on their reality and through a process of interpretation and understanding by listening, reading and immersing, to reveal the ‘fore-structures’ and thematic meanings embedded in the interviewees’ words and lived experiences (Mackey, 2005).

Lastly, the methodological design has been focused on identifying the most appropriate method that would best address what the researcher has wanted to know. The method which has best addressed this aim has been deemed to be in-depth interviews and hermeneutics to assist with the thematic analysis. These have been discussed in the next two segments under the headings of data-collection and data analysis.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data has been collected from a sample of NESB skilled primary migrant women mainly based in Melbourne and Sydney where a large number of NESB migrants have settled (ABS, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017e). The appropriate method
tool/medium for this interpretive phenomenological research has been deemed to be a hermeneutical method and for this reason in-depth interviews have been employed for data collection. Other methods such as participant observation or ethnographic research, which would have required gaining uninterrupted access to participants’ work settings, have been considered to be disruptive and limiting to gain access and interest from the full-time employed busy interviewees. In-depth interviews have been explored further in the next section.

3.5.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews have been carried out with eleven interviewees and they have taken place in shared communication settings, at a place convenient for them to express themselves freely (such as home, café or at the interviewer’s workplace) of interviewer-interviewee sharing, understanding and meaning of the phenomenon, where clarifications and explanations could be done (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). To answer the primary and secondary research questions of this study, the open-ended questions that have helped know more on the participants’ experiences have been, for instance:

- How have the women been navigating their career pathways?
- What career aspirations did they have when they arrived in Australia as primary applicants?
- How have their experience and career expectations been in reaching their current employment status?
- Ultimately what and how would success translate for them and what has been their experience of it?

In-depth interviews have provided verbal accounts, which have been critical for social life research as opposed to a strict formal question-answer format (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This flexible and dynamic, face-to-face medium has required rapport building and development of a detailed understanding of the participants’ experiences and perspectives as it has been directed to their individual subjective expressions and
perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I have spent about one to two hours with each interviewee. Out of the eleven interviewees, I knew six of them prior to the interviews while I met the other five for the first time. I have had to work on building rapport with those five women so I could create an atmosphere of trust for them to express and contribute freely on their terms (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The way the interviews have flowed depended on the interviewees’ personality and how quickly I have built rapport with them. For example, this has happened with some almost immediately while it took more time for others. However, being busy women and those interviewed in their workplace, they have had only about an hour to share their insights. Therefore semi-structured in-depth interviews, in its guided conversation format, has made for a well-suited medium for this study by making efficient use of the interviewees’ time without compromising in understanding and exploring a broad range of matters, while keeping to the main purpose (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) and principle behind this phenomenological research. Even with its guided format, it has also presented the flexibility and opportunity to explore themes that have been raised by the interviewees. I have followed a guided format in my interview with my first few interviewees, but I have also followed up on other important topics that they have shared with me. Therefore, the guided format has evolved based on these early responses. For instance, ‘luck’ has been brought up in my first few interviews and the interview guide has evolved to include that theme in future interviews.

All the interviews have been audio taped to capture the richness and depth of the data, which would be otherwise lost in other circumstances, such as taking notes during the interview (Mapp, 2008). The advantage of having an interview tape-recorded and transcribed has been in it providing a ‘fixated speech’, where the interpretation could be done directly and in collaboration between both interviewer and the interviewees (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p. 148). However, as the interviewees have been sharing their personal experiences, and at times, sensitive information about themselves and their employers, I have strictly followed the ethics plan approved by the Deakin University Ethics committee. This has included obtaining written consent from the interviewees, change of names, organisations and management of sensitive information shared during the interviews. I have also offered
to switch the audio record off in case of when they have been uncomfortable in getting
sensitive information on tape.

The selection and recruitment of the interviewees of this research have been
discussed in the next section.

3.5.2 Selection and Recruitment of Interviewees

The participants for the study have been identified and recruited through
various sources. Through the modified chain referral technique (Penrod et al., 2003),
recommendations and contacts of previous professional network connections, friends
and acquaintances have been used as a place to look for potential interviewees. I have
asked friends, colleagues and acquaintances to pass on the research information, which
included an outline of the research aims, the interviewee selection criteria and an
invitation to anyone fitting the profile to contact me or my supervisors for further
information. Ethnic community networks have also been used to assist with the
recruitment of interviewees. This has included community recommendations,
announcement in newsletters, community newspapers and online forums). Semi-
structured, in-depth face-to-face individual interviews, over an hour-long, have been
held with the interviewees to get an insight into these women’s experiences, as well
their post- migration career pathway(s), exploring success, barriers, mobility and
progression. The eleven interviewees who have participated voluntarily to lend their
voices in contribution to this important research have discussed in the next section.

3.5.2.1 Description of Interviewees

A total of eleven NESB skilled migrant women have participated in the study.
The interviewees for this study have been NESB women who migrated to Australia as
primary applicants and who have considered themselves successful as managers in
their respective fields. All the women have been currently working fulltime in
managerial positions and have migrated to Australia eight or more years previously.

The women have migrated to Australia as adults (‘first generation’ migrants)
and as primary applicants in the skilled stream, between the ages of 25 to 65. These
women have originated from four Asian-Pacific countries (China, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka) representing non-Anglo cultural background/ethnicities. The reason for choosing this group from these particular countries has been because there has been evidence that these women potentially may have had an advantage over other NESB women migrants (Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996; Lee, 2013). In particular, these women would be expected to have their skills, qualification and previous work experience better recognised and thus assimilate better because of their countries’ origins as former British colonies (with China’s connection being via Hong Kong), sharing similar education systems and having better proficiency in English (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Hawthorne, 1996; Lee, 2013).

There has been an important differentiation between skilled migrants in skilled migration literature: primary skilled migrants migrate in their own right or as students subsequently obtaining employment in their host countries but not all skilled migrants arrive on their own and include spouses or dependents who migrate under primary migrants (ABS, 2017b; Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2013, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). It has been argued that there has been a dearth of research and the ‘narrow’ perspective of skilled migration literature that has neglected the entry of skilled migrant women (Aure, 2013) (Hawthorne, 1996; Iredale, 2005; Kofman, 2014; Meares, 2010; Purkayastha, 2005; Van den Bergh & Du Plessis, 2012). Amid that skilled migrant category, include women who have migrated as spouses of skilled primary migrants, students or as refugees and whose secondary status have led their skills not to be assessed, thus impacting their employability. However, by the same token, I have argued that NESB skilled women who have migrated as primary migrants have also not been well-documented (e.g. “buried” under the dominant principal/primary skilled migration literature) and we do not know if skill screening at migration has necessarily translated to them finding satisfactory employment or social integration. Would the research conducted on skilled primary migrants imply that all of them have achieved similar outcomes regardless of their gender or ethnicity for instance? Therefore, in order to fill in the knowledge gap about them, this study has focused on NESB skilled migrant women who have had their skills qualified as skilled primary migrants at the time of migration to Australia.
The definition of the skilled category and selection of migrants, in this particular context, has been driven by the ‘occupations in demand’ or occupational categories that has had the highest weightings in the host countries’ selection points systems at the time of migration (Chiswick, 1988; Iredale, 2000, 2005; Miller, 1999; Parasnis et al., 2008; Teicher et al., 2002). The definition of skills has depended on the receiving countries’ needs and the shortage of labour experienced. Therefore, dynamics in the host country’s labour market have altered how skills have been defined for migrants (Kofman, 2000, 2012, 2013, 2014; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). The interviewees of this study have migrated to Australia because their skills, at their time of application, have been listed under Australia’s skill shortage specialisms. Therefore, these NESB skilled primary migrant women, some being managers and/or leaders in their country of origins prior to migration, have been custodians of valuable information from their own experiences (Creswell, 2013). I have aimed to uncover some of their stories from their experiences.

3.5.2.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees

The interviewees have been NESB skilled primary migrant women from China, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Further details of the interviewees, such as their backgrounds and current employment, along with the pseudonyms the interviewee have been given to protect their anonymity, have been provided in table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity (as defined by participants)</th>
<th>Family Status</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>English Language Proficiency</th>
<th>Year of Arrival in Australia</th>
<th>Length of residence (at time of interview)</th>
<th>Basis of migration to Australia (Visa on arrival)</th>
<th>Reason of Migration to Australia</th>
<th>City, State of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capulet</td>
<td>Late 30s</td>
<td>Malaysian-Chinese</td>
<td>Married with 2 young children</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>1998 (studies) 2001 (work/residency)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>International Uni student Onshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Studies (Bachelors and Masters)</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desdemona</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ceylonese Sri Lankan</td>
<td>Newly married</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>International Uni student Onshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Studies (Bachelors)</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Malaysian-Indian</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>International school student Onshore skilled sponsored regional Victorian migrant</td>
<td>Studies (High-school, Bachelors and fellowship)</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portia</td>
<td>Mid 30s</td>
<td>Tamil-Sri Lankan</td>
<td>Married with 2 young children</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>International Uni student Onshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Studies (Bachelors and PhD)</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>North-East Indian</td>
<td>Married with a 10 year old</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>International Uni student Onshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Studies (Masters)</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salerio</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>North Indian</td>
<td>Married with an adult child</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Offshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Family relocation</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>North Indian</td>
<td>Married with 3 adult children</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Offshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Family relocation</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalind</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>North Indian</td>
<td>Married with 3 children</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Offshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Work sponsored skilled migration</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>North-East Indian</td>
<td>Married without children</td>
<td>China (worked in Hong Kong)</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Offshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Work and residency</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Married with 3 children</td>
<td>China (worked in Hong Kong)</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Followed spouse however applied for onshore skilled migration</td>
<td>Family relocation</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Onshore means that the application for migration has been processed in Australia whilst offshore refers to an overseas application.
3.5.2.3 Interviewees’ Work-Employment Characteristics

This study has targeted NESB migrant women who have arrived as primary migrants under the skilled category and have been currently employed in managerial positions in the Australian skilled/professional sector, generally referred to in this study as managers and leaders in ‘traditionally’ male dominated spheres, such as Engineering, IT, Accounting and Finance. This has been because these occupations have been typically well sought by skilled migrants as well as professionals filling in the skill-shortages at the time my interviewees migrated (Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008b). As such, following the nature of this study’s description of assessing the success experiences of NESB migrant women who have arrived as primary migrants under the skilled stream and who have been employed in bigger corporations, I have excluded skilled secondary migrant women or ones who arrived on business visas and who have been running small ‘ethnic’ businesses or entrepreneurship, i.e. milk-bars, retail and speciality grocery shops, which have often employed staff or have catered to a customer base of similar ethnic backgrounds (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016) and have had less intercultural interaction at work with local Australians. The industry sector, position and status of employment of interviewees are presented below in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Interviewees’ Work-Employment Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Industry sector</th>
<th>Employment position</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capulet</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Principal Consultant</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desdemona</td>
<td>IT and information systems</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nerida</td>
<td>Financial Sector-Banking</td>
<td>Business Analyst and manager</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6. Rigour, Authenticity and Research Findings

As common in research, issues on rigour could be raised as well as on accuracy, reliability and authenticity in the data and findings. Most of the arguments have been derived from “the relative novelty of qualitative research and also the problematically, the diversity in methodology, requiring different methods of judgement” (Langridge, 2007, p. 156). However this diversity has served dually as a qualitative methodologies’ necessity and strength, and therefore validity measures needed to be equally diverse
and methodologically suitable (Langdridge, 2007). The quantitative researchers’ standardised procedural processes to judge/measure could potentially be deemed inadequate in judging and measuring the ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ or ‘generalizability’ of a qualitative research in the same way.

Having said that, considering that the data and interpretations have been shaped by my subjective perception, it has been acknowledged that an element of injecting personal views could influence and possibly overlook unearthed rich meaning and depth in the data. Therefore to ensure my own subjectivity have not negatively impacted this phenomenological research and to increase the possibility of discovering and unearthing hidden meanings (Langdridge, 2007), the study has adopted a rigorous approach in ensuring standards of validity and trustworthiness have been met to best answer the research questions. This has been explained further in the following sections.

3.6.1 Validity and Authenticity

“Validity has been important for those of us working qualitatively to establish some guidelines for best practice but it has also been necessary for others who would be interested in qualitative research so they have clear criteria for evaluating the quality of their work” (Langdridge, 2007). Validity has been related to truthfulness and credibility, and often conventionally associated with the magnitude of how measures have been taken to reflect the true meaning of the concept in consideration (Babbie, 2010). In a naturalistic qualitative research, ‘authenticity’ has been considered a standard of ‘rigour’, where worthwhile measures would have consisted of fairness to the values, perspectives and differences of various stakeholders, raising consciousness and awareness and conducting research leading to action and change (Armour et al., 2009).

As in any research, there has been no guarantee that the ‘truth’ has been captured, or the participants have not told or shared a ‘fictitious account’ of the phenomenon (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Following the constructivist epistemological
stance that people have multiple realities, the evidence from the research has provided
a rich account and depth of the ‘reality’ in the way knowledge has been unpacked,
translated and presented. The completeness of a set of data (adequate sample) and the
interpretation have been ensured through a thorough and systematic data collection
process and analysis, taking into account the complexity of data, such that the work
transcends ‘façade’ understanding (Langdridge, 2007).

The ‘reality’ could be the exchange of information that has taken place between
‘perceptions’ of the participants and the researcher, but it has been a ‘reality’ shared at
that time. A way of ensuring authenticity in this qualitative study of multiple,
subjective realities has been through thorough processes of analysis, interpretation and
understanding of the data collected from the in-depth interviews. For instance,
referring back with the NESB migrant women participants from the study on some of
the interpretation process has helped in presenting the ‘validity’ and ‘authenticity’ of
the data collected.

3.6.2 Reliability and Trustworthiness

Reliability, mostly reflected in quantitative research, has related to
dependability or consistency of results and their replicability from the same measure
and approach (Babbie, 2010) whereas the qualitative methodology’s needs have come
from different judgement methods. Whilst this have been considered problematic, this
“diversity” has been both a necessity and strength of qualitative methodologies, and
the ways of judging its ‘reliability’ have also needed to be similarly diverse and
methodologically appropriate (Langdridge, 2007). For instance, in the case of this
particular research, which has been about presenting the different individual realities
of the NESB skilled primary women migrants, aiming to generate consistent and
replicable results would have been at odds with the research’s purpose. However, the
different aspects of the concepts under the study have been explored from a number of
angles to ensure ‘trustworthiness’ (Babbie, 2010). Trustworthiness has been ensured
by checking that appropriate approaches have been undertaken to elicit the “reality”,

92 | P a g e
to the best of my ability, through transparency, coherence, persuasive presentation and reflexive discussion within the findings. (Langdridge, 2007). Reflexivity has been the researchers’ conscious recognition of the choices made and brought from their questions, methods and subjective positions (such as my personal view and experiences on colour, ethnicity, class, insider view and so forth) to impact in co-producing the research’s psychological knowledge (Langdridge, 2007). The discussion of reflexivity within the findings has helped me identify my personal and subjective views, which could have otherwise complicated the data collection, analysis and interpretation (Babbie, 2010).

3.6.3 Sample Size, Generalisability and Resonance

The recruitment process of finding eleven ‘successful’ NESB women, who have fitted the description of my interviewees has not been an easy one. Whilst a large sample could have provided quantity, it would still not have reflected a ‘true’ illustration of the people in the sample group. The cornerstone of qualitative research has been to provide depth, richness, details and understanding of a phenomenon and therefore it has been argued that identifying and defining a phenomenon by numbers and using that basis as measurement for reliability has deprived concepts of their richness of meaning (Babbie, 2010). This research has been about representing the individual experiences of a phenomenon so therefore the overall aim has been to avoid describing the interviewees within quantitative parameters. The ‘smaller’ sample size has not diminished the quality or meaning of the information that has been obtained from the eleven women, nor does it provided less inference, generalisability or confidence of a holistic or ‘reliable’ representation. The focus on the interviewees has been on identifying the most relevant group who has given us the information needed. As an exemplar, as the interviews with the eleven women progressed, there have been similar responses and commonalities that started emerging in their experiences. Adding another voice would have added to the number of my interviewees but that would not have necessarily pointed to a better representativeness of the sample of my interviewees or given me more in terms of depth to what I have learned from the eleven
women. Therefore the depth and richness generated from the 11 in-depth interviews have not been less relevant or informative than interviewing more women or a survey carried out on a mass scale.

The individual data has been aggregated into a group but that has not denoted generalisability (Babbie, 2010), though there could theoretically be transferability and resonance particularly when strongly common aspects have been found. My core focus has been to elegantly and transparently present the content and context of this research as well as how findings and interpretations have been obtained from the data. However, if it has the power to resonate with others with the potential of it to be utilised (Babbie, 2010) then the study would have added rigour by going beyond just researching and merely finding the ‘truth’ of the reality.

3.6.4 Additional Steps to Ensure Rigour

In order to add, even secondarily, ‘rigour’ to the research, complementing the conventional research standards and guidelines, it has been decided to publish in peer-reviewed conferences as it has allowed me to reach the experts and forerunners in the field and area. This research being at the confluence of key research areas such as migration, gender and leadership, key conferences have been carefully selected to best fit the study. Feedback and comments from experts and reviewers have been invaluable in offering added credibility and value to this interpretive phenomenological research. Publishing my research has also been a way of raising awareness and consciousness to a wider audience, particularly for the voices to be heard so it could resonate with others. Another subject not directly discussed within the section on the research’s ‘rigour’, and yet being an integral part of it, has been the ethical considerations. This part has been covered in the following section.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Most of the ethical limitations and issues associated with the study have been thought to originate from the method proposed for the data collection and the
responsibility towards the interviewees. For the social researcher, technical competence has been an ethical obligation (Guthrie, 2010). The interviewer’s origins and experiences would be relatable to the subject and therefore interviewer preparation in conducting substantial background research has needed to be tailored to each interview to clarify the aims, refine the issues and gain a thorough understanding of the local setting (Slim et al., 1995). Therefore a balance has been struck between collecting required information while allowing freedom of expression for the interviewees as active participants and witness of their experiences. However, when encouraging an interviewee to express their thoughts and experiences it has been critical to honour integrity and privacy issues (Anderson & Jack, 1991). In this research whilst it has been important to get the women’s voices, intense questioning has led to uncomfortable situations. While tackling delicate topics, the interviewees have been assured that it would be taken off the record; I have offered the tape to be switched off as well as the option of taking breaks or discontinuing if and when they wanted.

It has been important to uphold great care and accuracy in the transcription, presentation and interpretation of the information gathered from these oral sources. Accuracy and upholding high standard in the transcription and dissemination of material from interview to words, keeping the key audiences in mind, have been very important. Equally significant have been the editing skills that gave the material shape and message, helped avoid misinterpretations or ‘correction’ of perceptions through edited versions of life experiences, and made sure it has been presented with clarity and in agreement with the interviewees (Slim et al., 1995). In using equipment such as digital tape recorders, there has also been an ethical duty in the careful preservation and secure storage of the information and interview (Slim et al., 1995). These ethical obligations have been further reinforced formally through the submission of a specific ethics application in accordance to the Deakin Human Research Ethics Guidelines. This step has been carried out prior to gaining access to my interviewees. The data analysis that has been employed for this research has been discussed in the next segment.
3.8 Data Analysis

In order to gain more insight and knowledge about migrant women leaders and/or managers in Australia, I have derived the interpretations and meanings from the raw data descriptions by listening and re-listening, reading and immersing myself into the interview recordings. All the interviews have been transcribed manually to ensure concrete and detailed descriptions have been obtained from the interviewees (Kleiman, 2004). A thorough check of the text has been conducted to identify potential errors, context and other issues against the original recordings. That also has allowed me as a researcher to read and absorb myself in the text.

In following the principles of interpretive Heiddegerian methodological paradigm, hermeneutic techniques have been employed to interpret and understand the subjective constructions from the in-depth interviews, guided and weighed through a dialectical exchange to ensure the production of a sophisticated meaningful and an educated consensual construction (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The interviewees who have expressed or have had similar experiences have been organised and analysed manually into themes that explained how concepts have emerged from the raw text and description of the interview transcripts (Balasubramanian et al., 2016). I have followed this process because I have aimed to reveal the ‘fore-structures’ and thematic meanings which have been embedded in my interviewees’ words and lived experiences (Mackey, 2005). Through a phenomenological approach, the interviewee as the teller and myself as the listener have taken part in the narrated meaning (away from considerations of what is ‘right or wrong’), from which then I have outlined “the important themes here and the essential characteristics of the expressed meaning” (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, pg. 147).

Understanding has been achieved when I, as a researcher, have dived beyond the literal descriptive meanings of my interviewees’ words ‘to uncover the fore-structures and discover the essential thematic meanings immersed in the data’ (Mackey, 1995, p.182). The data analysis process has allowed for a check of the interview data by independent reviewers such as research supervisors. This has also
offered an opportunity to ‘weave’ and yield a diverse, richer depth and account from a greater variety of perspectives into the final product. This has helped as the outside perspectives offered on the themes identified or other issues might not have been entirely appreciated or missed, through my lenses as a researcher with former NESB skilled primary migrant woman identity.

3.9 Limitations of Method

The mode of investigation has consisted of semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face individual interviews of approximately an hour long, with eleven NESB skilled primary migrant women in the Australian white-collar work setting. Potential limitations of using this methodology have been outlined in relation to this approach of investigation and the study’s interviewee sample characteristics.

First, there have been limitations associated with the data-collection method. In conducting such interviews, interviewees have been given time to prepare so they could communicate their experiences, on their terms and be willing and able to communicate their feelings and experiences. Their words and actions would have likely been different in other circumstances, for example, witnessing them directly. A face-to-face medium may not have necessarily provided the full context necessary to understand their perspectives. This method has also placed importance in interviewing people on their terms and creating an ambience where they could relate and express freely (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The most important limitation in using in-depth interviews has been that the interviewees’ lives and current perspectives might not have been impacted by their experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The very nature of the research question has meant that a specific group of interviewees have been included based on their skilled migration visa status, geographical, former/current commonwealth countries, backgrounds (NESB), ethnicity (of non-Anglo backgrounds/ethnicities such as Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, and Sri Lankan) and employment in the male-dominated sectors in Australia. This research has also been based on subjective interpretations of these women’s realities.
and therefore the data, themes, findings and analyses of this study may or may not be transferrable to the study of other groups in the skilled migrant women categories. The subjectivity and uniqueness of the interviewees’ perspectives has also provided the richness of the research. It would thus be interesting to see similar studies conducted on other sections of the population to have other insights into the wider female skilled migration phenomenon.

3.10 Conclusion

The key aim of this study has been to add to knowledge about experiences and perspectives and provide a greater understanding of the women who arrived as NESB skilled primary migrants in Australia by exploring their experiences in their career pathways in their own words. This study has aimed to contribute to the bigger body of literature at the crossroad of skilled migration, ethnicity and gender. The phenomenological perspective has been deemed to be a good fit for the research as its principles have guided the way the voices have been heard and interpreted from the interaction with the interviewees and listening, negotiating and speaking to them on their experiences.

A significant aspect of the research has been in it providing a platform for the voices of NESB skilled primary migrant women to be heard by exploring issues relating to migration and gender in the context of their “success”. By sharing their career development stories in the Australian workforce, these women have provided invaluable knowledge and insight into the management challenges and opportunities that enabled them to integrate and thrive in the Australian work life. Most importantly, it has brought to light the stories of the women who have been perceived to have successfully bridged potential barriers, (not only of gender but also their background in terms of cultural, ethnicity issues or other stereotypes), to become leaders and managers in their fields.

By allowing these voices to be heard, the findings of the research might be considered when refining management policies and practices within Australian
organisations or the society in general. This study has provided an insight of a phenomenon, experienced by a group of people that had been under-explored. The thematic meanings I have derived from the interview transcriptions of my interviewees have been discussed in the following chapters.
Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion Part 1: Social and Cultural Fit

4.1 Introduction

The findings from my research have been presented in the next three chapters, which have been structured as a funnel with three broad themes in order to answer my research questions. It has started from broader adaptation considerations, to turning challenges into advantages and then leading to the interviewees’ experience and perspective on success. The three findings have been thus structured as follows:

a. Cultural fit, social and cultural capital. The first discussion chapter of the research findings (chapter 4) has been based on the theme of cultural fit and adaptation in Australia. More specifically, the theme has been discussed in three main parts. Firstly, the discussions have been focused on differences experienced because of the women’s cultural upbringing in their home countries, their reluctance to admit or accept that they would have faced prejudice in that they belonged to an elite group of migrants, the role of the English language, accents and cultural nuances impacting on their adaptation, and the impact of culture and gender on the perception and stereotypes formed of them.

b. Multilevel disadvantages or unique advantages of NESB skilled main migrant women. The second discussion chapter (chapter 5) of the research findings has been based on the theme of drawing an advantage from the multilevel challenges faced by NESB skilled migrant women (which have been mostly discussed in the earlier theme). This theme has been structured in two main parts; the first part has been a discussion on how gender has provided a unique proposition for women to carve out a place for themselves. In the second part, the discussion has delved on how the interviewees have talked about their migrant status and presented their value propositions as NESB migrant women.
c. **The meaning of career success for my interviewees**: The third discussion chapter (chapter 6) has been based on the theme of success and the NESB skilled primary migrants’ construction of success milestones based on their personal experiences at the cusp of gender, cultural backgrounds/ethnicity and their migration status. Within the gender section, the concept of luck or hard-work being an element of career success and the changing dynamics of what success meant over time have also been discussed, in the context of raising a family and how their ethnicity and migrant status have been incorporated in that dynamic. The discussion has continued on the cultural influence on the women’s career success and has concluded on how the NESB skilled migrant women’s have reflected on their negotiation of career success, specifically being a woman and migrant in Australia.

For ease of reference the structure of these chapters has been presented in the following table.

Table 4.1: Structure of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 – Presenting Research Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cultural Fit</td>
<td>Experience of Fitting in/Adapting Culturally into Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences of English Language ‘Proficiency’ and Integration in Australia.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I Am Too Elite to Have Been Discriminated Upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Multilevel Disadvantages of Gender, Ethnicity and Migration</td>
<td>Disadvantage of Being a Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantage of Being Ethnic, Non-White and Foreign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Findings 1: Social and Cultural Capital from Experiences of the NESB Skilled Migrant Women in Australia

From this section of the chapter, the focus has been mainly on the first part of the thematic analysis of the findings from this study and has been drawn out from the interviewees’ experiences of cultural adaptation process in Australia. This has provided a good starting point and a context to how their career paths have started or recommenced after migrating from their home countries to Australia. The cultural adaption process in Australia have taken various stages for some, such as combating stereotypes because of their cultural backgrounds, having to adapt to the local ‘Aussie’ lingo and accent even though they spoke English, getting out of their comfort zones to deal prevalent rituals in the Australian society and within its workforce. The interviewees’ experience and their adaptation process in the Australian workplace and wider society have been presented in the following section.

Much attention has been devoted to the ‘cultural fit’ issue in NESB skilled migrant’s employment in their host countries (e.g. Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Li & Campbell, 2009; Pio & Essers, 2014). My
interviewees experiences have not been the exception as they have shared their own experiences of cultural fit and adaptation challenges, especially in their initial arrival and subsequent employment in Australia. This first theme of cultural fit and adaptation has been described in three main parts. These three themes have emerged important because they have provided an insight into “the very beginning” of these women’s lives in Australia and assisted in gaining a better understanding their adaptation process and how their career paths have re-commenced following migration. The three main parts under the first theme of the women’s experience of cultural fit/adaptation in Australia have been as follows:

1. Experience of ‘fitting in’/adapting culturally in an Australian workplace
2. The role of the English language, and challenges posed by accents and cultural nuances
3. The reluctance to admit to having faced prejudice and a sense of downplaying challenges experienced in their early transition to the Australian workforce.

The following section has been a discussion of the NESB skilled primary migrant women experiencing adaptation issues owing to the cultural differences in Australia compared to their home countries.

4.2.1 Experience of Fitting in/Adapting Culturally into Australia

“To be or not to be, that is the question” (Hamlet, Act 3.Sc.1)

The concept of ‘culture shock’ and the need to adapt to different social norms when moving between cultural groups and across borders has not been not a new one (Bochner, 2003; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Leung, 2001a, 2001b; Leung & Karnilowicz, 2009; Pedersen, 1994; Ward et al., 2005). The literature on skilled migrant experiences on endeavours to ‘fit in’ with the norms of both organisations and the broader society have been well documented (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Dinç, 2010; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Iman, 2008; Khorana,
For the interviewees in my research, migrating as skilled primary applicants have meant that they have arrived in Australia as adults and have had spent their formative years in familial, social and educational setting that have been often quite different from those they found upon arrival in Australia. In relation to their career progression, most of the interviewees have experienced cultural differences, which have inhibited their adaptation in Australia. Most expressed that much needed has to be learned- and changed- in the ways they have behaved and conversed with others in the workplace.

Of interest, one of the first differences a number of participants raised has been related to the way Australian referenced people, events or societal experiences. There has been a sense amongst the interviewees that this difference have limited their participation and interaction with Australians, for instance in conversations and in the practice of office banter. For example, Rosalind has shared how she has sometimes felt like she has not fit in, especially during general conversations with her Australians colleagues. She has noticed that when the Australians in her workplace met with other locals of their age group, their conversations have tended to be infused with references to things they have in common, ‘like TV series or movies’ or would have gone through similar life experiences. As Rosalind have not been a part of that having grown up in India, she felt excluded and all she could do has been to sit back and watch and listen to the interactions and conversations that unfolded. Catchphrases and quotes from television, movies and advertising can become part of popular culture (Strinati, 2004). Popular culture has been argued to have the power to impact on social constructs and on people’s values, worldview, culture, decision making in aspects of their lives (such as at work, leisure and education) (Childs, 2015; Wright, 2013). Popular culture might become a form of ‘shorthand’ speech that can be shared amongst people of a particular geographical area or a certain generation (Strinati, 2004). For instance, one generation of television viewers from the US, UK and Australia who have grown up watching the Tonight Show, needed no prompting to catch phrases like “Heeere’s…Johnny!”; while another generation who have been common audiences watching Australian
series such as _Burke’s Backyard_ or _Blue Heelers_ whereas a younger generation of Western (and worldwide) viewers have related to (and potentially parodied) _Game of Thrones’_ catchphrase “You know nothing, Jon Snow” (Clehane, 2013; McConchie & Vered, 2003; Williams, 2008).

Of further importance in developing a career path within the organisation, differences in cultural norms in relation to interactions have given many of my interviewees a feeling of uncertainty as to how they might have to ‘prove their worth’ at the workplace. _Nerida_ and _Ophelia_ have spoken about how something that might be considered quite simple, such as participating and challenging an idea or a boss, could be culturally influenced. They have related that their native countries emphasised collective learning and disagreeing with teachers and/or managers have been deemed unusual or not encouraged. _Portia_ talked about cultural differences in her early experiences:

“I’m not sure if that was a cultural thing...at least I can speak for Sri Lankans and Indians who are friends of mine, they were very smart and very capable, but they didn’t project the same confidence that a fellow Aussie would, and they wouldn’t speak up as often as an Aussie would”.

Cultural upbringing and the way one has been socialised and expected to behave in a work environment has impacted on how these women’s confidence have been projected and perceived in Australia. In particular, the majority of the eleven women stated that “talking themselves up” or speaking up has been important in their career progression in Australia. For example, _Nerida_ has outlined cultural differences between her working experiences, 12 years ago, in her native Sri Lanka and in Australia. According to her, in Sri Lanka, managers or people in authority have not been challenged or questioned on the decisions they made, as doing so would have led to being shut down or reprimanded for it. _Ursula_ has also found the working environment in India to be very different from Australia. In India she experienced a manager intimidating the workers, and when she has tried to intervene it led to arguments. She has indicated that the environment for a worker there has been of ‘the
boss shouting orders and others following’. Therefore the expectation has been to just to ‘toe the line and not complain’. Rosalind echoed this sentiment and stated that the workplace in India has been very hierarchical, so if ‘you were the boss, you were the boss, you tell the people to do something and they will do it’.

Nerida advised that she has found the contrary to be true in Australia where, for instance, people have been encouraged to challenge ideas or their managers. In her experience, if it has been a valid argument, then it would be acknowledged without any negative consequences for the individual- although she also noted that the manager would still ultimately make the decision. Rosalind has also highlighted how, in Australia, she found the work structure quite flat and people have been more independent than in India. Such variance in organisational structures, with many organisations in Australia being less hierarchical when compared to those in many other Asia-Pacific countries, has represented both physical and behavioural differences. Nerida stated that she has been used to a more conservative sort of approach, where typically a manager would have people reporting under them in a ‘proper’ hierarchy. She felt that the organisation where she worked in Australia lacked this ‘proper’ hierarchy because anyone could challenge anybody. Nerida believed that her personal nature, shaped by her cultural background, has made her question herself to a large extent before she did anything. She would hesitate and assess if it would be appropriate to say something while potentially a local Australian would ‘just say it’. Such behaviour has not been uncommon amongst cultural groups from collectivist cultures (as the interviewees of my study); within these communal cultures, members have been often socialised to express soft skills and taught to show concern for others, have tolerance for errors and respect authority (Kennedy, 2002). Nerida certainly noted that, growing up in Sri Lanka, she has been taught not to express strong opinions, or to at least think very carefully before she spoke, for fear that voicing something could impact the performance and perception of a person. In Australia, she mentioned that people have been encouraged to talk at any time, and speak out, and that, she said, has been ultimately a strength for the locals.
Capulet mentioned that the work culture in Malaysia and Australia have been very different in that there has been a very team-focused environment in Malaysia with longer hours but with more social activities in between. In Malaysia one has been taught from childhood ‘a way of thinking that you do as you have been told and you listen to what the elders have been saying’. If one has had an issue, in Malaysia they assessed that maybe there would be a different way of saying it and that one would not express their disagreements the same way as in Australia:

“There is that cultural root if you like...[a] foundation that you’re more respectful of what others are saying, and, while you disagree with them, you may not necessarily just confront”.

Rosalind has had a similar dilemma and she used the word ‘respect’ when discussing cultural differences between her native India and Australia. She narrated an experience in India with a colleague who worked in the same level as her. She spoke of her inclination to be ‘very polite’ to him and to show him ‘respect’ for his experience. Characterised by high power distance on Hofstede’s cultural paradigm (Hofstede, 2010), Indian workplaces, like their family have been stated to be hierarchically structured, where respect and compliance from subordinates to their superiors (based on work roles, age, gender, caste, credentials and wealth) have been considered important (Kakar & Kakar, 2009). Rosalind found the respect and politeness lacking in the Australian workplace when she observed how, shortly after joining their new positions, people have tended to be direct and would question and challenge everything. Rosalind found this a struggle and a point of tension because, as a supervisor, she has had to be very firm with some of her staff and her cultural inclination of being ‘polite’ has not work all that well. There have been reports of similar experiences in cross-cultural studies where individuals have hesitated to voice their opinion based on a cultural apprehension of being arrogant (Abdullah, 2001). Nevertheless, looking back in retrospect on this particular experience during her interview, Rosalind has commended the Australian system whereby employees have access to training across a wide range of human resource and organisational
behavioural skills. For instance, her training in negotiation skills in Australia has helped her navigate her way through that particular struggle in her career after migration.

Development of such skills within the Australian labour context has been also important in ‘being noticed’ in pursuing a career progression path. Capulet felt that, compared to Malaysia, there has been an inherent level of internal competition in an Australian workplace, where people have been very aware of their own performance and that of others and therefore there has been a pressure for individuals to stand out. Interestingly, Australia has been characterised as a highly individualistic country in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions while Malaysia (where Capulet was from) has been characterised to be collectivistic. In individualistic cultures, individuals have been stated to be expected to look out for themselves whereas in collectivist cultures, the identity of the individual has been based on the group they belonged to (Madhavan, 2012).

Most of the interviewees reported that they have been told (and observed themselves) that people in the Australian workplace have had to ‘speak up’ if they wanted their skills to be recognised, which has been a very different experience from the workplace behaviour in their country of origin. For instance, Silvia stated that ‘some Asian cultures obviously have not been encouraged to be outspoken because that has been considered rude’, whereas in Australia it has been the opposite. Rosalind’s experience has been that, in India, an employee’s technical skills would see one ‘soar’ in their career. By contrast, in Australia, her experience has been that if one could be loud and have the ability to talk they would be valued more. Nerida’s experience in Sri Lanka has been also similar in that employees would be rewarded for their merits without having to vocalise them. She mentioned that her company in Sri Lanka being so small the managers have been aware of what the employees have been doing, whereas in the large bank she has been working for in Australia, she has had to be vocal about her merits to be rewarded for them. She mentioned:
“The fact that I've been backward, or the fact that I’m quiet, or the fact that I’m reserved, so it almost seems like I have no opinion, or I don’t have anything to say ...if you're quiet it means that you have nothing to say. And that might not be the case. But sometimes if you stay quiet it means that you’ve got no opinion. That’s the general consensus, of you having no opinion. Or you don’t care”.

Nerida has felt pressure to speak up especially in her current supervisory role where she has been managing staff who were born in Australia. Collectivist cultures, such as that of Sri Lanka have been argued to use high-context communication styles where things have been mainly left unspoken and emphasis has been placed on interpretation and less on words, whereas individualist countries like Australia have used low-context communication, which has been conveyed explicitly and directly through words (Madhavan, 2012). Being from Sri Lanka, Nerida has struggled with coming forward and has considered it a negative for her in her Australian workplace. At the time of her interview, however, Nerida has noted that she now believed that it would be beneficial for somebody to voice out and come forward even if it has been negative, because it demonstrated that she has an opinion. Ursula shared that she felt it has been very common in Australia for people to promote themselves beyond their own capabilities, to sell and highlight their own achievements without waiting for others to recognise them. However, in her personal experience, she has come to realise that it has been essential to ‘promote’ herself as she rose to more senior levels in her organisation. While she has been at the lower level she could still afford to hold back and hope that somebody would notice her work, she has had to promote herself as she climbed up the career ladder to more senior levels. She said that it has been competitive at the top and so the little edge one could gain has been through ‘projecting an image of yourself’:

“Being a leader here (In Australia) there is the expectation that most of the leaders are extroverts, they are the ones with the big personalities...I’m more on the quiet side, I don’t really like the word introvert, it’s more introspective.
So I like to think before I talk, and not just talk anything, but talk sense. But I do see that in Asia this trait is more common, being introspective. There are times when I have to shift gears, try to put on a different personality, just because people’s expectations are different. So I’m still learning about that aspect, but you just have to adapt to wherever you are. It’s not about being your own self wherever you go”.

Ursula has drawn this comment from her experience with a contractual position working for a local City Council for about six months at the end of which she could have been considered for a permanent position advertised, for which she applied. There have been two candidates shortlisted after about three rounds of interviews: a local Australian woman and her. Finally the other lady has been offered the post and Ursula has attributed this to her lack of skill in self-promotion. Because she has been working at the Council for six months already at the time, her assumption has been that the organisation would have seen her capabilities already and therefore she had not made a significant effort to ‘sell herself’. In hindsight she reflected that this has been more likely a mistake on her part.

Portia has also shared that she made a deliberate effort to change her behaviour in order to be noticed in her early years in Australia: ‘I’m not used to putting myself forward... I mean I am ambitious in my own way, but I’m not one who will like push others aside and push myself first’. Drawing from her experience in Australia, Portia, like most of the interviewees in my study, has not also been used to talking herself up. She reported that her supervisor would always point out that she has not been confident enough, and that her potential and knowledge have not been evident from the way she projected herself. Similarly, Ophelia’s boss commented in her first couple of years at the law firm that she needed to speak up more. There has almost been a suggestion that Portia and Ophelia have had to match their skills with their confidence in self-marketing and talking up.

Rosalind shared a similar experience, where not being ‘talkative’ and ‘outspoken’ has impacted her career progression. In a half-hour meeting, while waiting
politely for everyone else to finish their point so she could give her opinion, she missed her turn to speak. As a result she stated that she remained unnoticed by her managers and she has been perceived to have ‘had no opinion’ and therefore had anything to say or contribute. Therefore Rosalind stated that she has been of the opinion that people who talked and loud have been valued more in Australia and therefore they moved up in their careers faster. This has been in line with literature on Hofstede’s (2010) cultural dimension of power distance that low power distance countries such as Australia have not always appreciated their subordinates being compliant and not challenging their superiors (Madhavan, 2012). Nerida also added that, ‘if someone is not backward in coming forward’ then they would succeed further in the organisation, compared to somebody who has been happy to just stay back and still have those ideas in their heads. This has been because ‘sometimes merits went unseen, not everybody would see what one was doing, unless you told them what you have been doing and therefore one had to be very vocal’.

Salerio has spoken of her belief to be vocal, market and talk herself up to ‘get a profile out there’. When she first arrived in Australia, her belief has been initially that she would be noticed if she did her job well. However she noticed that ‘just sitting in the corner there and doing your job’ has not helped her in getting her anywhere in her career. She has articulated why she has decided to make a conscious decision to change herself to be noticed and subsequently, altered her personality to fit into Australia:

“Quietly confident is not necessarily a good attribute, you’ve got to be strongly confident. It’s a choice that I had to make, I said, ‘Do I want to go up the career ladder, do I want to step up and be noticed and be seen, or am I happy just... doing my nine to five job?’ And a lot of people are happy, there’s nothing wrong with that, it’s a personal choice you make. And I thought to myself, ‘No, I do want to make a mark for myself and I want to be seen as a success.’ And therefore I did have to make a choice and say, ‘If I’m the quiet, demure, shy type sitting in the corner, I’m not going to be able to do that, so I have to change
"my personality.’ And so I did change, not necessarily totally unauthentic, but because I already had that vivacious trait in me, I sort of just tapped into it more”.

It has not been surprising that Salerio felt that way when she has been quoted as saying the above. Her upbringing in India has been based on the philosophy that women have to be quiet and demure and that meant she has been brought up to be quite shy and timid when she started her career in Australia. Therefore another facet to Salerio’s story has not been just that of her cultural upbringing, but also one of gender and the perception of how a women should behave. The gender aspect has been discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, she has identified a need to change, and she has been reasonably comfortable with what she has been required to ‘tap into’ (as Salerio worded it) a trait that might have been a part of her drive to emigrate in the first place. This need and desire to change has also been evident when Portia relayed her personal experience on confidence when it came to giving presentations and public speaking. Whilst she felt her public speaking skills have improved, she still felt fearful because according to her, speaking up has been very important in Australia and if she did not do so, she would be perceived as not contributing. In focusing on public speaking skills, Portia has also highlighted that ‘speaking up’ involved language knowledge and proficiency, as discussed in the next section.

4.2.2 Experiences of English Language ‘Proficiency’ and Integration in Australia.

“But, for my own part, it was Greek to me” (Julius Caesar, Act I. Sc. 2)

A good command of the English language has been argued to be a main facilitator in enabling integration and social mobility to produce social cohesion in Australia in general (Berg, 2011). As has been stated in the literature review chapter, the lack of English language proficiency has been cited as one of the main obstacles for NESB skilled migrants’ employment in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Berg, 2011; Birrell &
Healy, 2008a; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996; Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010; Lee, 2013; C. Leung & Karnilowicz, 2009; Mahmud et al., 2008; Nesdale, 2002; Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Ressia, 2010; Teicher et al., 2002). The mandatory English language requirements at the core of the skilled migration scheme have been guided by labour market protectionism, aiming to ensure certain Australian professions and professional calibre of those sectors have been maintained through ‘appropriate’ recruits (Breunig et al., 2013; Forrest et al., 2006; Hawthorne, 1994, 2005, 2010; Hugo, 2014; Ong & Shah, 2012). Therefore it can be argued that the NESB skilled primary migrants who have been accepted for skilled migration have been considered part of an exclusive group, with their successful completion of tests under the scheme, such as that for English language proficiency, which have deemed them to be of an acceptable and high calibre.

All the interviewees in my study have considered being proficient in English as paramount to them fitting in and finding the right employment in Australia. All the interviewees interviewed for my research have stated that English language skills have been very important in securing their initial, subsequent and current positions. Although some interviewees have stated that their accents may have been an issue, which has been discussed further below, they believed that their education and fluency in English have enabled them to cross that particular market entry barrier in Australia. As one exemplar, Ursula stated that English skills have been very important, because that has been what one noticed about another, whether it has been in a conversation over the phone, face to face during an interview, or in a written test. However, Csedo (2008, cited in Aure, 2013: 280) has suggested that the language of the host country, whilst highly valued amongst migrants, has not necessarily assisted them in finding qualified employment. Whilst the absence of an ability to fluently speak the host country’s language has been identified as a barrier to labour market entry post migration, fluency alone has not guaranteed access to it either (Csedo 2008, cited in Aure, 2013:280).
As stated earlier in the literature review, the fluency in English has not been an indication of the migrants’ proficiency to its use in a particular country (Li & Campbell, 2009). It has also been stated that English as a language has been contextual to the country’s culture, norms and varied in that way it has been spoken, interpreted and the manner in which it has been delivered (Wong, 2005). One appropriate example to cite would be the backlash involving Australian Tourism’s campaign punchline, “Where the bloody hell are you?” (Winter & Gallon, 2008). The controversy has been mainly related to the use of the words as ‘bloody hell’- for instance, ‘bloody’ has been considered an obscenity under the British broadcasting regulations and the use of ‘hell’ offended the American Family Association (Winter & Gallon, 2008).

Therefore, drawing from the experiences of NESB migrants, one area of curiosity has been to see if the ability to speak English but not have a command of the cultural nuances and the English spoken in Australia have impacted on them finding qualified employment in Australia. Rosalind shared that she has had difficulty in the way English has been written in Australia compared to India or the UK (where she studied), therefore report writing and learning what has been expected culturally of her in her writing have been areas she had to focus on initially. Ophelia, who has been brought up in an English speaking household, also held the impression that Australians spoke really quickly, which has been quite different to ‘her English’. Desdemona also related that even though she considered English to be her first language, as it has been spoken at home (which proved helpful), she still found herself in situations where she discovered new vocabulary from conversations with general managers and directors. So while she has been probably perfectly capable of explaining something technical, she has not felt as competent in setting the scene or putting something intangible into words. This has been consistent with literature that has reported on NESB skilled professionals finding ‘language’ a barrier in them understanding culturally implied humour and slang, for instance, which restricted their integration at the work environment (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Li & Campbell, 2009).
Capulet also described that both her cultural upbringing and how English has been spoken in her native Malaysia has been different to the way this language was used and understood in Australia, which proved a difficulty for her initially and also continued to do so, even after more than a decade of working in Australia:

“How we deliver something say very impromptu, off the cuff, witty style of conversation...I would think that it comes easier for people who speak English as their first language. And for me it hasn’t been an issue, it’s just that you know, responsive quick thinking, how do I respond to this, sometimes I’m struggling with this thing.”

Capulet shared that she noticed there has been a lot of wit to how her Australian workmates delivered words differently to her. As a Malaysian, Capulet expressed herself differently from an Australian and that could be perceived as lacking in confidence. Similar to the research cited above, she expressed it has not been sufficient to just have ‘good’ English skills. Rosalind also expressed that local knowledge, local experience, a local ‘way of everything’ has made a difference at interviews. Similar to the previous sub-theme of cultural fit and adaptation being assisted by being ‘in the know’ about people and events that have been part of a local’s experience, being able to articulate responses in a particular way has been another approach to convey familiarity-and be ultimately viewed as someone who has been a ‘cultural’ fit for the organisation. Being able to speak the English required for migration purposes has not ensured that interviewees have been able to speak ‘Australian’ in a way that assisted in their adaptation and career progression.

An important aspect related to language proficiency that has been raised by the interviewees has been the notion of accents. However while one might suppose that the key concern for the interviewees has been that a strong accent has the potential to impair others’ ability to understand them, there has been a greater emphasis on the perceptions that others might place on them upon hearing a particular accent. Accents have played a significant role on how a person’s speech has been understood, perceived and valued as it has not only been indicative of its country of origin but also
determined racial, ethnic and socio-economic spheres (Colic-Peisker & Hlava, 2014, p.351). *Silvia* stated the criticality of accents or more specifically, the ability to speak “Aussie English”, that has been paramount in fitting into the Australian society and its workplaces. She shared that she has made a conscious decision to work on her accent early on, when she arrived as an international student. She could sense people differentiating between Indians and mainstream Australians based on the thickness of their Indian accents. This has been similar to literature that stated ‘respectable’ middle-class Indians in the United States and Australia methodically distinguished themselves from other poorly perceived and stereotyped lowly Indian migrants of allegedly lower uncivilised roots (by virtue of their geographical and ethnic segregation in India), who spoke in heavy Indian accents, lacked local knowledge of their host countries and struggled fitting in culturally (Khorana, 2014; Sandhu, 2012). *Silvia* attributed her securing of an important work internship at university to her lecturers feeling that she has been different from other ‘migrants’ because she has made a lot of efforts to adapt. She stated that she focused on speaking clearer and trying to ‘fit in the Australian way of life’, which has required a more outgoing and social approach.

Similar to *Silvia*’s experience, *Nerida* highlighted how an accent has served to ‘locate’ a migrant’s country of origin (whether rightly or wrongly) especially if they have not been born in Australia, and in this way influenced people’s perception of her. *Rosalind* also stated that even though she has had higher qualifications from the UK, she went backwards in her career after migrating to Australia because she felt that Australians have been still catching up with perception issues about migrants from India (compared to the UK). *Portia* shared an incident where she experienced judgement or pre-conceived views from a colleague, who felt that she needed to correct *Portia*’s work based on an assumption that *Portia* would have inadequate writing skills as a result of not being a native English speaker. Portia ended up surprising her by handing down a ‘perfect piece of writing’, and argued she actually felt *she* could correct her colleague’s work given the emphasis placed on English grammar in the process of her learning English as a second language.
In exploring the experiences of language fluency further with these NESB skilled primary migrant women, it has been apparent that it has not just been the ability to make themselves understood when speaking English that has been relevant. With the interviewees’ shared background of “good” English skills (assessed by themselves and the thorough selectivity of English tests in the skilled migration process), what has emerged has been the role of English language proficiency and demonstrating an ability to discern the cultural nuances of the varied ways the language has been spoken in different countries and contexts. *Portia* has stated that in her initial years of migration, she has faced discrimination mostly from other Sri Lankans and Indians who have been born or brought up in Australia. She felt that at the time, they have perceived from her ‘accent, dress-sense’ and her ‘Sri Lankan and lingual mannerisms’, that she has not adapted well enough in Australia and as a result, they have looked down upon her. As has been stated in literature, the length of residency in a host country has impacted on NESB migrants’ adaptation process in their host countries’ culture (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Ramanathan, 2015).

*Portia’s* experiences in this particular context has brought in another interesting angle, one that placed NESB migrants in a pecking order that seemed to have been based how well they had adapted to the language, accents and cultural identity of their host country. The extent of this adaptive ability had implications for how others perceived individual NESB migrants and, indeed, how the NESB skilled primary migrant women have perceived themselves. These personal perceptions have been discussed further in the final theme below.

4.2.3 I Am Too Elite to Have Been Discriminated Upon

“And though she be but little, she is fierce” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act 3. Sc.2)

Past studies on NESB migrant women in general have documented challenges on cultural, social adaptation and hence employment in Australia based on their gender, colour, background, religion, country of origin, English fluency and accents
Like these migrant women before them, my interviewees have also reported facing negative stereotyping and having their professional abilities questioned because of the general association of NESB women with lower skilled employment (Hawthorne, 1996; Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004; Syed & Pio, 2010). For instance, Ursula said that she has had to fight against that mindset of being ‘boxed’ with other Asian women by employers. She mentioned that:

“It could be gender, it could be your looks, or because of my looks, people just jump to the conclusion I’m Asian, not necessarily Indian Asian; and then an Asian female, of a certain age, so these factors might just trigger something in their mind which you want to get beyond that. And you only get a very short interview process to project that. So it’s a very small window that you get. But once you are in, then it gets easier”.

It has been that small window of opportunity where the interviewees have had to prove they have been good enough for the jobs they interviewed for and have tried to reverse perceptions of them based on their country of origin, ethnicity or appearance at the same time. Ursula stated above that it became easier once they got through their initial interview and their first jobs in Australia. However some of the interviewees have struggled to get into employment matching their qualifications and have had to accept positions below their qualifications in their initial jobs; having an Australian degree or relevant overseas work experience have not made a difference in them landing a position commensurate to their qualifications or experience when they entered the employment market in Australia. For example, having graduating from an Australian university had not helped Nerida get her started even on an entry level position in her field. Even though she had arrived with previous work experience in Sri Lanka, it had not mattered and after graduating, she started her work experience in Australia on low skilled jobs such as sorting out correspondence and entering data. She has stated that she felt that being a migrant has led to her not being given the same
opportunities as a local would have. Reasons cited in the literature as to why many overseas students trained in Australia have not been able to find professional and managerial positions, amongst other factors, have included discrimination as a possibility (Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b). Silvia, like Nerida, has also mentioned that she felt she was not given the same opportunity as a local when she started her career in Australia as she mentioned she had to accept a lower level pay than she deserved. She has also felt that her ‘Thai-sounding’ surname hindered her from getting interviewed for an appropriate position as employers would doubt her proficiency in English. This has been echoed in the experiences of NESB migrant women in New Zealand, where not having Anglo-Saxon names have drawn perceptions on their skills, qualifications or their ability to speak/understand or function in English (Pio, 2005, 2007).

However a number of the interviewees in my research have insisted that their experiences in Australia have been nothing short of a completely successful adaption process, despite experiencing struggles and some of the challenges presented in previous themes and other unpleasant experiences in their initial years of migration. Desdemona, for instance, shared details of an incident that occurred during an earlier work experience in a call centre while she was undertaking further university studies. She stated that while the position had not always attracted ‘the brightest and most educated’, she faced harassment from a women who stated that she was ‘too black’ to sit next to her. But because Desdemona was working more than her allocated hours, she asserted in her interview with me that the perpetrator did not have ‘a leg to stand on’ to make any formal complaint on her performance or work ethics. So going back to the incident, Desdemona shared that she would say something back or laugh it off as she ‘learned to put up with it’. However, when things took a wrong turn and she felt that the harassment got out of hand, she placed a complaint to a senior official. She was told that upon an investigation into her perpetrator’s history, she had been known to have provoked people in order to get fired and then sue the company for unfair dismissal. So Desdemona has reflected on the incident and stated that she felt that the
actions have not been personally directed towards her; rather, she happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Similar stories of struggle have been often presented in the research interviews as of little consequence to the interviewees. Rather, these NESB skilled primary migrant women have been more eager to convey to the researcher a sense of pride, strength and resilience and have been quick to assert their difference from other ‘migrant’ categories such as ‘under-privileged’ migrants who had arrived in Australia on lesser skilled or humanitarian grounds. There has appeared to be a sense of an unspoken consensus of belonging to a ‘special’ class of women, who have easily adapted to the Australian way of life because of their upbringing, education, language skills and careers, as opposed to other Asian women migrants. Indeed, Ursula has commented that an average ‘comfortable’ Australian-born national would experience culture shock in her country of origin, as opposed to her not experiencing it in Australia. In a similar fashion, interviewees in past researches have been reluctant to be compared to ‘other’ lower skilled Asian migrant women (Pio, 2005, 2010). There has also been a reluctance from middle class ‘civilised’ Indians in Australia and the Unites States, to be confused with ‘vile’ behaving, lowly Indian migrants who culturally struggled fitting in a western context (Khorana, 2014; Sandhu, 2012). As an exemplar, Ursula arrived from India and, like most middle-class and educated women in her country of origin, she mentioned that she has had to travel to a main city for her education and career. So, according to her, moving to a different place and adapting has not been a significant issue for her. Even if there have been some initial culture differences and difficulties in migrating to Australia, she mentioned that she has not been ‘fazed’ easily. A Singhalese, a Burgher from Sri Lanka and a Manipuri from India respectively, Desdemona, Nerida and Silvia have also mentioned that they did not have any difficulty adapting or fitting in, in Australia, socially and professionally even though that has not always been the case in the latter. Desdemona and Silvia, in particular, believed that their personalities or values have not been suited to their countries of origin, and therefore Australia has been a perfect fit for them.
One explanation for this apparent downplaying of unpleasant or uncomfortable experiences when transitioning to Australia may be that this group of NESB skilled primary migrant women shared a strong internal locus of control, a trait that has been positively linked to career commitment (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). The majority of the interviewees stated that they have not experienced severe discrimination in Australia. Desdemona, Silvia and Ursula, when narrating the experiences described in the previous paragraphs, tended to term them as ‘isolated’ incidents, arguing they have been of no consequence to their integration. This strength, resilience and adaptability have been qualities the interviewees constantly referred to and attributed their success in Australia.

Another explanation could be the presence of a sense of gratitude for the opportunities that have been made available to these NESB migrant women as individuals. All interviewees have been keen to state that they have been above social and economic challenges and discrimination; hence, there has been a distinction between them (as primary migrants) and the ‘other’ NESB migrant women (Pio & Essers, 2014). This could suggest a strong desire to be acknowledged and represented as highly educated, mobile, socially aware, adaptive and resilient women, who have been reluctant to be associated with the dominant global perception of the less-educated, illiterate, passive migrant women (Pio, 2005, 2007; Pio & Essers, 2014; Raghuram & Kofman, 2004). A general unspoken consensus has appeared to emerge whereby they have seemed to classify themselves above these ‘others’ based on their cultural flexibility and their fluency in English. Interviewees such as Sylvia and Nerida, who arrived as international students before they applied for skilled migration, even prided themselves in the fact that they have been often thought of as local “Aussies”, both in Australia and overseas, because of their fluency in English and their accents. This has been interesting as parallels could be drawn with literature arguing that some middle class NESB skilled migrants (most arriving as international students) have been assimilated into becoming an invisible ‘model minority’, conditional on them accepting to follow the white Anglo-Australian values (Stratton, 2009a, 2009b).
and represented ‘Australianness’ by identifying and endorsing Australian traditional symbols (T. I. M. Phillips & Smith, 2000).

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the experiences of the women in fitting in and adapting to the Australian society and workplace have been explored. The main focus of this chapter has been on elements that has helped or deterred the NESB skilled primary migrant women interviewed for this research, in assimilating and adapting into the Australian culture. The component of language has been particularly interesting in that English proficiency, accents and country of origin in the way English has been spoken and delivered seemed to have impacted on the way they have adapted in the Australian society and workplace. This has been further expanded in the issues and differences experienced by the interviewees in their workplace because of their cultural upbringing, stereotypes and perceptions based on their country of origins, cultural background, ethnicity and language. In particular, the findings in this chapter has not only highlighted these challenges but has also presented conflicting perceptions from both employers and participants themselves.

In the theme of cultural fit, aspects of ‘speaking up’ and marketing skills to getting recognition in the Australian workplace have been stated, where some of the interviewees, after getting their initial employment in Australia, went through experiences of having to talk themselves up. They have done that to show their worth and value; so they could demonstrate their merit, their performance and the actual work they have done. All the interviewees stated that talking themselves up or speaking up have been important in their career progression in Australia. There has been various aspects to consider within this theme, and two important aspects have been that of gender and their migrant status. The impact of their gender and their migrant status on getting ahead in their careers in Australia has been discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion Part 2: Multilevel Disadvantages or Advantages, NESB Women Celebrating Their Cultural Uniqueness

‘Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt’ (Measure for Measure, Act I. Sc. 4)

5.1 Introduction

The themes in the previous chapter have been related to the cultural fit challenges faced by NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia post-migration. Cultural differences, based on their collectivist cultural backgrounds posing challenges in an individualist context such as the Australian workplace, have been discussed in conjunction with language proficiency issues. Aspects such as speaking up or marketing oneself have been identified as important for the women to have a successful career progression in Australia, as most of the interviewees indicated.

Whilst the cultural background and country of origin effects have been profoundly pervasive in the adaptation process in how NESB skilled primary migrant women have been reflected and perceived in the work place, the gender effect has been just as important to consider. The second part of the thematic analysis of the findings from this study has been presented in this chapter. Firstly, findings have been drawn out from the interviewees’ experiences with reference to their gender differences as women, followed by their ethnic and cultural differences as NESB migrants in Australia. This first section of the chapter has been a discussion on the lasting effects of gender role socialisation pre and post-migration, stereotypes, ethnicity and migration and how that has all created multilevel disadvantages in the interviewees’ career progression in Australia.

The distinctiveness brought either by virtue of their gender, ethnicity, colour and/or country of origin has been the second focus of this chapter. The discussion has been on how capitalising on their differences from men or local Australians have
enabled these NESB skilled primary migrant women to draw on their differences to carve out a formidable position in the workplace environment. This sub-theme has emerged from a positive perspective looking at how the interviewees’ unique position as women, combined with their ethnic and migrant status, could lead to a successful career in Australia. Therefore the discussion in this later segment of the chapter has been beyond gender and ethnic disadvantages to consider the advantages brought by the interviewees as NESB migrants via their perspectives, distinct cultural and international experiences. An insight has been provided on how the ‘migrant’ experience and status could, along with gender, offer a further differentiator that has been harnessed into successful career outcomes for the NESB skilled primary migrant women in this study.

5.2 The Multilevel Disadvantages of Gender, Ethnicity and Migration

5.2.1 Disadvantage of Being a Woman

“Frailty, thy name is woman” (Hamlet, Act 1, Sc. 2)

The social roles bestowed upon women and the socialisation into gender stereotypes has played a significant part in women’s career progression in their organisation. As an example, Ursula believed she needed to be quite outspoken in order to progress in her career in Australia. While she insisted that this has been an issue she faced as a migrant woman, she felt that it has not been uncommon for local Australian women to ‘undersell themselves’ and to remain under the radar. Therefore, she reflected that gender has posed a bigger challenge as women have not been perceived to fit into the ‘strong personality’ leadership style in Australia. As has been stated in literature, gender segregation in the workplace has been argued to have its roots deep in societal norms, where gender differences and behaviour have been dictated by social gender stereotypes (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Kalantari, 2012). She shared that:
“We (women) want to make a point, and we want to carve a footprint for ourselves, but in doing so there’s also a perception, particularly with a female, and maybe given what people conventionally think of female... when you’re a bit more vocal, you know it does strike a reaction. And I think increasingly it’s been good reactions anyway”.

Ursula felt that women have been perceived to not possess ‘outspoken’ qualities (such as in vocalising their opinions and thoughts) compared to men and their tendency to consult a bit more before expressing their disagreement. Ursula felt that, as a woman, she needed to be more vocal and to speak up more to change the social perception that women have not been leadership material in Australia. This, unfortunately, has not been an experience unique to Ursula as a NESB skilled primary migrant women. This feminine social stereotypes of women being inconsistent with the required ‘male’ attributes in certain leadership roles has been reflected in literature (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002). As an exemplar, Salerio shared that from her experience, people have not necessarily noticed or liked women being vocal or talking themselves up as those traits have not been associated with being feminine, whereas they have been considered natural for men. Salerio, whilst acknowledging facing cultural barriers in the workplace, said she has also experienced a gender barrier in establishing a comfort zone with others and getting ahead in her male-dominated workplace. She stated that:

“So people like women to be straight down the line, very poised. And I’ve heard this from not only from a racial thing, but also from other strong white women, too. A lot of the men especially feel very uncomfortable with strong white women. So when you’re strong, whether it’s white or non-white, people do feel very uncomfortable. So I would suggest even a strong white woman would find the same similar barriers...there are a lot of women in the top leadership in [her organisation], but the ultimate leadership is at the top with a couple of men. And the women there, underneath that leadership, are OK as long as they’re in that 70% category [not to showcase intelligence, brilliance, skills or
beauty beyond the 70% threshold]. So the moment you start challenging that leadership, and you start moving into that level, they’re not comfortable...I’ve got personal experience of that. Because I transgressed into that and it wasn’t appreciated at all”.

Salerio worked in a leading organisation in the government services industry, which has been mainly male-dominated at the top. Salerio stated that the men leaders at the very top in her industry have been uncomfortable and intimidated when confronted with strong women like her, who have not fitted their perception of how women should be, nor has she been “masculine” in her dealings. So for women to be successful in her organisation and industry, Salerio stated it has been important to stay within the gender social role perception and not showcase too much intelligence, brilliance, skills or beauty [70% rule]. If women ventured past that threshold, they would be taken out of the inner circle, which has been what she experienced when she spoke her mind and challenged ideas. Therefore any action or quality, not in-line with women’s social stereotype as warm, nurturing, and caring (Kawakami & White, 2000) has attracted a negative reaction and therefore women have been seen as aggressive when they came forward while men have been seen as assertive for the same behaviour (Scandura & Williams, 2001). This has been similar to what Ursula experienced as she shared that when she has been outspoken on issues that she felt strongly on, she has been told ‘jokingly’ that she was being very aggressive. Though Ursula eluded getting into a discussion of gender specific behaviour and expectations, there has been more than a subtle allusion that the aforementioned remark of her been aggressive has been made wryly. However, she added evanescently that she realised her speaking up could have been out of place and perceived to be a little belligerent coming from a ‘calm woman’.

Many male-dominated jobs have historically drawn on masculine characteristics for the “ideal worker” which has led to some women leaders adopting masculine behaviour (Demaiter & Adams, 2009). Ophelia has pointed out the male presence in the leadership roles in her Law industry. She has also mentioned, rather
unfavourably, of the garish ‘aggressive’ women she has encountered in her industry, who have tended to take on the traits of men to get further in top leadership and managerial positions. However, that has been deemed a necessary feat by some interviewees, such as Robin, which she stated, has helped her hold her own in the very competitive male-dominated financial sector, specialising in global and cross-border transactions. This has been similar to literature which has reported in male-dominated industries and in positions strongly associated with masculinity, women tended to adopt masculine traits at the top to be evaluated favourably and be perceived effective (Kawakami & White, 2000; Powell & Butterfield, 2003; Stoker et al., 2012). For instance, Robin iterated that:

“You have to take on masculine qualities. I mean to some degree, yes, you do. You do it naturally, unconsciously, you don’t realise, until you finally realise and you go, ‘oh God, I don’t want to…I am definitely a woman”. I’m a woman first, full stop, and I don’t have to try to be a man. I don’t like to be a man, I won’t and I’m not, and I don’t want to be. But sometimes I do have to counteract male energy with some masculine energy itself”.

Robin stated that she has had to ‘build’ certain masculine skills, such as to be intimidating, because men have dominated the top position (where she also was). She shared that the situation has been exacerbated by the challenging environment she worked in (facilitating cross-border collaborations, mergers and acquisitions) and therefore she has had to fight back against her male counterparts. She stated that she has to constantly negotiate her situation and, when she voiced her opinion, it would be met with patronising comments from her male leaders. So she has had to garner some of the masculine energy so as to draw the line and show people that they should not ‘mess with her’. She felt she could do that by using the same tools the male bosses or colleagues have used to get their wins. The paradoxical position of women adopting a masculine leadership style has been that they risked being loathed, seen as aggressive, as in Ursula and Robin having to endure patronising remarks, and that could, in fact, deter their career progression; and yet if they managed with a feminine style, they
would not be respected (Kawakami & White, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Vinkenburg et al., 2011).

It has been stated in literature suggested that the manager’s gender and role congruency have a strong relationship with employees’ satisfaction and turnover as the preference has been to work under male managers, favouring masculine leadership styles (Carroll, 2006; Grissom et al., 2012). However in Silvia’s experience, she felt gender has been independent from being effective leaders. She, for example, said that:

“When it comes to managing me, I prefer a man because women can be very different. Because I’ve seen, we have a director who I definitely wouldn’t want to be and she’s a woman. No, she doesn’t inspire me at all. It’s a person to person thing- gender is irrelevant in leadership”.

Silvia has shared that being a woman leader has no meant that they brought something special. For her a good leader was a good leader, irrespective of gender. She shared that:

“My father...He’s an extremely successful person, very ambitious, very hard working, good person and he has always been my role model. And in the office now is my boss, my director. My father’s a people person, so is my boss. And it’s not just being a people person, they do small things that enrich other people’s lives. Like for example, helping people in terms of having a sustainable livelihood by giving a job, you get your salary, your whole life virtually is made...and my boss is similar, he’s got similar characteristics-helpful, being helpful and being ambitious and not just sitting back. I like people who are doers, like my father is a very dynamic person. He’s a big doer, he’s a leader, that’s what I like. And even my boss is the same”.

Silvia has rarely strayed from her earlier overture that gender has not matter in leadership, however she has clearly articulated her preference to work under a male rather than a female leader. Generally, the likelihood of working under women leaders has not a common occurrence because men have a greater presence at the executive
level and leadership positions and where women have been underrepresented (Dworkin et al., 2012; Scandura & Williams, 2001). At first glance, as suggested by the aforementioned literature, an aestheticizing explanation for Sylvia’s preference to work under male leaders could be attributed to the role incongruence of women as managers and in terms of her having not seen many women leaders, growing up or having little experience working under many women leaders. However, on analysing deeper, the meanings that emerged in Sylvia’s musings have appeared to have been derived from her early gender role socialisation in India.

Growing up in India, Silvia has been brought up in a patriarchal culture where the distribution of power in society and corporations has been decided by men and women who have struggled to get past their societal roles to be accepted as effective managers and leaders (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). Therefore, Sylvia has had little access to good female role-models and it has not been thus surprising that she has drawn her success inspirations from her father and her male director, whom she described as her role models. One interesting reflection from my interview with Sylvia has been that there has been little reference to her mother in the success context; her inspiration from her father in her own career success aspiration seemed to have eclipsed her mother’s own achievements, whom she has mentioned was a working woman and successful in her own right. This could be explained by the way Indian women have been seen and regarded as maternal figures in India (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). Therefore Sylvia’s perception of success has seemed informed by her cultural background, distribution of power in her own society and family and socialisation into gendered roles. All those elements have influenced her preference for male managers and leaders / mentors even though she has been in Australia and thus in a different context. Hence, the perception and social role of educated Indian women in Indian enterprises in their home country (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012) appeared to have extended and been upheld beyond Indian borders, in an Australian context by NESB women themselves, as seen in Sylvia’s experience. Sylvia’s socialisation into gender role and stereotypes could have contributed to her own internalised, prejudiced view on the demarcation of roles for men and women (Mavin, 2008) and that could explain why she has found it harder for
her to relate to her woman leader as well as she has with her father or her male manager.

It has been argued that women have sometimes found it hard to relate to women leaders (and women leaders to other women) because socially embedded stereotypes have contributed to their internalised sexism and gendered perception in organisational roles and contexts (Mavin, 2008). As an example, Sylvia related an experience where she said she was relieved when a staff member on maternity leave, who was meant to re-join as a part-timer, had decided not to come back. Despite her own difficult transition from motherhood to her career, Sylvia has maintained that while she understood and sympathised with the challenges entailed in juggling motherhood and career, she has also been apprehensive about part-time employees, because at the end of the day, ‘staff have been paid for productive work’. It has been stated that at a certain level, organisational roles became more important than gender roles and men and women occupying the same leadership role in organisations, essentially behaved similarly (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) and decided on objective, quantifiable outcomes. Sylvia has that objective outcome in mind as a manager and she felt having a part-time employee would impact on the deliverables and productivity of her staff.

While Sylvia has been apprehensive of a staff member, a new mother, returning as a part-time employee, she has also spoken about how she felt more restricted in her movements, compared to her husband. She has stated that she has been unable to fulfil important career strategies for promotion, such as travelling for work and that sometimes she has to sacrifice more than her husband, as a mother, when it came to their careers. Sylvia’s experience has appeared to align with literature that argued that women’s traditional roles of child-bearing, nurturing and household duties have therefore restricted on their ‘productivity’ and their ‘true’ labour force participation (Baker, 2010; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kalantari, 2012; Mínguez, 2012). She shared that:

“When it comes to, for example in my role, because I look after the international business I need to do a bit of travelling, sometimes I have to give
up because I have a young son. Although having said that my husband is a very supportive man. But I have to think about my son. A mother’s care is different from a father’s care, let’s face it”.

Silvia in that statement, intimated the depth of her gendered/familial social role expectations and commitment, and what has emerged has been a juxtaposition of sorts, where at work, she has been an uncompromising manager worried about productivity and at the familial level, has had the same maternal and social expectations struggles impacting her own career. This juxtaposition of roles experienced by women has been supported by literature (Schieman & McMullen, 2008), suggesting that women in leadership situations have encountered contradictions in what their work roles demanded and what has been expected of them socially; leadership roles involved masculine, task-related attributes while female roles have been stereotypically associated with interpersonal and cooperative traits, considered unsuited for leadership. This discussion has also been also relevant in the particular context of Sylvia’s experience as a NESB skilled primary migrant woman manager in Australia. This could be simmered down further through a cultural discourse, as pursued later in the chapter, the conversation has been essentially still a gender one (Baker, 2010; Barnett, 1991; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kalantari, 2012; Mínguez, 2012; Purkayastha, 2005) as most of the interviewees mentioned how having a family have disadvantaged them in terms of their career. However it has been worth acknowledging that while Sylvia has reacted in a particular way to her part-time employees despite her own limitations, others might have responded differently in a similar experience. A further discussion has been presented below on how this womb ceiling has limited the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career progression.

Similar to Sylvia’s experience, most of the interviewees have intimated that having a family and transitioning back into their careers has not been an easy feat. In Robin’s situation, being a single mother has meant that her familial responsibilities took precedence over her career prospects. She has stated that, “There’s no point in conquering the world when your family’s crumbling.” In that sentence, she made an
earnest reference to the difficulty of progressing in her career while things in her personal life had needed sorting out. She shared that she had spent some years as a single mother in Sydney, trying to keep her life afloat as her personal life hit a low point with a disintegrating marriage while her career took a backseat. Her priority became about raising her child and she said she had to take another look at her career direction and make choices on what it meant. She said:

“So I made a choice that I was going to stop my career because my life became my career too. And so I had to come back into my life and say, “Well, I want to be at the school gate at three-thirty”- so that became my vision for life, I have to be at the school gate at three-thirty”.

This turn of events and the life choices Robin made according to her circumstances has also meant that she has had to give up ‘fancy offices, managing staff or taking on ‘that next big job’. She shared that she found herself going for an interview to be a CEO, and then coming back questioning her priorities. So she had to teach herself a new skill of saying no to work opportunities, ‘press the brakes and steer’ in a different direction and took on roles that allowed her to be flexible. She reflected back to that stage of her life fondly and stated that it has contributed to the progress in her career and at the time of her interview with me, she was at the executive level in her organisation. However, on a profounder level, a discussion on Robin having to turn down a CEO role because of familial duties could be viewed as a massive career compromise and setback, an impediment in her career progression. The social role responsibility and expectation of a mother to care for her child have managed to elude Robin’s doggedness to succeed in her career but it has been a familiar tale, one told many times, as has been also mentioned earlier in Sylvia’s experience. The difference between Sylvia and Robin’s has been that Robin’s priority to raise her child sounded more like a choice she has been happy to make.

Many of my interviewees who have children have shared how the direction of their careers have veered once they entered parenthood. Capulet has been one such interviewee. She has been in the country for 13 years and has three children. She said
she started feeling more empathetic towards herself and has a lot more self-awareness in doing her work competently and being very productive without being too pressured by what went on at work. She has attributed that change to being a mother and according to her, it has been a more beneficial change. She felt she has had ‘a lot on her plate’ with her children and life, but she has been still ambitious and wanted to progress in her career. Yet at the same time, she has had a broader sort of perspective on career progression and recognised the trade-offs in terms of ‘portraying herself to fit into a corporate hierarchy’. Perhaps, if she did not have children she would still have pursued, and perhaps, achieved much more in her career, as her ‘Chinese’ family and values intended. The cultural values on success have been discussed a little later in the next section.

In Capulet’s broader perspective on her career progression, there has appeared a secreted reality and an optimistic philosophy of rationalising her position of having to strike a balance with her young family and her career. In other words, one could not help but wonder if she has made peace with her current familial reality and decided that has been as good as it could get as far as her career went, and therefore she has had to readjust and lower her career’s expectations accordingly. She has not mentioned if her husband has gone through the same thought process, in understanding and negotiating the trade-offs of moving up a corporate ladder and bringing up a family. There has been perhaps then a sense that there has been more on her shoulders as a woman than a father and having children has limited her career prospects. Like the glass ceiling faced by most women in their careers (Beauchemin et al., 2010; Bruning & Cadigan, 2014; Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Dimovski et al., 2010; Le & Miller, 2010; Schreiber et al., 1993; Shambaugh, 2008), women like Sylvia, Robin and Capulet as mothers, conceivably, also faced a ‘Womb’ ceiling and have been limited by their reproductive ability at some point in their careers in Australia. Portia has also weighed in on the limitations of being a working mother:
“I suppose you wouldn’t have the interruptions in your career because of children. They’re not supposed to discriminate just because you have babies and you’re female...but there is a bit of it I suppose”.

At the time of her interview, Portia had a young child and another on the way. General life for her has been much harder after having children because she felt everything have been slotted in and she experienced exhaustion at the end of each day. She revealed that she has felt fulfilled in her work, up until she went on maternity leave with her first child. When she returned to work, she felt she has slowed down and it took her around a year before she got back into her ‘A game’. However, at the time of the interview, she was going on maternity leave again in a few months and she shared:

“So it’s just getting off that mark but it’s a life choice to have kids. I think that for example if I wasn’t going on maternity leave this year, if I was waiting one more year, I would be more comfortable in the position I was at work. Whereas I feel I’ve just got my mojo back and now I’m going back”.

Portia added that she has gotten used to and has settled in to the new routine and way of life, which has eventually become her normal. But career wise, she felt she could not really do as much work from home because of her child. She has not suggested that it has brought her backwards, because her strategy of working has been different, where she has had to be smart with whatever time she had. But when she announced her second pregnancy, she shared how she has felt sidelined by her boss. She stated that he has been treating her differently, as though she has already taken her maternity leave; and because he knew she was going on leave, he has been trying to take away projects she has worked on. She was upset that it happened because she still had three months left. She stated that even at meetings when she has put her hand up to work on something before her leave started, he said that, “Well, you are going on maternity leave next year”. She added:

“I mean the fact that my projects had been taken away from me, even before I’m ready to let go of them, I don’t think is very fair, but what can I do?”
It has not been fair, like Portia indicated, however her going to maternity leave has limited her in her work and that has been something that has been a recurring theme with the interviewees who have children. They have described their career situations as fulfilling and yet have also expressed frustrations from hearing patronising comments and sentiments from others about their societal and biological roles as mothers, as Portia has experiences. The researcher also has had a similar experience in her career when she was negotiating her return from maternity leave. I wanted to come back after three months, as women did in countries like India and Malaysia. However my male boss was insistent on hiring someone long term and told me that I was not aware how life-changing having a baby was. In Australia, the common maternity leave duration has seemed to be 6 to 12 months and it was perhaps normal for an Anglo-Saxon man to comment on maternity leave and how life changing it was. However upon reflection, it has also been patronising and sounded like women should know their places as mothers.

Another area that many of the interviewees have spoken has been about how their lives had been “easier” in their own home countries. For instance, Salerio also shared her views on this:

“The woman still has to pick up the kids, she’s expected to put the dinner on the table, get the kids fed and put to bed, and all of that kind of stuff. It’s bloody tough, and I don’t want to go through it again...So until and unless, things change in society and men start thinking that the household is also their responsibility, things are not going to change”.

Salerio spoke and shared passionately on this topic, maybe because of the chores division in her household. She has stated that a ‘lot of her friends’ have taken up expatriate roles in Asia so that they can have help and have not wanted to come back to Australia until their kids have been grown up. She felt that first of all, there has been very little help when it came to women and their household chores in Australia. For instance she related from her experience that all her friends in India who have been in in equal positions as her, or better, in their positions as CEOs, CFOs, or
managed their own business have not had to worry at all about the household. She shared that her friends in India had help with their children, food, cleaning and the routine management of household chores while in Australia, she has been worried about what she would ‘cook for dinner.’ Therefore this has been an area that Salerio felt disadvantaged as mother and a migrant woman in Australia compared to India. The hindrance caused by the family dynamics in my interviewees’ (with young families/or when their children were young) experiences has also been germane to literature pertaining to NESB migrant women’s impediments in pursuing career advancement possibilities such as further qualifications or professional rewards due to housework demands and lack/cost of childcare in Australia (Alcorso & Harrison, 1993; Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Foroutan, 2008; Hawthorne, 1996). It has also been reported that similar predicaments have shown in Germany, where women who combined motherhood with their professional lives have been often forced to accept a traditional gendered role at home and unstable working positions with lack of plausible career advancements (Riach et al., 2015). My interviewees have not been an exception; in fact they have been only too familiar with how having a young family have sometimes rendered a slump in their careers.

Juliet, another driven and career oriented woman, had three children and her family arrangement have been different than that of Sylvia, Robin, Capulet or Portia’s as her husband have been the primary carer of their children while she has been the main provider. However, she shared that:

“Especially when you have kids I think no matter how much you love work, jobs or careers become, a little bit, secondary...I think for an Asian migrant if you want to maintain your career and family it’s quite important, you need to have family support. I think that’s critical and my husband was quite supportive, he’s more the supportive person in my relationship, like, the spousal relationship. I think one good thing about Chinese families, they usually have family help”.

Juliana Mutum
What Juliet mentioned above has been a reflection of her experience on how her husband’s and her life and their careers have been affected once they had their children, especially after migration to Australia and not having her family in Australia to rely on. Juliet, who had lived and studied in the US, had relied on her parents for child-care assistance while she was studying and worked. However, in Australia, with the overseas distance and her parents getting old, they lost that support and it has been all up to her husband and her. When their third child came along, they found childcare expensive and thus her husband decided to stay home as the primary carer while she continued working full-time. Juliet said that as she was more qualified and driven, she became the bread-earner for the family. They have decided on that arrangement because Juliet had better professional qualifications than her husband and also her personality was such that she was more career-oriented and enjoyed working. This family dynamics has been described in its duality, melding its enabling (as was seen in Capulet and Juliet’s experience) and restricting roles in the context of NESB skilled migrant women, which has been delved at the cusp of their ethnic backgrounds, gender and as new Australians, through the family embeddedness theory (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Foroutan, 2008).

Robin has also conceded her early struggles as a working mother to her younger children, however she described that because now that they were older, she has been able to take up more professional challenges. Salerio and Robin, the two interviewees in executive levels, had grown-up children and therefore the findings that women migrants increased their chances in greater employment participation as their children got older (Foroutan, 2008) have also held true for my interviewees, especially the ones with grown children and for those without children. Therefore the family embeddedness perspective of family dynamics, in its role as an advantage and a disadvantage, described in illustrating the experiences of Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016) has been relevant in my interviewees’ experiences. Furthermore, my research, while underpinning the family dynamics theory, has also lent augmentation to the theory by providing a reflection from the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s cultural and family influence on
their career choices and their individual construction of success in the Australia context.

As has been discussed above, the restricting role of family, such as childcare costs and unavailability has also seen in Portia, Sylvia and Capulet’s lamentations over their career limitations, owing to them having a young family. However, as has been seen in Juliet’s experience above, her family dynamics hindrance has not been necessarily only confined to an ethnic or gender restriction as her husband’s career has also taken a different turn after having children and migrating to Australia. It has appeared that with their decision to migrate in Australia, my interviewees’ family dynamics frustration in Australia has also been also an aftermath of them migrating as new Australians. With their decision to migrate, they have left their support system behind, such as their family and this has been perhaps a limitation that they had not considered before they decided to migrate and start a family in Australia. For instance, had they migrated to France or Denmark, child-care would not have been a limitation as it has been reported in literature that having state-sponsored childcare, the labour integration of skilled migrant women in France and Denmark has not been impeded (Liversage, 2009).

Following from my discussion above on my interviewees’ limitations on their career success post migration, what has emerged as a profounder compromise on my interviewees’ successful career progression seemed related to their ethnicity, and background and migrant status. For example, Salerio suggested that while in lower levels of employment, gender or colour has not been all that relevant but they mattered a great deal at the top positions. She stated that:

“I think because people really don’t care at the lower levels- some accountant working there, it doesn’t matter who it is, black or white or green or blue. It doesn’t matter. But when you start looking at senior roles, like CEO, CFOs- it matters. The perception matters about who is it I’m looking at, there you’re the face of the organisation, right. That’s when it starts like that, people are comfortable with the white thing. And I think it comes back to again the whole
gender thing, is that most CEOs worldwide are six feet two, blonde hair, blue eyes, either named Michael or Robert or John. It’s that concept”.

From what Robin shared above, she felt that her visible differences meant that they have not been congruent to the image that has been perceived of the ideals in top leadership positions. While gender has been an important differentiator as discussed in the section above, the differences that have been brought by colour, ethnicity and being a migrant in Australia have been discussed next.

5.2.2 Disadvantage of Being Ethnic, Non-White and Foreign

“Alas, I am a woman friendless, hopeless” (Henry VIII, Act 3. Sc.1)

Literature has highlighted that on top of their gender, migrant women have faced multilevel challenges due to their colour, cultural background and migrant status (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010) and employers have shown a general preference in hiring culturally similar migrants or native-born workers (B. Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Li & Campbell, 2009; Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Syed & Pio, 2010; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006). Salerio, who migrated as a skilled primary migrant, shared her belief that NESB women have been disadvantaged because employers have sought out people from the same cultural backgrounds, because it has been a ‘comfort zone thing’. She stated that:

“White people are comfortable with a white conversation. I’ve got a mixture of people here, and we have what you call as white conversations versus non-white conversations...People are uncomfortable. Indians can be quite passionate, I am a passionate person, and I say things, and there’s a lot of vivacity, there’s lots of colour, there’s a lot of passion. People from Asian backgrounds do talk about different things, you know, and especially if it’s a male dominated one...for me a conversation about fishing really doesn’t
interest me. So I’ve faced a lot of sitting in boring conversations with them at lunch or something, or dinner, with a whole lot of men and they’re talking about fishing, and I’m thinking seriously, gosh, there should be something better to talk about. So it’s not only a woman issue, it’s a white woman issue. So there’s a gender barrier, then there’s a race barrier. It’s not really a race, race, but it’s more of a comfort zone thing- so it’s a cultural thing”.

In her musings above, Salerio has highlighted the diversity and cultural issues on top of her gender that has contributed to perceptions based on her (Indian) background and in the way she has been judged as a leader. In her experience at the executive level, Salerio shared that she has struggled at times to get the right role, and to get people to believe and trust her in terms of being in the right ‘comfort zone’ with them. She explained that what she has meant by ‘comfort zone’ has been what was comfortable for people when they networked, communicated or worked with others. As an example, she stated that people from Asian backgrounds talked about different things from Australians Anglo-Saxons and the latter have felt uncomfortable with ‘Indians’ because they were different from them. What Salerio described has been very similar to what has been theorised in the ASA (Attraction-Selection-Attrition) paradigm, stated earlier in the literature review, where people tended to attract and select people similar to them (Doms & zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Slaughter et al., 2005; Van Hoye & Turban, 2015). Elaborating the discussion, Salerio has brought in a plangent perspective from the migrant angle. She stated:

“Being a migrant and a woman in Australia, it teaches you resilience. Resilience is a huge thing, and if you are not resilient you can’t succeed, whether you’re a man, woman, anyone. But I think for a migrant who is a woman, it’s very important to be resilient. I think resilience in all aspects of life is very important. So therefore when you put your hand up and then you get brushed off, and then you say, “No, you’ve got to keep going, got to keep trying”.”
Salerio has taken that context from her experience, where she has struggled to be noticed and taken seriously, even when she talked herself up. She mentioned that the issue has been magnified at the intersectionality of being a migrant and a women. When she would put her hand up for some projects, for instance, she has not been considered for them at all. She found from her experiences that in more than many instances, her being a woman and a migrant, she has never been considered first up for any job or given a position based on her potential. She has described her climb up her career ladder as a piecemeal development, where she has had to work extra hard in different directions to demonstrate her potential before she was even considered for a position. For instance, Salerio shared an experience where her company had to expand services to Asia. She had done a lot of work around establishing that service in Australia and she felt that she was ready when the role of director for it became available. She put her ‘hat in the ring’ but she did not get the role. The man who was given the role was not fully capable and within a year of being in the position he wasn’t successful. She ended up getting the project, managing to make it very successful, by expanding it all through Asia. She has related an incident when after having just taken over the man who had managed the project, he had left a pair of his shoes in the office with the following note: ‘Let’s see how you can fill these shoes’.

Primary migrants have represented a high potential human capital compared to secondary migrants through Australian Migration laws (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). An important factor in the interviewees’ interpretation of having a successful career progression in Australia have been informed by the pressure as primary migrants, in that they have had their skills screened and therefore, had higher expectations to be employed in their respective professions and achieve success, right after migration. Some interviewees, however, recognised the issues and disadvantages associated with them migrating as adults, even as primary migrants on a highly skilled basis. An important area that the NESB migrant women have been disadvantaged has been in the loss of formal network and connections in their countries, and that has been a big hindrance as the importance of network in women’s careers has been documented
in literature (Cross & Armstrong, 2008; Skaggs et al., 2012). As an exemplar, Salerio stated:

“So and we don’t have a culture of support and help in this country, and it’s filled with migrants so therefore people don’t have the connection and the network because they’re all back in another country. In India it’s like constantly you’re bombarded by noise, colour, this, that, everybody just talking to you all the time, and here you come in and it’s who do I talk to now? So it’s building up that and so much of the relationships in India you take for granted, and those networks, which I think also impact on your career, it’s because you don’t have any of those networks. And it’s the networks that you build in your school and college days are the ones that really last. They take you into your career, and that was one of the huge disadvantages I find migrating to another country, more than anything else”.

The importance of networks has been documented as an important element in women’s access to higher roles (Barnett, 1991; Cross & Armstrong, 2008; Dimovski et al., 2010; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; Skaggs et al., 2012). Salerio has lamented that in her experience in Australia, she has not been able to really capitalise on informal connections because she has not grown up in Australia. She stated that those informal relationship networks would have been tapped into and she would have progressed a lot more into her career. This has been another part where being a migrant in Australia, even a very adept one as her, has not been quite as easy. In fact, Salerio stated that losing that informal relational connections has been one big ‘disadvantage’ of migrating to Australia.

Having migrated to Australia as adults, another disadvantage some of the interviewees have confided has been on their down gradation of career roles and start at low positions, much below their migration professional levels. For instance, Juliet stated that, “No matter what the career, in Australia is a step down initially”. Juliet has held very successful legal careers in Hong Kong, China and the US and was also highly qualified with an overseas prestigious Bar and Law degree. She had initially
thought that her skills were high in demand as her primary skilled migration status had suggested. She did end up being employed in a good position, however it has been at a lower level than before she migrated.

Other interviewees also have had to accept employment at lower levels than the ones they held in their countries of origin; but what has been remarkable has been their expressed gratefulness for the opportunity to be even employed in their fields. For instance, *Capulet, Ursula, Rosalind and Nerida* have all felt ‘fortunate’ to have been employed at entry level positions in their fields, thereby, justifying the category in the government migrant surveys of migrants employment in their respective skill fields (ABS, 2017b, 2017c). However, their employment in Australia, like *Juliet*, has been lower than the level held in their countries of origin. For example, *Rosalind*, on a deeper reflection, has shared that while skilled migrants hoped of securing good employment opportunities, the reality in her experience has been that if they came in a mid-career professional level, they would be employed in a ‘slot’ lower. She also stated that skilled migrants, depending on their country of origin, have been also treated differently in their employment and career progression. In her experience, ESB migrants from the UK or the US, for instance have been held in a much higher esteem in Australia than ones from India. As noted in the literature review, ESB migrants have been able to access high positions in Australia matching their qualifications compared to NESB migrants because they have been considered culturally relatable to local Australians (ABS, 2017b; B. Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Birrell & Healy, 2008a, 2008b; Foroutan, 2008). However despite expectations that their relevant skills would translate to career success, NESB highly skilled migrant women in Canada and the US have also experienced similar predicaments: in the former, experiences of downward employment mobility has been reported (Suto, 2009) and in the US, there has been an apparent gender and ethnicity disadvantage, with a wider pay gap in NESB migrant women compared to ESB migrant women (Le & Miller, 2010).

This disadvantaged position has not improved or proved less intricate for interviewees who have stayed longer in Australia, before they became skilled primary
migrants. Ophelia, Sylvia, Nerida, and Desdemona were international students before they applied for their skilled residency in Australia and they have had to trail different / lower-level avenues (Suto, 2009) before landing their current ‘successful’ positions. To illustrate this, Ophelia has been in academia and in an administration role before she was offered an entry-level position in her law firm. Sylvia also has had to start from the bottom, but in the right skills field and Nerida, from the very bottom as has been stated before. Desdemona worked odd jobs as a student to pay her bills and living expenses and after she graduated, she started from a lower clerical post in the field she studied in. Nerida like Desdemona had also worked different jobs while studying to pay for her living expenses however, she has not even been employed in the same industry of prior experience nor in the field she had specialised in her Master’s degree. She has had professional experience from Sri Lanka and a post-graduate degree from a reputable Australian University and she stated:

“I possibly thought that I probably wouldn’t have to start from scratch, like from absolutely the bottom. But in reality I did. So and it was the opportunities that came that became available to me. I think that’s it as well, because I just took the first opportunity that came by, so I didn’t hold back and wait for better opportunities because I needed the money, and I needed to get a job. So I just took even a job, even if it was just like where I started, like sorting our correspondence and then inputting, like a data entry basically”.

Nerida had hoped that her previous experience or her educational qualifications would have amounted to something, however she justified her position by stating that her work experience has been in a different industry and her down grade, despite her Australian post-graduate degree, has been possibly because she was a migrant and she has not been born in Australia. As she shared:

“I was a migrant, and basically I had to sort of start again, and like whatever I had done in the past didn’t really matter. And you see it around you all the time”.
Nerida felt that even though she spoke English quite well, her being a migrant and not a local Australian meant she has had to piece meal her way to build up that familiarity, the lingo and little things like saying the right things and approaching a person (Li & Campbell, 2009) as has been discussed in the cultural fit theme, as she stated that “sometimes how we approach people like in Sri Lanka would be different to how you would approach someone here”.

From the above, migrating as skilled primary migrant applicants have created pressure to have successful careers, as suggested by my interviewees. As has been stated in the literature review chapter NESB skilled primary migrant men have higher expectations regarding their career transition post migration and have been more likely to be in an employment matching their professional backgrounds than women migrants (O'Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). However, this has not been the case when NESB skilled women have been the primary applicants, as witnessed by most of the interviewees who have had to start from the very bottom. Juliet, Portia, Robin, Capulet, Salerio, Ophelia, Ursula, Rosalind have been all employed in their respective fields and held respectable positions. At a glance, superficially and personally, their employment post-migration would be categorised as successful career transitions but in their initial jobs in Australia post-migration, they have had to start from lower positions- interviewees like Ophelia and Desdemona have had to start from random low clerical and administration roles before they have been even considered entry-level positions matching their professional backgrounds. Nerida did not even pursue an entry-level position. She has worked her way through small positions to her current managerial post. Having arrived alone, they have had to fend for themselves and had to take any opportunity that came their way to pay their bills. Being a skilled primary migrant has given them an opportunity to work in Australia but that has not necessarily meant that they fulfilled the expectation of finding employment matching their qualifications and also at the right level. This study has helped fill a gap in literature by showing how women as NESB primary applicants have also felt pressure to succeed but unlike NESB skilled primary migrant men, they have not been necessarily employed in the levels that matched their educational or professional backgrounds.
Another important finding that has emerged in this section has been that the double/triple disadvantage (gender, ethnicity, and migration) did not improve much despite some of my interviewees having spent more time in Australia as international students even before they applied as NESB skilled primary migrant women. Australian qualifications has been listed as an essential employability factor in the Australia skilled migration scheme (ABS, 2017c; DIBP, 2017; Hawthorne, 2005, 2010; Hugo, 2014; Ong & Shah, 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b); however, from the findings in this section, the vexed position of this factor in the migration scheme has been raised (Hawthorne, 2010) as it has not presented an essential employability factor for the interviewees who did have Australian qualifications (Jackman, 1995; Kostenko et al., 2012; Parasnis et al., 2008). That has suggested that for my interviewees and their career progression in Australia, being local, migrant status and Australian work experience have taken precedence over elements such as acquiring Australian qualifications or being affluent in the local culture.

Women from ethic minority women have been stated to have belonged to more than one undervalued and disadvantaged social group of gender, in that they have faced multilevel discrimination (Syed, 2007; Syed & Ali, 2005; Syed & Murray, 2009; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Syed & Pio, 2010). The disadvantage faced by my interviewees because of them being migrants has been also illustrated in Juliet’s experience. She has stated she has had to take the first job that came her way, which was at a lower level than her previous position. Having a family of five to support, she has to be the main bread-earner as her husband stayed at home to look after their children. But more importantly she has mentioned other factors contributed such as not having local experiences, language skills and culture, therefore suggesting the barriers to employment for other NESB migrants (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1996; Colic-Peisker, 2005; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Hawthorne, 1988, 1997, 2002, 2010; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006; Torezani et al., 2008), and in particular, NESB women in Australia (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Lee, 2013), have also been applicable in her case as well, even though she migrated as a primary applicant. She has shared that:
“For me, being a mum it’s quite important to be a good role model for them. Now for me some of the motivation comes, doing a good job is kind of to prove to them being a woman it’s possible that you could do – kind of like the gender equality thing, right? I think when they grow up, they grow up here, like, the race background or the migrant background possibly is not that important for them. I’m hoping that by the time they grow up in Australia possibly they’re non-Asian, if you grow up here without the culture and language barrier. Other than that possibly I think it’s closer to the local people so for them it’s more important about the gender equality issue”.

Juliet has been of the belief that the multilevel disadvantages she faced would disappear for her daughters, who have been born in Australian and the only issue for them to overcome would be gender equality. Her perspective has been that being Australians, her children shared similar cultural values with locals, spoke like them and therefore, they will be ‘Non-Asian’. This has been similar to the crucial role played by South Asian American children of first generation migrants in developing social and cultural capital because of their command of conversational American English and American culture, which they imparted to their parents on conscious and unconscious levels and also fulfilled their parental life success hopes and expectations (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004; Sandhu, 2012). However, while I have argued earlier that being local (not a migrant), having Australian work experience have proven to be important factors to consider in the interviewees’ successful career progression, there have been other disadvantages related to ‘visible’ aesthetic features than just being born in Australia and being able to speak and behave like a local, as Rosalind has pointed out:

“Sometimes I feel that people really don’t give regard to your presence. And I don’t know why, whether it’s the ethnic background, or whether it doesn’t work, like they will almost feel as if they will disregard you. I do feel like that, because especially when there are external consultants coming in from different organisations. So when they come, they will talk, and even if you’re
wanting to say anything, or you’re saying anything, I feel that they don’t regard you as much. No, it’s just the perception - if I have not met a person before he doesn’t know my speaking style, he doesn’t know any of my styles, so what reason will that person have to you know. And I think that is why a lot of the Chinese people, they even change their name”.

Rosalind has described her frustrations and stated that people’s perception of her could have impacted on her career progression. She has felt undermined and overlooked because of the way she looked and because she sometimes did not have the opportunity to speak up. And which has been why she has stated that people, including clients would discard her even before they heard what accent or speaking style she had. Her reasoning has been that, people’s perception of her aesthetic appearance and her ‘visibly’ Indian look have impacted on her career. This has been in line with literature that has stated that Indian women in New Zealand have been negatively perceived owing to their visible characteristics such as skin colour, ethnic dressing, accents or not having Anglo-Saxon names etc. (Pio, 2005, 2007, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014). Sylvia has also deliberated on this issue and shared that:

“I think that’s where the issue is because they look at your name, I have a very Indian, not Indian, very Thai sounding sort of name so they look at your name and they assume you don’t speak English. So I’ve had calls where they’ve approached me to invite me for an interview and they’re like oh your English is very good. I’ve had comments like that so meaning because of my name you assume that my English wasn’t good”.

Sylvia has spoken like an Australian, there was little trace or hint of her Indian origin even though she had arrived as an international student in Australia. However, there have been other ‘front-line’ issues that she has stated that needed to be ironed out before employers recognised her English credentials. Therefore, there has been more to being ‘Non-Asian’, as Juliet suggested; just by being born and brought up in Australia did not equal opportunities or advantages if one looked different from the mainstream white Australians and had unfamiliar names, which sounded or were
perceived to have been from non-English speaking backgrounds. Asian Americans have been still considered different, stereotyped and perceived by some white people assumed to be universally successful because of their abilities in the classroom and workplaces as Science and Maths nerds (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). However, they also have suffered negative perception when it came to being considered as good leadership material; they have been perceived to be content with working hard, getting results and had no interest in pursuing leadership opportunities or would simply be not good at it because Asian men have been seen as less masculine and the women, feminine, submissive and subservient (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). The poor representation of Asians in top positions, among other factors have also been attributed to culturally ingrained aspects such as their reluctance in speaking up or being in the public eye as making highly visible decisions have been intimidating for some of them (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). For instance, Nerida’s reflections on whether she has had a successful career sounded indecisive and unconfident. She has shared that:

“I’m probably not- I have a lot to learn, and I would say- that’s always been the feedback that I’ve been given- I’m a person who you can count on to deliver. I’ll always deliver- that’s one of my strengths. So you bring me in and you know it’s going to get done. So I feel that I’m often brought in, in problems, at the last minute even, because they know that I can fix it and I’ll deliver it. So I guess I think I have delivered in the spectrum of what we’re talking about, I mean I’m obviously not at a level where it really impacts a financial decision, but of course I have contributed to financial benefits in that sense to the (organisation). I’ve still not achieved everything that I want to achieve maybe, but I don’t really know what I want to achieve- that keeps changing every time”.

Nerida has stated that she derived her success from validation through her bosses and managers. She has been told by her superiors and managers that she needed to more forward and speak up in-order to be noticed and be put up for higher roles. Her bubbly personality made fitting in easy, however there has seemed a confidence
lacking in her and she doubted whether she wanted to be in top management positions. *Nerida’s* boss reminding her to speak up more has resonated with what has been stated in literature (Oguntoyinbo, 2014), however the reference has been more to American born Asians while *Nerida* would be at a more vulnerable situation because she was a NESB woman and a migrant in Australia and had the odds stacked up against her. My interviewees were distinctly different from the Asian Americans, in that they had ‘foreign’ accents and had migrated as adults. So in their career progression and success, they would face glass ceilings brought on by their gender, ‘womb’ ceiling as mothers together with a ‘bamboo’ wall that would see them fight perception of Asian women as being submissive and subservient (Oguntoyinbo, 2014), in addition to facing a glass border (Bruning & Cadigan, 2014) issues that have been based on their accent, language and migrant status. All those issues have been woven in the stories and how the interviewees have described their experience of career progression in Australia.

The disadvantages faced by migrants in their host countries and the importance of being able to fit in culturally (Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006) have been discussed in the earlier chapters. We have also seen in the earlier themes that some of my interviewees have mentioned how speaking like the locals, having sophisticated English and adapting to the host country’s environment standards and this has been echoed in the literature (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; Hawthorne, 1994; Lee, 2013). It would imply that even though the women have been born and brought up in different countries and cultures, they would be expected to compete and fare better if they fitted in like a glove, be less visible and exhibited only small differences compared to the locals.

However, drawing out the uniqueness of their gender, cultures, their country of origin and celebrating that difference and working it to their advantage in this globalised work scenario would be a beautiful angle to look at. As *Ophelia* has noted that women seen as uncomplacent in selling themselves as publicly as men has not
been necessarily a bad thing as it has brought a different perspective. She has mentioned specifically that her NESB woman migrant manager of Indian origin has used a different approach that worked to her advantage and saw her advance in her career. *Ophelia* has stated that even though her NESB manager was in a very senior position, she was not vocal and yet very skilled in running meetings rather than just speaking out to the crowd, though she was just as capable of putting her words together to be heard. From what *Ophelia* shared, there has emerged a point of conveyance that one’s difference (gender cultural background, migrant status) could be harnessed in creating an advantageous approach, instead of blindly believing that donning ‘Male’ and ‘Australian’ qualities would necessarily ensure a successful career progression. Therefore to add texture and dimension in the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s leadership, there has been value in a deeper exploration of the impact of migrant status, colour, cultural background and how all those could bring advantages and value to their roles.

Migrants harnessing that unique position to create success stories in their work lives has been discussed by some interviewees in this study. It has been sometimes made apparent by the interviewees from their stories that they have felt they had an edge over their ‘local’ counterparts. The next theme has been thus focused on interviewees who have shared that they realised, drew and capitalised on their unique advantages of being women and NESB skilled migrants in Australia and translated it into successful careers.
5.3 Perceptions of the Multilevel Advantages of Gender, Ethnicity and Migration

‘We know what we are, but know not what we may be.’ (Hamlet, Act 4. Sc.5)

In this section, I discuss how the interviewees’ perception of their capitalisation on their difference or ‘uniqueness’ have led to successful outcomes in their experiences. What most of the interviewees from this study have talked about has been the many qualities a woman could bring in a leadership and managerial role. For instance, Ursula has mentioned that as a woman, she has perceived that she has been good at multitasking and a better listener than a man. She has also felt that women were more careful in their decision making because in general, they have tended to balance the “factual side and the belief system better than men”. This has been demonstrated in the way some interviewees have referred to women leaders they looked up to and thought they brought something different to the table, as discussed below.

Capulet’s role model in her company was the chief executive. Though her CEO was direct in her delivery and action, Capulet has felt that as a woman, she has been approachable and allowed for opinions and frustrations to be voiced. Therefore Capulet’s appreciation of her CEO has suggested that feminine qualities, such as vulnerability as an example, could be compatible with managing people. She responded positively to her CEO’s leadership style and appreciated the combination of steely structure and feminine vulnerability, which she thought have been qualities that stood her in good stead as a female leader amongst male peers. She has felt she could relate to her because, like her, she was a young woman and a mother of two. She saw a very good role model in a woman from a background different to her, who also had to juggle kids. Therefore, having a female CEO has made her feel that being a woman and a mother were not detriments to effectively take on a high executive role in her organisation a high role.
Thus, there has been some main notions that have emerged from what Capulet shared. First, in this instance, Capulet’s perception of a women leader drawing on her ‘feminine’ skills to have an advantageous position has suggested that capitalising on feminine qualities, can be seen as favourable and desired in a leadership and managerial role. This has aligned with literature stating that women managing with their superior inter-personal social skills than men led to a democratic and participative managerial style, something which was not previously encountered by autocratic and directive styles exhibited by male managers (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). It has also been argued that a ‘feminine’ leadership has been more effective and preferred over traditional male leadership styles therefore women leaders have been found to exhibit more effective and contemporary leadership behaviours than their male counterparts (Eagly et al., 2003). Secondly, seeing more women leaders has been found to encourage employees’ appreciation for leadership roles on ‘epicene’ qualities rather than on masculine ones (Stoker et al., 2012). This balance and combination of leadership styles, such as being vision orientated and yet displaying prescriptive gender congruent behaviours, have been stated to be important in women’s progression to the highest leadership roles (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). The combination of leadership styles have also been seen in Capulet’s description of her CEO’s style of management.

There has been another strong gender discussion that has stood out from what Capulet has shared above. The ability for Capulet to be able to relate to her female CEO has appeared advantageous because it inspired and empowered her in her own career progression. This has been in line with literature stating that women in powerful top positions have been found to engender and lend legitimacy to them serving as important role models and inspiring others like them (Dworkin et al., 2012). The importance of roles models has also been stated (De Janasz et al., 2003; Demaiter & Adams, 2009; Dimovski et al., 2010; Dworkin et al., 2012; Furst & Reeves, 2008), especially women mentors for women mentees, in facilitating women’s career progression to higher organisational roles (Cross & Armstrong, 2008; Haynes & Ghosh, 2012; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Tharenou, 2005). The increased female
representation at the top has been thus, found to have a positive influence on increasing female managerial aspirations (Skaggs et al., 2012), reversing women’s negative views of management careers (Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005) or viewing the top as a masculine domain (Mangi, 2016; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Therefore having women in both executive and board roles can lead to increased women’s chances to good mentorship, access to better social networks, and the muting of negative gender stereotypes (Skaggs et al., 2012). It has been interesting that this finding could also be relevant in an Australian context, as seen in Capulet’s case. Capulet was keen to see women in top positions as role models, such as her CEO as she could relate more to her than she would to a male manager.

Ophelia has been another interviewee who has felt that working under a NESB women leader of Indian descent, has been advantageous for her. She felt that her leader has been very successful because she had the performance to back herself up and she listened more than her ‘Anglo’ male boss did. She has shared that:

“I think it means and that it is very specifically to me because she is an Indian female, who is also quite petite, not quite as petite as me. But having a woman in what is like, Aaron [her male boss] is now in a more powerful position within the group but...she is much more senior than he is. And she is more experienced...I like them for different reasons but...she has more gravitas than him, I think. And to have that model in our particular group as the head and as one of the...influential partners, within the partnership sort of does sends a strong message. I mean in one sense it sends a strong message that if you are similar to her in terms of how you run your life...I think it also sends a message about the fact that women who are not these masculine women...Or what you think of as conventional strong women...can be successful...I think it always helps to see someone like me...”

Ophelia has stated that her boss had mentioned wanting to distinguish herself from the other successful ‘conventional strong women’, who appeared aggressive and were essentially, women acting like men to get ahead. As we have discussed in the
earlier chapter, *Ophelia* has been a quiet achiever and she felt having a similar women
as a leader has been inspiring for her own career and gave her the confidence that she
did not have to emulate masculine energy or ‘talk herself up’ to get to get promoted,
especially in the law industry she was in. In this particular context of *Ophelia’s*
experience with her NESB woman leader, there have also been other salient
characteristics such as culture and ethnicity that have been considered important for
her. *Ophelia* has shared that it has been inspiring to have a woman of a similar
background to her sitting at a top leadership position at her firm. Physically she shared
similar attributes with her NESB woman leader and they were similar in their
personalities, being both quiet-achievers. This has been in line with literature, which
has mentioned that social identification to similar individuals and the allowance of
diversity and inclusion of salient observable elements such as gender and ethnicity; for
instance, in formal mentoring on Indian women have been important in the vertical
integration of women in Indian organisations (Haynes & Ghosh, 2012). A more recent
study on ethnic minority students in the United States has pointed to the merits of
modelling from ethnically similar mentors and the importance in the mentee emulating
traits leading to professional socialization, by attesting from legitimate journeys
(Davis, 2008). The context of this study has been, in that instance, more reflective of
*Ophelia’s* relationship and feelings of being managed by an ethnically similar leader.
It has interesting that what has been considered relevant in Indian organisations for
Indian women’s integration or encouraging ethnic minority students in the United
States has been also befitting in explaining *Ophelia’s* perception of being in an
advantageous position by emulating and learning from an experienced NESB skilled
migrant woman leader.

However, unlike *Ophelia, Rosalind’s* has not felt inspired by her Indian woman
CEO in her company in the government sector. *Rosalind* felt that even though she was
ethnically and culturally similar to her CEO, she did not necessarily view it beneficial
for her. *Rosalind’s* sentiments have been echoed in literature stating that it has not been
important to be guided by ethnically similar mentors to have a better experience
(Atkinson et al., 1991). Seemingly, it has appeared that *Rosalind* did not acknowledge
the importance of having an ethnically similar CEO in her career progression. However she has also shared that:

“Because initially when I was here, for some time I wouldn’t be given the opportunity to present myself because they formed an opinion about me without giving me any chance. But over the years it has changed now, because they would have seen me and they would have seen how I’m working, so over the years it has changed and now my CEO is an Indian, so that has made some help”.

On a profounder level, Rosalind has stated vaguely that she felt having a CEO of similar gender and ethnicity in her company did help challenge, educate and change people’s perception of Indian working women. As has been noted in the earlier themes of cultural fit, Rosalind has stated that her colleagues did not know much about India, which she felt has been an impediment in her career progression in Australia. Therefore the participation and visibility of minority ethnic women at the top has been a significant factor in changing the general perception, in creating precedence of acceptance and possibility by the general ‘majority’ public of seeing NESB migrant women occupying top leadership positions in Australia. This has been echoed in expectancy violation theory, that has stated that an increase in women managers and in leadership roles can influence and shift traditional ‘stereotypes’ (Joardar, 2011), such as on gender and ethnic ‘ideals’ and prevalent leadership role qualities. Even though Rosalind did not necessarily see the overt benefits of having a NESB migrant women as a CEO, it has been paving the way and creating a catalyst for change, especially in the importance of seeing more leadership based on diversity facets such as ethnicity, colour, migrant status and gender.

Therefore what the findings from this section bequeathted has been that while gender has been important, other factors such as culture, background, and ethnicity have further offered a deeper significance and benefit in increasing the prospects of career progression for some of the interviewees. Consequently, from the interviewees’ experiences with women leaders, I have maintained that there needed to be more
visibility of role-models in women of similar backgrounds, culture and ethnicity to assist in the NESB skilled migrants’ career progression in Australia. This would give them a further incentive to capitalise on their unique qualities as women and as NESB skilled primary migrants in Australia. The capitalisation on the latter part of ethnicity, country of origin and migrant status in successful career progression has been discussed in the next segment.

In the previous chapter and specifically in the cultural fit theme, some of the interviewees have related that on how it has been important for them to fit in, to get used to the Australian way of life and also how their English language skills and adopting an ‘Aussie’ accent had helped in their careers. Interviewees like Silvia and Nerida have been the poster children of that notion as they have been convinced that adaptation to the Australian way of life has been a ticket to their career success in Australia. Other interviewees like Ophelia, however, have not been so persuaded by the ‘complete immersion’ approach. Ophelia has believed that not immersion, but skills and performance to back their work have been important in her getting ahead, as has been seen above from the inspiration she has drawn from her NESB woman leaders. Like Ophelia, Portia has also believed there has been more to success than plain immersion and trying to sound and act like an Australian. When she was asked directly to recount the qualities she brought as a migrant women that have enabled her to succeed in the Australian workplace and set her apart from a local, she has shared that:

“I think a lot of the time my work spoke for itself. I’ve always wanted to show my boss what I’m capable of through my work- not through my words, but through whatever I had to present to him, and I think that helped a lot. So that I guess my dedication to excellence at work, that helped a lot. And just my ability to get along with my team I suppose, the fact that I can take direction from my boss, I’m not an argumentative sort of person. If I totally disagree with something that he says I will bring it up, but I’m not one that will clash with people”.
Portia has shared that she has gotten along reasonably well with people and that helped in her career. She has described her work environment as a collaborative environment in which therefore getting along with people was important. Portia believed that her success came from drawing from her individual strengths, be it cultural or personality, rather than a complete immersion in the Australian culture to act and sound like a local. Portia did not mean that the locals have not been as capable to working hard but culturally and as a migrant, she felt she has had more fluency and fluidity in understanding people’s situations. Therefore there has been a sense that she felt her coming from a collective culture like Sri Lanka and then her experience as a migrant has equipped her more than someone who has been born and raised in Australia.

It has been asserted that some successful Indian women professionals in New Zealand have accentuated on their increased abilities, compared to other women, because their minority status has helped them build persistence and negotiate their stance in a white dominant structure to avoid being ensnared in an ‘ethnic’ docile preconception of being incapable and inferior. (Pio & Essers, 2014). Ursula has shared similar sentiments and she has felt generally more resilient than a local Australian. She has stated that:

“If you erect a building without the strong foundation, it’s not likely to withstand pressures. I know I’m generalising and simplifying it a lot, but I find it really strange that a privileged country like Australia, where kids don’t really have to go through the struggle that Indian kids go through, why despite having everything, do they have to crash and burn like that? I’m not fazed easily. Probably being from India helps because we just take disappointments in our stride, and things that bother people over here seem very trivial. If there is something that’s not comfortable in the workplace, just try to just change it instead of complaining about it”.

Ursula stated the above because she has felt her background and growing up in India had equipped her with life lessons. She said she has believed and perceived
that she has been at a more advantageous position and better equipped to adapt in Australia because of her background, culture and a skilled primary migrant than local Australians. *Ursula* has not talked about taking on a proselytiser’s role, challenging the dominant white pervasive canonical status in the society to fight her stance or preconceptions based on her ethnic minority, differing from the experiences of some of the successful Indian women professionals in New Zealand (Pio & Essers, 2014). *Ursula* very simply has endorsed the positivity of being born in India and has drawn on her upbringing as a strength in adapting, succeeding and showing more resilience than a local in the Australian workplace. *Ursula* felt she has been better than locals owing to her early experiences of interstate migration in India where she has had to travel from her native Northeast Indian state to Indian metropolises for educational and employment opportunities. Those early experiences of being away from family have helped her developed that independent and cosmopolitan outlook from a young age. *Ursula* stated that she has had witnessed her Australian counterparts complain, be argumentative and get into confrontations on things that has struck her as paltry. She stated that her coming from a different culture and country, to settle and work in Australia has made her more adaptable and gave her the ability to have a more holistic perspective and see the bigger picture.

Tapping and appreciating their cultural or gender uniqueness as NESB migrant women have been important for the women in realising their potential. However, confidence has been discussed as a catalyst and the mortar that enabled them to do that. While others have been upfront and clear in their advantages over locals, some interviewees’ experiences of drawing resilience and strength have been hidden in texts and have had to be brought to the fore after some inquisitive exploration. *Desdemona*, for instance, has expressed that she did not find her being female, a skilled migrant or her NESB background brought confronting nor distinctive contributing characteristics in the IT sector she worked in. She has stated that:
“It did not matter where one was from, whether they were male or female or which first language they spoke, if they had the skills they could be successful in their positions”.

Desdemona has felt that the Australian IT industry she worked in has been capacious and diverse enough that the defining barriers of ‘difference’ have already been broken. Desdemona getting that sense of gender and ethnic parity could be explained from research that has stated NESB women in the Australian IT industry have achieved as successful an employment integration as their male counterparts (Alcorso & Ho, 2006). However, in relating Desdemona’s story of migration and career progression in Australia, there have been deeper elements that have emerged when she mentioned her initial struggles as a migrant in her having to work harder than a local because she had migrated as an adult without her family. She has confided that:

“I mean in terms of uni, I paid my own way for my Masters. That puts a lot of pressure on you, obviously on financial terms. But also to be honest, academically, it wasn’t really a challenge for me. And I have been told, obviously I don’t know first-hand but I have been comparing notes with friends who have studied in the States and it is a bit obvious that our education standards, they are fairly low, for want of a better word. So I kind of breezed through Uni and even my Masters I did while I was doing a full-time job that was pretty demanding. So it wasn’t that hard. But it was more the pressure you have on yourself, with what you make of your life. You don’t have a safety net, so you don’t have parents who live here, to start with, which means that you need to make sure that if not anything else, you are able to pay rent... you can sustain yourself...it makes you grow up a lot quicker”.

So Desdemona has felt that she did struggle initially when she started at the current telecommunications company she was working at and she felt like she needed to prove herself and build her own professional equity. She has shared that she has had to work a lot harder than most people, doing her own 'homework, reading, asking
people questions and building her knowledge base, far and beyond what has been asked of her role. But she has recounted that her struggle as a migrant has paid off and has worked to her advantage because when she reflected on her other skills that she developed in her experience, she has attributed it to that groundwork.

Seemingly Nerida, like Desdemona, has also not been clear at first if she had an advantage over locals; she has lamented that she faced apparent barriers as a migrant compared to a local Australian and has hence ambled behind in her career. As has been stated in earlier themes, Nerida has been told by her managers that she was lacking confidence and needed to work speaking up more to be considered for promotion. However, she has mentioned that, “I’m pretty open to other people” and her approach has been to check if others could contribute a better way of doing things if something has not worked. She has developed more assurance in dealing with ‘quiet’ people and she has stated that her initiative as a leader has been to include them and ask if they have anything to say. That level of understanding, managing and including others in the decision making process has come from her having gone through a similar experience as someone having ideas but not necessarily the opportunity, confidence or the cultural experience to be vocal and express them. Now that she was at a higher level, she has been able to relate and inspire others to express and contribute. She has been able to tap into her previous experiences as NESB migrant woman to bring value into her current role and career. Therefore early experiences of going through something that has been considered a double disadvantage by Nerida, as has been discussed before in this chapter, have actually worked to Nerida’s advantage, adding to her potential and qualities in her experiences as a NESB skilled primary migrant woman in Australia.

The ability to demonstrate cultural appropriateness and work with other people has been an enormous advantage because the interviewees had migrated from cultures very different to that in Australia. What has emerged in this section of the findings has been that they appeared to be well equipped to deal and relate with a wider diversity of people and cultures compared to locals who have been born and raised in Australia.
For example, *Portia* has mentioned that the ability to understand, relate and work with people from different cultures, accents and backgrounds has been where her South-East Asian and migrant background greatly have contributed. She narrated an experience with her supervising a Malaysian PhD student; she believed she has been able to relate to him perfectly because she understood his accent, his experiences, particularly as an overseas student. However, her ‘Aussie’ colleagues often told her that they couldn’t understand a word he said and were surprised that she did. It was not that the student spoke poorly, in fact his English was very clear but his Malaysian accent and lingo were different. *Portia* has mentioned that because the world being full of different people and accents, her ability to relate, respond and direct that diversity aspect into successful interactions, owing to her migrant background have held her in good stead compared to the locals. Hence this has enriched her, both personally and professionally.

As in *Desdemona* and *Nerida*’s cases, the researcher has had to explore further into *Portia*’s experience as well because she had not fully realised that her expressed frustration at the locals who failed to acknowledge diversity in people, culture and accents meant that her world and outlook have been much wider and holistic than the locals she has been referring to; what has come so naturally to her, through her background and experience has been a strength and an advantage over the locals. It has appeared, however that this has not been a strength she has been entirely aware she had.

While some interviewees’ strengths have been hidden in subtext as has been discussed above, some interviewees have been more aware of the contributions of their gender and migrant status and have brought them to the lore in their interviews. *Ophelia, Robin, Rosalind* and *Salerio* have outlined their cultural and experience based ‘advantages’ with more candour in their conversations. Their forthrightness about their strengths could be explained by the fact that they have been more experienced and have worked their way up to very senior leadership roles in their organisations and sector, with the exception of *Ophelia*. But having said that, *Ophelia*’s career has not
been short of its laurels. In her interview, she has shared her impressive resume, including her accomplishments in academia before she embarked on her law career. These experienced skilled migrant women interviewees have brought in a different discussion by stating that from their own experiences, the focus has been on realising and harnessing their difference as migrants into strengths, to stand out from the local crowd and using that unique position as a tool to successfully navigate their career pathways in a globalised world. The findings in this section, particularly in the context of migrants feeling like they had higher achievement drive or of them being better than locals, because of their struggles or experiences could be explained by what has been reported in literature. Migrants who have moved from economically troubled regions to more socio-economic advanced societies have motivation for higher achievement and power than non-migrants, related to their hard work, efficiency and competitiveness (Boneva et al., 1998). This study, which has been conducted in Albania, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and tested in the US, has also been motivationally comparable to migrants in an Australian context, as has been seen in the experiences of Ophelia, Portia, Ursula and Desdemona’s motivation to achieve high, migrating from countries like Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka to Australia. However, one primary difference has been that most of the migrants in the research have been in reference to Eastern Europeans and North Americans and therefore could be assumed to be white, although this has not been specifically mentioned in the study. Therefore, I argue that my research has contributed in extending the feasibility of migrants’ motivational achievements within the Australian context, specifically from the South-East Asian NESB skilled primary migrant women. It has further added diversity elements of gender, ethnicity and culture to the women’s motivation to succeed in their careers. This value proposition, using their unique status as NESB skilled primary migrant women as a position of strength, has been outlined from three interviewees’ experiences, namely Salerio, Ophelia and Robin.

Salerio, for instance, wore her affable, bubbly personality and cultural background proud. In her experience as a ‘Non-white’ NESB woman CFO in a reputable Australian institution, her position has been a rare one. She has shared that
she has been able to capitalise on many advantages from her being a woman and a skilled migrant from South-East Asia. She has added that those advantages have been used extensively throughout her career and have created a unique, positive platform for her, as she stated that:

“I think in the jobs that I’ve done there were a couple of things which really stand out, one from the skills side, technical side because most of my jobs are in multinationals, working with Asia Pacific jobs, leadership specific roles, so my being an Asian, being an Indian, was a huge advantage because I sort of related to the cultures. So that was one thing I did bring, which I think was absolutely useful. I think it initially just happened, but then you start tapping into it because, “oh OK, I’ve got an advantage that you can put there”. So I think and also then a lot of people begin to realise, “oh OK, so she’s got experience, she’s an Indian”...for example my role in China was an advantage because I did come from an Asian background, and so therefore could relate better with the Asian cultures and talk to people. That was a huge advantage”.

Some of these advantages have been her cultural aptitude and appropriation skills, owing to her cultural background and her adapting into a country very different from India. She has stated that by not fitting into a ‘cookie-cut’ mould she has been able to explore other possibilities and she has carved out a niche by focusing on her cultural knowledge/contacts, linguistic skills and cultural background to achieve success (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). That, with a mix of her business and strategic advisory skills, have brought Salerio to the fore and propelled her on a successful career.

Ophelia has also shared a similar experience in her role and how her migrant status and her cultural background have placed her in an advantageous position. She stated that:

“I suppose both in my previous role as research fellow and here, I have been able to sort of play my difference to my advantage. So the fact that I am slightly
different to everyone else means that people think that I understand different things. So we have Asian clients or the firm is moving towards doing more work in Asia and I am seen as an asset in that sense because I understand stuff. It is not because I am Asian but I had lived there and I understand things-I understand culturally how things work. That's seen as an asset. It’s language on and off; it’s looking slightly different and playing that because people do not expect certain things from you”.

Ophelia has had to learn to place herself in an indispensable position, despite working in what she has called, “a traditionally male” and predominately white sector. She felt she has been able to bring value in her work experience in Australia, not only because of her Indian background but also from the fact that she has had lived experience and cultural understanding of how things have worked in Asia (Carr et al., 2005; Li & Campbell, 2009; Tharmaseelan et al., 2010). Her cultural background and upbringing in her home country have hence become advantages that she has been able to use in her current career (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). This has been comparable to the Indian Elites who have worked their cultural stereotypes to their advantage and attributed their insider knowledge, social and cultural capital (i.e. knowledge of their host country) on top of their technical capital as critical factors in finding success in the US (Sandhu, 2012); however, the focus on ‘atypical’ Indian migrant male and members of a specific Californian based Indian professional skilled group has not been sufficient in explaining Ophelia drawing on her ethnic and cultural background as advantages in an Australian context.

While Salerio and Ophelia have realised and learned to bring value preposition and position themselves professionally based on their cultural background and experiences, Robin has stated that appreciation and value of her background was something she has realised and tapped into overtime. She mentioned that:

“If more migrants learnt...how they are uniquely positioned, they have a differentiation as compared to other people who are not from that background, they will be able to get jobs for themselves. Because after all, the community
has people from all these countries, the community would rather deal with somebody from their community, so there is actually room to increase employment of all these people sitting in our society not employed. It’s about learning to match a company’s strategy, their customer relationship strategy, to your own unique skill set. For example, a bank is serving a large community, and in that the community people would like to deal ideally with somebody from their community. So you’ve got the employer and then you’ve got the employer’s customers, the employer’s target market. If the target market consists of people with your ethnicity, then you have a very valid role, and a unique differentiation in being able to serve that market. So people should go in knowing what percentage of their employer’s customers come from regions that link to their backgrounds, and then come in with that as their key...value proposition”.

Robin stated that she has learned from her many experiences, arriving in Australia as a young naïve twenty-something to becoming a prominent business figure, specializing in multicultural business in Victoria. She felt that way because she has, over time and in her work experiences, learned to engage her cultural background, what its relationship meant to the company and its customer base that it was serving (Azmat, 2013). So she shared that she has had to communicate what she has been able to do for a firm or a client, or employer’s client base, which has been directly related to her cultural background to gain advantage.

This value proposition drawing on their network and international experiences in Australian companies with overseas operations, as has been mentioned by Salerio, Ophelia and Robin from their experiences have also resonated in researches conducted in New Zealand, where the importance of migrants’ has been argued, in ensuring human resource availability and the benefits of their professional experiences, their international expertise, extensive range of networks gained through migration and working globally (Carr et al., 2005; Li & Campbell, 2009). Some of the difficulties migrants faced in finding employment in New Zealand (Li & Campbell, 2009) have
been also relatable to the NESB skilled primary migrant women in my study. However, what has been different is that the voices were presented from a spectrum of NESB interviewees hailing from different parts of the world (such as China, Europe and Africa) while my study has focused closer on a specific sample of South-East Asian NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia. Thus my research has offered a tapered and yet a more holistic and richer appreciation of my specific group of NESB interviewees, the difficulties and advantages they brought from their network and international experiences in their career experiences in Australia.

The use of cultural backgrounds to tap into ethnically similar customer base as has been stated in Robin and Salerio’s experiences have been comparable to the experiences of Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016) where their seemingly disadvantaged situation as NESB women entrepreneurs have become a benefit when they have learnt to capitalise on their gender, ethnic knowledge/contacts, linguistic skills and cultural characteristics to achieve success in ethnically-similar communities. My research has confirmed this reversal of disadvantages into advantages for NESB women in Australia, with a focus on South East Asia skilled primary migrant women who have worked their way up in Australian organisations and capitalised on their unique position to establish themselves in a globalised market.

It has been discussed in the first chapter that this research aimed to help organisations and employers in distinguishing themselves as they increasingly realise and service varied customer groups (representing different migrant groups, language skills and having the required cultural understanding) to cater a more international and global market (Kramar, 1998). I argue that the value derived from employing skilled, culturally global savvy and customer-relatable individuals such as Ophelia, Salerio and Robin has helped their employers as much as it helped my interviewees; this has been conveyed from their experiences of capitalising on their cultural uniqueness and making that work to their advantage in serving the globalised interests of the companies they were working in. Therefore, further contributions to the literature have
been made by this research by expanding the literature through personal accounts of bringing value prepositions based on the interviewees’ culture and migrant status, which has substantiated the claims of migrants bringing advantage to companies in their international operations or in serving a wider clientele.

5.4 Conclusion

It has been discussed earlier that technical skills, competence and education have made it possible in the first place for my interviewees to migrate to Australia, through their acceptance by Australia as skilled migrants. As evident in the earlier themes, most interviewees have mentioned fitting in, adapting, speaking very good English, with or without an Australian accent and learning to do as the Romans have led to successful outcomes and upward mobility in their careers. My initial thoughts were also been in line with the concept of ‘total immersion” into the local scene in getting settled in Australia, a culture different to theirs and try to adapt, live, speak and sound like the locals so they could find acceptance, positions and employment in Australia. However, this has been intensely challenged and it has been humbling to gain and see things from the interviewees’ perspectives, learned from the experiences of Salerio, Ophelia and Robin in particular, that perhaps one could tap into one’s cultural core to find value. As Robin stated, just being employed in Australia was not something that would bring enrichment in a migrant’s job and a migrant’s career needed to go towards something that was aligned to the future and something that was relevant to one’s skill set and cultural backgrounds. Therefore the social and cultural capital (not screened at time of migration) have been found to be just as important as the technical and language skills which were screened at the time of migration. However, not much has been related nor expanded on the social and cultural skills in the current Australian government migration initiatives that would further assist the migrants in their employment and in achieving success in their careers.

In the last section I have explored the possibility of my interviewees drawing success by distinguishing themselves from the locals through their social and cultural capital, their cultural differences and using their backgrounds to achieve career
success. That has suggested that differences can be empowering. It has been humbling to know and learn from the experiences of these NESB migrants that one could draw from one’s cultural foundations, language, background, the aspects one inherit and the experiences one go through, all that could be strengths that can set one apart and lift us from the rest. Fitting in and speaking like the locals may be important because we have been told that we would be discriminated upon for the way we spoke or the cultures we have hailed from. But this findings chapter has conveyed that there is also strength in diversity, which should be appreciated, recognised, known, valued, channelled and celebrated. Difference could be empowering and lead to successful outcomes, both personally and professionally.
Chapter 6 Findings and Discussion Part 3: The Experiences of Success in Australia

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them” (Twelfth-Night, Act 2. Sc.5).

6.1 Introduction

In my journey to find successful NESB skilled primary migrant women to be part of this research, I have stated in the methodology chapter that the pool of women has been a small one and I have been initially apprehensive of not finding enough ‘successful’ NESB women, who fitted the description of my interviewees. After a long and tedious process of locating them, the eleven interviewees have been carefully selected targeted specifically because they have been considered successful, at least in their careers and roles they have held as managers and leaders in their fields. It has also been important for me to share that these women have also agreed to be interviewed because they have been happy to relate their pathways and experiences of their career success in Australia. As such, they have felt special and in many ways, flattered because I approached them and wanted to interview them as women who have been successful in their careers. This chapter is a presentation on how my interviewees have felt about being successful and in particular, how they have interpreted their experiences of success in Australia.

The chapter has been discussed in two parts. The first segment has discussed the differences in defining success from a personal and government perspective. That has been specifically done through a gender and cultural analysis of what my interviewees have shared on their experiences of success from their vantage position of being successful NESB skilled primary migrant women. The second section has pulled in the analysis to present an adaptation model that has best exemplified their experiences of success in Australia.
6.2 Defining “Success” – Perspectives

I have argued earlier in the literature review and in previous chapters that elements such as cultural fit, gender, ethnicity and the country of origin effect can all impact on the successful career progression of the NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia. Consequently my interviewees’ experiences have been anything but straightforward because these varying elements have made for a very intricate but personal experiences of career success in Australia. Therefore it has suggested that by avoiding these important elements that influenced their personal journeys, the economic-centric research on skilled migration returns (Breunig et al., 2013) or the government’s quantitative recourse in migrant employment (ABS, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e; Richardson et al., 2004) have presented an incomplete illustration of the migrants’ experiences. As has been stated in the earlier chapters, the perspectives of the top-down objective definition of success of the skilled migration scheme and the narrative, experience-based perspectives of my interviewees have presented two different trajectories of what success meant. In this section, I present what success has meant to my interviewees and discuss the construction from a gender element, followed by the cultural aspects that have influenced their career success pathways in Australia.

6.2.1 Gender and Success

“My desolation does begin to make. A better life” (Antony and Cleopatra, Act 5. Sc.2)

As the nature of the study has been focused on career success, the question posed to my interviewees has been seemingly a straight-forward one. As a response to my direct enquiry of their meaning of success, each of my interviewee have expressed different interpretations of what success has meant to them, whether it has been in defining success in terms of their work achievements (in the value they were adding to their organisations and jobs), or attaching social responsibility, work-life balance or
overall life fulfilment to their careers. However, one categorisation that has run common has been in their interpretations has been denoted by their subjective and internalised success constructs, identifiable mostly by introspection. Nerida, for instance, has shared that her sense of success has been when she was happy and fulfilled, when she has made a valid contribution to something that has mattered to her, such as the community or in helping somebody through her work projects. She has divulged the following on what has defined success for her: “Success is [where] I need to feel that I’ve made a contribution, a valid contribution, and without it the project wouldn’t have been as successful as it was, if I wasn’t there”. From what Nerida has shared, her career success (which supported broader success beyond employment) has been viewed in terms of more internalised facets of success, such as having that personal fulfilment and satisfaction from her contribution at work. In differentiating internalised facets of success from that of objective success constituents, the latter has been stated to be represented by verifiable, observable and valued outcomes of the career journey whereas private fulfilments and personal meanings are subjective internalised success constructs that have not been classifiable by observation or consensual validation (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). Desdemona, has also shared that:

“Actually when I was younger I think I used to look at a job title or a role and decide that was a success point. Now that I have been working for a while, so the role I had in which I was managing the team was probably the role I liked the least. And that basically showed me was that the role didn’t matter, what really mattered to me was what I was doing, how much I felt I was growing and how much I was using my brain, and how much I was using my intelligence, to create something. That’s actually what matters to me. So even now going forward, I am a technical project manager now. I need to decide if I stay down this delivery manager role or I move to something that is a little bit more, a little bit more creative, like technical architecture... So I think what will motivate me is feeling like I am using my brain and using my intelligence, I am proud of what I create”. 
From what Desdemona has shared above, she too has considered her success defined by more internalised success measures, like her personal growth, being motivated and using her intelligence, instead of it being directed by a role or a position. This also has been very similar to what Rosalind has shared in my interview with her. Rosalind was referred to me by Ursula and for our interview, I was ushered into her office building and our conversation took place in one of the meeting rooms in her office. When I asked her directly about her meaning of success, she shared with me her views, which have been very similar to Ursula and Desdemona’s accounts. To her success has not been about holding a top role in her career. She stated that, “To me, success is something where you really get the sense of fulfilment” and has described a pattern of waves of high and lows in feeling successful in her career, where the highs corresponded to the successful completion of projects and the lows left her looking for something equally challenging, where she felt she could do more. It has not been surprising then that for her being successful has not been about ‘reaching the top’. Akin to Desdemona, she has also appeared to possess a driven personality that needed to be constantly challenged with interesting projects in her job. Therefore it has made sense that for her, sitting at the top and not being challenged would have rendered her bored and hence she would have not felt successful even if she had been promoted higher in the career ladder. Sylvia, who has considered herself successful and ambitious also, divulged:

“For me I just want to continue doing a good job of what I’ve been entrusted with and that’s what matters to me, because all that will come along. I don’t say, ‘Oh I’m going to be director’. No, I don’t look at it that way. For me you continue working hard... things will come to you yeah, and that’s been my philosophy all through and that’s, and I have come this far”.

Sylvia shared that she has felt very successful because of her traits such as adaptability, which she felt she has inherited from her father. This has not been a unique trait as literature has stated adaptability has been an important trait in migrants being accepted and achieving success in their host countries, including Australia (e.g.
Balasubramanian et al., 2016). She shared that, “he was my role model, I followed him and I’m successful now”. In terms of feeling successful, she said she has been more than half-way through where she wanted to be professionally and she has been very happy with her progress. Similarly, Ursula has emphasised on internalised elements of success by stating that her success has been derived from job satisfaction, which has been achieved when her work benefitted people around her:

“It’s the work fulfilment that keeps me going. I need to be in a job where I’m happy. As long as I’m happy I’ll stay. If not I’ll just make a move. My ultimate goal is not to be a CEO or somebody at the end of it; it’s just the personal satisfaction I get out of it. I’m not even that money minded, which is something Canidius (her husband) and I, don’t really agree with. He is like that but I’m really not just quite focused on money or the position. But as long as it keeps me satisfied…”

What has been interesting in what Ursula shared above was that she has not been money minded, comparing herself directly to her husband as she described her feeling of success more on the satisfaction she derived from her work. Ursula enjoyed her profession in the government infrastructure planning, because she has gotten self-fulfilment and satisfaction from knowing that she has been able to influence people’s choices in life by changing the built environment in which they lived. Therefore from her experience, her measures of success have not been quantifiable by monetary value but by those that have held high in terms of self-satisfaction. She described that, for her, breaking out of the mould in a gendered space, doing something worthwhile and being appreciated have contributed to her sense of feeling successful.

These accounts from my interviewees on their personal interpretation of success have been significant, particularly in the way they have described how they constructed their individual meanings of success. What has seemed like a forthright query have also drawn candid answers that have been strewn with gender elements that have distinguished these women’s measures of success from that of men’s. The reason why their constructs have been different from that of men’s has been a complex
area to explore, however one contribution could be based on a gender premise of men and women placing value in different things, such as women valuing personal relationships over other things as has been suggested in literature (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

There also could have been an element of disenchantment from the women themselves from not seeing enough women sitting at the top or in them facing salary disparity and less compensation for comparable skills, effort and responsibility to men despite having similar expectations of salary and work opportunities (Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008), which has been even more apparent at higher roles (Le & Miller, 2010). It has been discussed in the literature that the career trajectories of women should be considered in light of the intersectionality of factors and roles that impacted on their idea of career success differently from men (Dimovski et al., 2010; Le & Miller, 2010; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). My interviewees’ testimonials as NESB skilled primary migrant women have supported that literature as their individual meaning of success, in an Australian context, have been described in more internalised measures such as personal recognition, accomplishment, and achieving balance in their lives (Dimovski et al., 2010); therefore their success measures then could be considered different from other NESB primary migrant men or just men in general as men’s focus has been documented to be more on external objective success measures such as salary, position or status (Dimovski et al., 2010).

Another gender related area that has pertained to the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career success would be the attribution of success to luck. In this part of the chapter, I explore what ‘luck’ has meant for my interviewees in their experiences of career success in the Australian workplace. Luck has been a term used continually in the research, and it initially came up when the women described their experiences of the migration process, career pathways and their journeys in Australia. For instance, Rosalind has indicated that she has been ‘lucky’ in being privy to achieving personal success and a sense of fulfilment through delivering successful
work projects in India and then in Australia. A lucky event has been defined as a rare occurrence and an uncommon event even when the relevant initial conditions for the same event that turned out lucky have been applied (Levy, 2009). For example, winning the lottery could be considered a good illustration of a lucky event. The concept of luck came up when my first interviewee, *Ophelia*, has talked about it in helping her career. *Ophelia* has attributed the right education, support and resilience for her success; she has also experienced a veering route to her career success but she has credited some of her successful experiences to luck and has mentioned that it facilitated her career success. She divulged that:

“Yeah some of it has been luck. And also I suppose, being willing to jump at opportunities or being willing to put myself into places, into opportunities even when it’s been hard and that paying off. I think a lot of people work really hard and don't necessarily get to where they want to be or where I am. And it is not because they work any less hard. I think really the stars have to align. Fate, god has to be looking out after you. I am sure god looks out for everyone. But it’s more than just me. I don’t think it’s all because of me.”

From what *Ophelia* has shared above, coming by the right opportunities and hard work have been important to facilitate one’s success, however she has also stated that she felt that the ‘the stars had to align’. *Ophelia* also stated that luck has been about ‘being in the right place at the right time’, which has been something most of my interviewees have mentioned. For instance, the second interviewee I spoke with, *Desdemona*, also has credited luck for the exposure she has had, in what she has ‘learned, carried forward’ and what she wanted to do next. Like *Ophelia*, she stated that she has been lucky, ‘to be at the right place at the right time’ in finding the right job opportunities. As has been stated previously in the literature review, it has been argued that women have been more likely to attribute a portion of their success to ‘luck’ than men, with men more likely to see the derivation of success from sheer hard work; this gender gap has been even more evident in higher positions (Fisman & O'Neill, 2009; O'Neill, 2007; Swim & Sanna, 1996). Following my interviews with
Ophelia and Desdemona, my curious predilection to explore if there has been a gender element that has made the women more likely to attribute their experiences to luck than men, has led to adding ‘luck’ as a conscious pointer in my interviews with my interviewees.

Thereafter in my interviews with the remaining nine interviewees, when I have asked them directly if they thought luck played a part in their career success, most of them have agreed that, without luck, their story could have taken a different tangent. In fact, most of my interviewees have mentioned luck as being an element in achieving success in their experiences. For instance, Salerio mentioned:

“Luck has played a huge part for me, and I think I was lucky in terms of the organisations I’ve worked for. They have been pretty good in terms of encouraging women, encouraging people with potential. So the bosses I’ve had have been pretty good. And I have- if you look at my resume, I have worked for top multinationals. So therefore I’ve been lucky in getting jobs. It’s not that I have deliberately sought out those. So some people look at the top 40 of 500 companies and say, “I’ll only work on these companies.” I’ve never done that. I’ve just said for me, “It has been about driving value, where will I find an interesting job, where can I add value? And also I think it’s a question of opportunities. I think what my boss used to say all time is, “Success is not about your skill sets, it’s all about opportunities”.

Salerio has described being able to work in the right organisations and leaders as the lucky events that led to her successful resume in her career, and most of that has been attributed to luck because she has mentioned that she has not ‘deliberately sought’ them out. Therefore the way she described herself lucky has been comparable to what has been stated in literature generally on ‘lucky’ people and how they have been those who have gotten what they wanted from society without trying or having to act (Hindmoor & McGeechan, 2013).
Even though *Salerio* has considered herself lucky in how opportunities had come by her without trying, she has also shared experiences where she has had to work hard and put herself out there to be noticed. Therefore an explanation for my interviewees underplaying their hard work to be successful and their inclination in attribute success to luck could be because they have not thought the workplace to be level-playing field, which rewarded efforts, or in them not enjoying being competitive (Fisman & O'Neill, 2009; O'Neill, 2007). That has not been entirely implausible for them to have felt that, considering it has been argued in literature that men have been still nine times more likely than women to reach senior management in companies even though women have been overrepresented in middle-management and as Australian university graduates (Martin, 2015a, 2015b). In that way, some of my interviewees have shared commonalities with what literature has stated on women, in general, attributing their success to luck (Fisman & O'Neill, 2009; O'Neill, 2007).

However, the notion that women generally attributed success to luck, compared to men has not been consistent across all of my interviewees- some of them have stated that they believed they deserved to be successful because they have all the ingredients to succeed. Some of my interviewees have been more forthright in attributing their efforts and hard work to achieving success; however the notion of luck has still lurked around in their recollections of their career success pathways, even if it has been in its very infinitesimal role of enabling them to be at ‘the right place and at the right time’. One such interviewee has been, for instance, *Capulet*, who has shared that:

“I felt I deserved to be there. I’m trying to recall what happened then, but overall I think it’s the education background, and I think I do have a Masters in that sense, and good grades from the degree level anyway, and they’re probably needing people, so maybe right place, right time then”.

*Capulet* felt that her capabilities have been responsible, much more than luck, in helping her land her first role in Australia. However, akin to *Ophelia* and *Desdemona*, she has also attributed a part of her success to luck. Similarly *Rosalind*...
has also stated that she has been lucky in that she found the right team to work with, that she came to join her husband in Australia, that her company has sponsored her permanent residency and so forth. But for her, luck sometimes has also meant opportunity, it has been important to know how to make best out of the opportunities and contrariwise, if an opportunity has not been recognised then there would have been no success. Therefore, Rosalind has reinforced the importance of hard work and what one made out of that opportunities that have been presented to them and therefore luck has not all been that relevant. She stated that she has worked with people who have landed the best of the projects but somehow failed to realise the opportunity. Juliet has also shared that pragmatic description of luck as she stated that, “I think I am lucky to find a job; on the other hand if I didn’t get this job seven years ago I could potentially be in a better position”.

Juliet has attributed her career success to hard work and not necessarily luck. She has specified that she associated the use of ‘luck’ with finance, as in when one has won the lottery; therefore she disagreed with the use of luck in achieving career success or satisfaction. Juliet has stated that perhaps the attribution of luck may be at certain points in time, like in finding the right job – however she has stressed the point that she would have achieved the same successful results with the extra effort and time. So for instance, if she had not gotten into her current career straightaway, she would have come to it in a later date and if that opportunity passed by her, she would have gone on to achieve other successes. Like Juliet, Desdemona stated that she would have achieved success anywhere, regardless of luck or her being in Australia. Desdemona has stated earlier that she has ‘lucky to be at the right place, at the right time’ because her third job provided her the opportunity to be consulting to the company she has been working currently. However, she also shared that:

“Regardless of where I was going to be in the world, whether it was here, or in Colombo or in the US, Europe or wherever, I knew this was the industry I wanted to be in and I knew that I wanted to be in a delivery role”.
Desdemona stated that she did not see outright obstacles in her work pathway and that has been where she has been probably lucky in that she worked for people she has had a great relationship with. However, she stated that some situations have required more than luck, courage and confidence to make decisions including burning bridges and moving elsewhere when she has not been valued by her company, to find value outside in the industry she has been in. From this section of the findings, it has appeared that the personality of the interviewee, rather than their gender, has had the most influence on the attribution of their career success to anything but their sheer hard work, which has been discussed to be something men attributed their success to (O’Neill, 2007). Some of my interviewees have believed and stated that they have been competitive and with hard work, could have worked to creating the opportunities themselves, anywhere. Therefore that has not fully endorse the literature findings of women being more inclined to attribute their success to luck, as my interviewees have stated that they have been just as likely to attributing their success to sheer hard work, as Juliet and Desdemona have stated in their testimonials.

Another section that has stood out as a gender element has been the way my interviewees have described and shared on their construction of career or overall success, and how different interviewees have sometimes have valued different ‘internalised’ measures over others- the success parameters have evolved for many in their preference for a more holistic meaning of success, which ventured more into their personal side of things as their migration years increased, they have grown in work hierarchy ranks or as their responsibilities and family priorities have changed. The pressure to succeed through their many roles have seemed to have followed an evolutionary pattern and some rigid stances have lessened for some of the participants, as Capulet divulged:

“Obviously five years ago, I would see success as having made, being looked at as a potential partner in a big five company. I mean that’s one kind of tangible thing, and that does change. I have a different measure now, it’s a bit more qualitative”.
Capulet has talked about the construction and evolution of success over different times, in that what she has valued as a tangible measure of success at one point in her life and career has changed over time. She felt that she has been happier in the workplace she has been and that has summed her ‘present’ feeling of success. Capulet also shared that she has started feeling more empathetic towards herself and has a lot more self-awareness in doing her work competently, being very productive and less pressured by what has gone on at work. She has also felt there has been a lot to be done and roles to be explored before saying she felt highly successful and likened her state of success to a constant work in progress. She attributed that change to being a mother and according to her, it has been a more beneficial change. She has moved away from that success mould, particularly because she had kids and unlike her parents who have pushed her towards a career that made money, she thought that success needed to be guided and driven by what her children have been good at, and what their passions laid. I will expand on the role of family on the interviewees’ career success a little later in the dynamics culture and ethnicity brings to the definition of success (section 6.2.2). Ophelia, not so differently from what Capulet has shared above, has also stated that her success has been an evolution and a construction at a point in time:

“I think every time I have a little win, I feel happy, whether it is personally or otherwise...So I feel like I constantly have little successes. But in terms of an overarching success, I think, no I am not there yet! I think it is a progressive thing, I don't think you ever, depending on who you are, I think you go along and you set different things. The parameters change and success means different things at different times. I think I have, I have done well in all the tick the box things- got my year 12 results, got to uni, got to great uni, got a great degree, got a great job”.

Ophelia has felt she has been unconsciously and partly consciously doing things to set herself for success in the future. However, she has been more philosophical about her meaning of ‘overarching’ success, stating that has not been easily achieved as it has been in a constant state of evolution. This statement has
resonated with the what others have generally defined career, where it has been described as a continuous construction and maintenance of a healthy self-concept and continuous learning of self-fulfilment (Adamson & Doherty, 1998). This has suggested that the definition of career of my interviewees has not been unique to them and therefore, not much different from what others have experienced generally.

Therefore as my interviewees have progressed through their lives, some of them have felt that ‘proving’ themselves to their family or society has not been quite as prominent in their definitions of success as it had been in their earlier years of migration or employment in Australia. What has been seemingly common and interesting has been the changes over time, particularly, in the success parameters and milestones in what the women have narrated in their experiences of over-arching success. Even though the interviewees’ interpretation and views of success have evolved, changed and meant different things at different times, at different ages through their lives and careers in Australia, it has been intriguing to also notice that not every interviewee have valued the same ‘internalised’ elements of success in their experiences, as evident in what Desdemona has shared:

“I am not a huge fan of the people management part of it...I think maybe because I have come from a place where I have had to fix my life for myself, I don’t expect anyone to hold my hand...you make sure you are doing the right thing by people who work for you...Obviously we work around people’s lives, children. But it doesn’t mean that I am going to spend 2 hours of the day listening to someone’s sob story. I expect people to deal at a certain professional level, I expect them to have that maturity, if they can’t make it to work, that’s fine they can’t make it to work....that is something that I have consciously drawn boundary at because in a large organisation you can get bogged down with trying to sort out people’s lives for them because they come crying to you saying, “my child this, my husband this or whatever”. I didn’t work this hard to get here and put up with that”
An explanation of Desdemona’s divergence from the other interviewees’ testimonials could be one based on her age, years of migration in Australia and lack of familial responsibilities at the time of her interview. She was newly married and had resided in Australia for ten years at the time of her interview. Besides Juliet, she has been in Australia for the least amount of years compared to the other interviewees. In terms of her personal life, she has been content with no children responsibilities that could hold her back compared to the familial duties Robin, on the other hand, has had to prioritise over her work ambitions such as her ‘priority’ to be at school gates at 3:30 PM, which has not been conducive to a CEO’s responsibilities. Family characteristics have appeared to be closely associated with the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s employment in Australia, where it has been documented in literature that having no young children offered substantial opportunity for women migrants to work outside the house (Foroutan, 2008). What has been relevant in explaining the findings in this section has been an age-related discussion of women career development under the phases of idealistic achievement, pragmatic endurance and reinvented contribution, where each phase has been characterised by differences in career pattern, locus, context and beliefs (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Therefore what Desdemona shared earlier has been completely comprehensible given her age, status, personality, passion and drawing success from her individual work achievements. From her statement, she has mentioned that she has been more interested in the work delivery side and that she has had to look after herself from very early on. From her reflections, the stage Desdemona seemed to be in was what could be described within the idealistic achievement phase, where women in their 20s and 30s have shown to have an internal career locus using internally directive and assertive ways to succeed, guided by the success norms dictated by organizations and society at large (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

Therefore most of what my interviewees have described as their initial motivation and the indicators or milestones of achieving success at a younger age, have seemed to be similar to what Desdemona has suggested. However, the rest of my older interviewees or ones with younger families, have placed value on other elements as
their success indicators or milestones. *Sylvia*, for example, has shared that her idea of success has been about “having a successful career plus a successful family life”, however she added that she wanted to try “to balance both” – trying to strike a wholesome combination of career and personal life, and like her, most of my other interviewees have also emphasised the importance of a good work-life balance in their success criteria. Reinforcing the balancing act between work and family as *Sylvia* has emphasised, *Portia* intimated that:

“For me family is very important, so being able to balance work life and family life to an extent where I don’t compromise, obviously not on family, but also I’m able to succeed, to do fairly well at work. I think achieving that balance, it’s a very clichéd answer but achieving that balance is success, I think”.

*Portia*, like *Sylvia* has described her success as a combination and achieving a balance between family and her career. The importance of adding their family to their success equation has not been uncommon for women, especially as women are still more commonly the primary care-givers to their young family even when simultaneously working; therefore the work-family pressures they experienced could influence and render their career development to be distinctly different from those of men (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). As such they could be categorised under the second phase of pragmatic endurance, where they manage multiple personal and professional responsibilities as also they have been at the age where they have had to made firm decisions regarding parenthood and career (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). *Ophelia* stated that:

“In my view, career success is not everything. So I feel like right now I have that sort of going ok. But success is, I suppose being happy and not being happy in that fluffy sense but being fulfilled with what you are doing, personally as well as professionally and I think, personally to me relationships are important. Whether it is friends, family or partner, whatever but it is also staying true to who you are and your values. And I feel like lots of people go down the conventional career success or success paths without really being
true to what they personally believe is important, in terms of just your personal integrity, that personal values that you really hold. Success is having everything but I don’t think I see having everything in the same way as having all of it at 100% but to have that mixture of things in the right balance. I see that it is a juggling act from the people that I see around me. But I think I would be happier if I had more of my personal life sorted out.

Ophelia did not have children but from what she shared above, she has felt like she could do better with her personal life development, and has been at a point in life where she has been looking for ‘an overall meaning’ in her life (O’Neil and Bilimoria, 2005:184). Juliet has also continued the discussion of achieving success through a balancing act between her family and professional life with the additional dimension of maintaining good relationships with people. Women have been identified to value social aspects of their work, slightly more than men (Gibson & Swan, 1981) and have also been generally more interested in building relationships and rapport with others whereas men have tended to be more directive and authoritative (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). For instance, Salerio, almost in her mid-fifties, has grown children and held a senior executive position in her organisation. In that way, she could be described to be at a very different phase in her lives and career from someone like Desdemona. Desdemona has shown to have a strong inner career locus and has stated that she has not been interested in the management of people whereas Salerio stated that she wanted to venture more avenues of success, such as helping and inspiring more people:

“I would like to contribute more to, I want to help more women. And I think I’m not doing enough. For me there’s one aspect, which I feel like has not been successful...And I’d like to do more in the community sector...I need to find a particular passion in terms of whether it’s diversity of women, like women’s issues I feel very passionate about...I feel really upset about things, when I feel women are not treated properly. There are obviously a couple of areas which I do want to do more work and that’s something I want to get into. But, I think maybe there’s a couple of more, like I’d like to be a CEO of an organisation, I
think that’s what is my next career step. And the reason I want to be a CEO is not because I want to be a CEO, but because that’s where I want to find a passion, and if I can be a CEO for an organisation that drives that- that would be another step, platform for it, too. Because I think that would be able to drive a lot more value than to the community, to the organisation, to the world- that’s why I said I’m a change agent, I’m a transformer. I remember this saying when we did some leadership course years ago, that you either ride the wave or you create the wave. For me it’s all about creating the wave”.

Salerio professed that she wanted to make a difference and a wider contribution from her work. However she has not been overly complacent with her current employment as she emphasised that she wanted to challenge and clamber her way further up the career ladder, such as becoming CEO of an organisation, to initiate further change. Compared to most of the interviewees who have discussed that they have not looked at achieving the ranks of CEO, Salerio’s plans have appeared motivated to achieve further success in her career; this has bolstered what has been emphasised at the reinvented contribution phase in an age-based career model (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005), where women have been described to more likely to work in places that provided them the opportunity to contribute meaningfully through their work. Women in this phase have been described to be more experienced and astutely more aware about the ways of advancing in their careers, recognising from their experiences that life was entwined with both internal and external elements and therefore they lived integrated lives with a deeper focus on self, on other and balance between other and self (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). This has stood out in my interviews with my older and more experienced interviewees who either have had families with grown children and dependents or who have resided longer in Australia.

My older interviewees have seemed to validate their overall feeling of success with a shift of the discussion from career success to one that encompassed more of a ‘life’ success. To give an example, Robin has stressed on the importance ‘of sorting out personal relationships’ and how enhancing the personal side of things has brought
about and enabled her career success. This has again indicated that a personal element such as family life has been held important and linked to her career success as she has stated “Nothing is achievable without the family’s support”. Although Robin has credited her life experiences as crucial ingredients, she expressed that achieving success has been about getting fulfilment from her personal life outside of her profession and then getting the support of her family to give it all at work and achieve professional success. This has supported research that has argued that subjective life success (which is broader than just career success) has been the psychological accompaniment, instrument and indicator to objective success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Salerio has also deliberated on this idea of an over-arching ‘life’ success:

“For me success is when I’m driving value, when I’m adding value to anything, in my personal life, in my career, in my family, all of that, is I have to add value. And I think it’s all about coming down to my personal values. My value system should not be compromised. For me, if I’m compromising my value system, my personal value system, I’m not being a success. So I have to be authentic to that. And as long as I’m adding values to the organisation- that would be success for me”.

As evident in her statement above, Salerio has described her success as a combination of values placed on different spheres of her life: in her career, personal and family life. The ‘life’ success, which Robin, Ophelia, Sylvia, Portia, Juliet and Salerio have shared, have been similar to what has been stated in literature, that identification and appreciation of ‘true’ biographical success of women has been described to be a combination of different lasting values (such as family and professional self-actualisation) in different areas and ages of their lives.(O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Riach et al., 2015). It has been interesting that the description of ‘life’ success, explained within the elements of age, qualifications and work-life trajectories, has also been relevant in the specific context of my interviewees’ construction of ‘life’ success in Australia. Therefore their experiences have not been unique in wanting a
more fulfilled context surrounding success, but what has emerged different in the case of my interviewees is that the understanding of their true biological success has required an exploration beyond age, qualifications and work-life trajectories, to include profounder elements of intersectionality, such as migrant status or ethnicity and culture. In particular, this part of the findings has attested to the unique complexity in my interviewees’ meanings and relationship between objective and subjective facets of success, reflecting their symbiosis in informing one another in the way my interviewees’ success have been constructed (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005).

The NESB skilled migrant women’s experience and understanding of career development and success, possibly from each other, have been reported to depend on the context, age and the multiple life roles of the phase they have been in, as has been illustrated in the O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) model. My research has thereby attested to the recommendation that women in general should be recognised and supported for their broader life roles; by investing in the individuals, will the necessary resources be identified for these women to make their best contribution and so the organisations could draw on their success (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). However in conjunction to their career trajectories, it has been argued that NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia played broader life roles, which has not only been contextual to gender and age but also to other dynamics such as ethnicity and migrant-specific considerations, as has been argued in literature (e.g., “English proficiency, family roles, skill recognition, societal stereotypes, cross-cultural and religious differences, and gaps in social capital”) (Syed & Pio, 2010, p.133). Therefore I argue that even the O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) model, which has been created specifically for women though recognition of their broader life roles, has appeared inadequate in discussing my interviewees’ broader life contexts as it has seemed to only scratch the surface of the deep dimensional influences in these women’s career and lives. In the next section, I discuss these important dynamics and their role in the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s definition of success.
6.2.2 Migrant, Culture, Ethnicity, and Success

“To climb steep hills. Requires slow pace at first” (Henry VIII, Act.1, Sc.1)

In the earlier chapters and themes, I have discussed the multilevel disadvantages faced by the NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia at the crossroads of gender, migrant status, ethnicity and country of origin. I have also argued how those multilevel disadvantages have buoyed to create advantages for some interviewees in capitalising on their gender, ethnic knowledge/contacts, linguistic skills and cultural characteristics. As has been mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, I have specifically targeted my eleven interviewees because they have been considered successful in their careers; in fact one of the most important criteria for their selection has been in their status as successful managers or leaders in their fields in Australia. Therefore in that context and during the interviews, they have been asked directly as to what success has meant to them and how they have felt they have progressed on their own continuum of success. One of the important aspects that have emerged in my interviewees’ interpretation of success has been one that has been linked to the values of their country of origin cultural values. To illustrate this, Salerio has divulged:

“I think in terms of opportunities and experiences in Australia as a migrant to start off with, there wasn’t any issues. I think at the lower levels it is quite easy for migrants to find jobs, and I think I have been quite lucky. I started off with KK (a big finance firm) when I came here. I know I have been quite lucky actually, the recruiters I’ve worked with, the people I’ve worked with, have all been pretty good, they understood and were aware of the Indian system and the education but a lot of people I know struggled a lot”.

There has been some significant cultural overtures captured in what Salerio has recounted above, with her direct allusion towards the highly regarded education qualifications and skills that have been associated with members of the Indian community. It has been argued that all societies have broadly agreed status markers
that are classified as success criteria, such as educational attainment and occupational
category (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005) and Indians have been long
associated with the reputation and stereotype of possessing deft skills, competence and
qualifications, especially in the technical and academic fields (Sandhu, 2012). Chua &
Rubenfeld (2014) have identified three traits which have been stated to have rendered
cultural groups, such as Mormons, Jews, Indians, Nigerians, Chinese, Iranians,
Lebanese, and Cubans, to be more successful than others in North America. The three
traits identified have been that of having a sense of superiority and inferiority complex
as well as impulse control, instilled through their work and discipline (Chua &
Rubenfeld, 2014). This has also been useful in explaining the different values that my
interviewees have appeared to have infused, which have contributed to their success.
For instance, they appeared to have combined a sense of superiority thanks to their
high educational attainment with a sense of inferiority owing to their lower status in
Australia and impulse control associated with their delayed gratification (Chua &
Rubenfeld, 2014).

As the nature of the study has been based on career success, most of my
interviewees have expressed their varying views on what success has meant to them,
as has been discussed in the earlier section. They have defined success in terms of their
work achievements and attaching social responsibility, work-life balance or overall
life fulfilment to their careers. A deeper analysis of their success definitions however
has revealed threads of ingrained cultural values. To state an example, Desdemona,
when asked what success has meant to her, she described it primarily in the context of
her work in that she established her success through creditability in her profession and
recounted some of her experiences working on some difficult projects, which she has
taken as a personal challenge to deliver successfully. She has shared that she has
acquired a personal sense of satisfaction and achievement in turning something good
out of what has seemed like “rocky and almost impossible” situations. She has liked
that her job involved thinking on her feet and being creative in the way she approached
things. That way she has been able to ‘implant’ her role in projects, which has also
meant that she has had substantial control on how things have been delivered. She has stated that:

“I think I have built up a reputation here to be willing to take on the difficult things, and to be willing to take on the messy situations and to be able to fix them. And I don’t know if that is an aspect of my natural personality that I do want to fix things and I want to put things in order”.

What has been interesting in Desdemona’s description of personal success has been the use of words such as reputation and knowledge. It has not been unusual that Desdemona have valued those outcomes, especially in the context of her coming from a collective cultural society in Sri Lanka. For instance, reputation has been stated in literature to be an important measure of validation from others in collectivistic cultures, such as that of Sri Lanka where Desdemona hailed from (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). In such cultures, people’s consciousness and identities have been often based on the social system to which they belong and therefore, maintaining ‘face’ value has been considered important (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Kemp, 2009). It has also been stated in research on American Asians in North America that culturally relevant values, such as collective conformity and sense of duty, influenced American Asian’s social relationships, their propensity to succeed or their meanings of life (Yu et al., 2016). That has all seemed to have rung true in Desdemona’s scenario as clearly those success markers in collective cultures and values, such as reputation and knowledge, experienced by American Chinese, have also been relevant to her in feeling successful in her career in Australia (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). In the literature review chapter, the relevance of national culture frameworks such as Hofstede’s model (Hofstede, 1998, 2010; Hofstede et al., 1990) have been stated in gaining a deeper understanding of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s labour participation in Australia. I have also discussed in the previous chapter that the NESB skilled, principle migrant women’s cultural background and early socialisation experiences have provided a good context in understanding their experience of migration and career pathways to managerial positions in Australia. To that purpose,
this section has articulated Desdemona’s internalised Sri Lankan cultural values and cultural background and their relevance in understanding her description of what success has meant in her career.

Cultural influences on success have often been revealed in the interviewees’ reflections on their career choices. For instance, while discussing future career prospects, Capulet pondered on what she would eventually end up doing and was certain she would eventually end up doing something in line with what has been in her curriculum vitae. She stated:

“So culturally there is that... it’s much deeper than how you progress in your career, because that ultimately actually sets the foundation, doesn’t it?... well I might want to be an environmental scientist, but no, I’m supposed to be doing accounting or law. I could be really good at the science bit... it already defines the path...in this generation, for most of the cases that I am aware of. It will change again in the next generation because we’re trying to learn as well...”

Capulet has intimated that she has stopped chasing after what she thought has been a very rigid mould of success as per her cultural upbringing. She stated that this mentality has been deeply linked culturally to her Chinese family’s hierarchy, where her parent’s generation have always emphasised on taking on either of the three professions of Accounting, Law or Medicine because anything else would not make enough money. That has suggested that the ‘objective’ and nominal definition of success has been influenced by her culture and ethnicity and that she has had to abide by in order to be considered successful by others. Higher family expectations on career choices of individuals from vertical collective cultures, where they have viewed themselves as interdependent of a group, have been documented in literature (Fouad et al., 2010). It has also been reported that for those in vertical collective cultures, both culture and family of origin have played a pervasive and influential role their career choices, more than any other cultural group (Fouad et al., 2008), which have all been prevalent in what Capulet has shared above.
Therefore, so far the discussion has divulged the cultural aspect to explain the way my interviewees have described their definition and individual construction of success. Earlier from Salerio, Capulet and Desdemona’s accounts, I could argue that the pressure to succeed and achieve have been considered important because it has been culturally ingrained. Even to feel satisfied in their own careers, the validation from their parents and the society has been essential. It has been considered important to tick all the right boxes in the success criteria, like getting a good education, being employed in a great job and being professionally successful. Their success milestones then could have well been culturally determined, and that has included being defined by how well they have been accepted, how well they have chosen, and have been employed in the right job, titles with a good salary to match and how educated and supported they have been by their families and familial circumstances, such as Salerio alluding earlier to her ‘reputable’ Indian education. The triple package theory (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014) as mentioned in this chapter earlier, has been relevant in explaining the pressure on my interviewees to succeed and prove themselves in Australia, provided their higher educational attainment and their association at a lower level in the Australia society. This has been a clear manifestation of their country-of-origin’s cultural effects that have enabled them to be equipped with elements that helped them achieve nominal success, to have ‘made it’ in Australia.

Another important factor that has appeared to have determined my interviewees’ success measures has also to do with their migrant status and the prominence that has come with them migrating as primary skilled applicants to Australia. This section has added another dimension to the NESB migrant women’s interpretation of success and the discussion has been followed by how their migrant status have informed their construction of success. As an example, Desdemona has shared that, “…it was more the pressure you have on yourself with what you make of your life”. With culturally ingrained status markers, reputation, high educational attainment and pressure from family and their broader community, there has been perhaps then a strong suggestion that the prospect to succeed for NESB skilled primary migrant women in their careers in Australia has been high, as Desdemona has stated
that, “I think the fact that I am willing to take on things that other people would kind of shy away from, has helped in getting me more opportunities”. This has appeared to align with the trait of ‘impulse control’ of the triple package theory (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014) where they have displayed the willingness and discipline to work hard to achieve success. This has been interesting as and understandably so, as I have discussed in earlier chapters that as a skilled primary migrant, her decision to migrate has been one based on choice and career prospects, backed with essential employability factors, she would naturally want to succeed. Unfortunately, the chance for NESB women on achieving ‘high’ levels of success based on their primary migrant status has been eluded as this gender discrepancy issue has been diluted and dispersed in an all-male or neutral prolific literature on exploring primary migrants’ propensity to success (Boneva et al., 1998) or on their potential as NESB primary migrants (Jackman, 1995; Ong & Shah, 2012). Therefore, accounts such as Capulet, Juliet, Desdemona and Salerio’s have been significant contributions in providing a gender and ethnic perspective through accounts from NESB skilled primary migrant women themselves; these have been potent illustrations of how my interviewees as NESB women have had thriving and successful experiences and have been etching their way amid the prevalent NESB skilled primary migrant men or gender-neutral imperious dominion in the skilled migration literature. Most importantly, this section has shown that my interviewees, as women and as primary skilled migrants, have been as indefatigable in their prospects and expectations of career success post-migration in Australia.

Luck has been discussed earlier in the gender segment of this chapter on how some of my interviewees have acknowledged its role in enabling their career success in Australia. In explaining how some of my interviewees have viewed and described their situations as primary migrants and their ‘successful’ migration to Australia, the role of luck has still lurked around. To illustrate this point, I quote Ursula, who has conceded
“Luck does play a part in all this. Coming at a time like this, today, would have been much more difficult I feel. But I’ve been lucky that way.”

Ursula has used the term ‘lucky’, in describing two important migration experiences in her life in Australia. The first has been based on the timing of her migration to Australia; Ursula has referred that she migrated at a time when the policies have been relaxed, her skills set have been in demand whereas had she arrived later and assessed in later immigration system and climate, she would not have had the chance to migrate to Australia. The timing of migration and the changes in the job market have been what Ursula has referred to and that has not been very different from what Capulet conferred from her own experiences, with particular regards to her migration process. Capulet had applied for her migration before the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and therefore has said that she has been ‘lucky’ to have had done it so quickly. Describing their migration timing as a lucky event has also been endorsed by Portia, who has divulged that luck has played a big part in her success story because her unique set of skills and area of expertise have been ‘different from that of an accountant’s’, for instance, as she has stated that ‘it would be harder for an accountant’ in the current Australian market as when she migrated.

The importance of the skills in demand at their time of migration and its significance in enabling career success has also been reiterated by Salerio, who has recounted earlier on the opportunities that have presented themselves to her, leading to her career success. She has also stated that, “I think the field that I was in also helped a lot, because being in accounting, there was a huge demand at that time for accountants and all that, and it’s still there”. As consistently articulated by Ophelia, Ursula, Capulet, Portia and Salerio, it has been apparent that the migration skill-sets in demand at the time of their migration have assisted the women in landing opportunities and subsequently, achieving career success in Australia- and most of that has been credited to the element of luck. For instance, Ophelia has stated with regards to the comparison between her sister and her. Referring to being ‘lucky’ as ‘being at
the right place at the right time’, *Ophelia* has gauged the comparison between her sister and her arrival the time of migration and stated that:

“All also that's been things that have helped and a lot of it by, is also just luck. Being in the right place at the right time. I know that sounds terrible, but my younger sister has had very different experiences from me. We had gone through the same law, some of it has been luck”.

From the above, *Ophelia* has not necessarily felt that she has been better than her sister nor has she suggested that her sister has been, in any way, inept. *Ophelia* has shared that even though they have both threaded the same educational and professional pathways, her sister’s travails have not lead to the same opportunities as it has for her. Indeed, arriving at a later time for skilled migration meant her sister has been subjected to the Australian migration system’s continuous revision of skills in demand (Hugo, 2014). However in *Ophelia* recounting that experience as a lucky experience compared to her sister, there has emerged a clearer influence of culture, where the collective culture *Ophelia* has grown up in, has instilled conformity and sense of duty in her where she has downplayed her skills and has found herself as interdependent of a group (such as a family unit) as her sister. Her sister, if portrayed as not being ‘good’ enough would signify slippage and a poor reflection on her group members/family, and invariably, her ‘face’ value (Fouad et al., 2010; Fouad et al., 2008). Therefore the attribution of her own success to luck has been in many ways, signs of cultural solidarity, respect and maintaining face, characteristics of collectivistic cultures which I have discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore while the attribution of success by women to luck could have a ‘gender’ connotation, also ensnared in it has been a cultural undertone, as it has been seen in *Ophelia* and her sister’s situation.

It has, however, not been a straightforward discussion as another important angle materialised in my interviews with my interviewees. Cloaked in their description of ‘luck’, has been a social comparison done with other NESB migrants. While a few comparisons have been tentative, many have been stark, and the premise for the comparisons, as stated in my interviews with most of my interviewees, have been
many-ranging from their migration selection process to their general experience in the wider Australian society. For instance, I have detailed earlier on Ophelia’s attribution to luck, in comparison to her sister’s experience in Australia. What has surfaced, interestingly, has been that, whilst she has been more clandestine in a direct comparison with her sister, she has also been less reluctant to compare her situation with other NESB migrants who, she has suggested, have not been quite as successful as she has been. While she has not said she thought the migrants she has compared herself to have worked any less than she has, she has stated that they have not been as successful. Perhaps the important element she has asserted in within this context of comparison has been her ‘cultural fluency’, which has ensured, according to her, her cultural fit in Australia and subsequently her career success in Australia. Therefore, there has been more than a nuance at her ‘heightened’ cultural sensibilities, and perhaps that this has been an element the other ‘unsuccessful’ NESB migrants, she compared herself to, did not possess.

Therefore ‘luck’ and finding career success in Australia has been done in relation and in comparison to ‘similar’ others, who have not been quite in the same ‘privileged’ positions as they have been. There could be elements of downplaying their skills or their hard work, (as Ophelia did earlier) but there could also have been an inclination that they have been, in some ways, better than most of the NESB migrant women they have often used as a point of comparison. For instance, Ursula has expressed that she felt her migration from India has been a privilege deprived of new NESB Indian migrants, applying for residency after that time she migrated. For instance, Ursula has stated by drawing a direct comparison with a NESB migrant woman:

“But just for new migrants, women who are migrating to Australia at this time, I know one person who’s done her architecture, she did her masters from here and yet she’s still working as an admin, not able to just break into the job market. So it is at times difficult, but I think just persevering and it’s about just not giving up, I guess.”
As mentioned earlier, Ursula has stated how lucky she has been in migrating at the right time and how that has proved eminent in her career success. However the reference she has drawn above has been of a woman she knew, who also migrated as a primary applicant with the same qualifications as her. Although on the surface, it would paint an illustration of a tough labour market, which has not been as easy to break in when her friend arrived. Perhaps there has also been a cultural tendency not to sound arrogant by Ursula not overtly stating it but from what she has mentioned above, there has been an inherent indication that perhaps the other NESB migrant woman she has compared herself to did not have the same ‘perseverance’ or the willingness to work hard as she has in trying to break into the Australian job market. This has pointed out to Ursula’s locus of control. Capulet, not dissimilarly to Ursula, has shared that:

“I certainly feel I am in a good spot at the moment, not because I’m paid handsomely or I’m getting lots of senior roles, etcetera, but there is a prospect, and at the same time at the moment, right now, with two young kids, I can control how I do my work, when I do my work, and still get it done. So I think that’s best that I could handle at the moment. And sometimes it’s not about doing everything perfect, a hundred percent, it’s about getting 80% done, but it’s done and it’s OK, and you have healthy kids.”

From what Capulet has shared, she has not been in a situation where she has not struggled. However there has been situations that she has encountered where other migrant women has had it worse than her. As stated earlier in the literature review, downward social comparison has theorised that individuals have compared themselves to less fortunate others when they have negative experiences, thereby improving their subjective well-being by lowering their reference points and comparing their outcomes with others who have had worse outcomes (Bonifield & Cole, 2008; Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). This has also tied in with the discussion on the earlier sub-theme of my interviewees considering themselves to be too elite to have been discriminated upon. I have brought this social comparison to the forefront and have found that a lot
of the times when my interviewees have considered themselves lucky, they have compared it to a similar someone, who has not been quite as fortunate as they have been. To add another voice into this section, Silvia, for instance, has used social comparison when she referred to her English skills and her career success. She has stated that:

“So I guess that really helped as opposed to let’s say my friend from Thailand who was my uni mate while I was doing my post-graduation – they struggled because of the English; you don’t speak good English, you don’t do well here. Same way, I would never hire somebody who doesn’t speak good English. It’s got nothing to do with them, it’s about me. Well I suppose the people who couldn’t fit in, they had to go back to India and some of my friends who didn’t fit in, they’re working in very junior roles even now in Canberra”.

Sylvia has inadvertently explained her success in comparison with other NESB migrant friends in my interview with her and therefore, her success milestones have sometimes been measured by her comparison to other NESB migrant women, who have been implied to be potentially in lower employment roles or in less fortunate circumstances than her. Thus this has been a clear manifestation of her definition of success being done through a downward social comparison process, as has also been seen in the extracts above, from my interviews with Ophelia, Ursula, Capulet and Silvia.

However, whilst the social comparison with other migrants has been significant in my interviewees’ personal construction of career success, there has been another pertinent element in what some of my interviewees have stated, that has indicated that their comparison with other migrants have been done simply because they have felt they have been a class apart from them. For example, Salerio stated:

“Yeah, there are a lot of people, a lot of my friends, a lot of them struggled a bit, in terms of not being able to fit in, because they were quite rigid in their thinking. So you’ve got to be a bit fluid in your thinking and accepting of other
cultures and things like that. And a lot of people I know... are quite traditional in their thinking, though they have come here they haven’t changed in terms of their thinking... Yeah, it is a bit of a time warp, and not culturally actually fitted in much. So those people struggle a bit”.

Salerio has stated that she thought some of the Indian migrants she has known to have struggled fitting in because they have been very rigid, traditional and uncompromising on their cultural takes. Another important point to note here, as seen in Salerio’s example, has been that her social comparison has been done in relation to migrants from similar backgrounds. This has been somewhat similar to what Sylvia has shared above, who has also candidly credited her ‘superior’ English skills and other advantages that have assisted in her career. In doing so, she has also implied other NESB migrants’ inadequacies compared to her. What has surfaced in what Sylvia has shared has been her self-categorisation as a distinct and a ‘bigger’ league player than the majority of NESB migrants, who have suffered the plague of prejudice or not fitting in. That has suggested their distinctiveness from other NESB migrants, even with ones who had the same opportunities, same education and cultural backgrounds as them. There have been strong nuances in what my interviewees have shared that their personalities and their individual success stories have been atypical.

Therefore the main idea that has emerged here has been that some of my interviewees have regarded themselves the cream of the crop, even though the notion that they have had to work hard to reach at that point has not been completely lost on me during my interviews with them. In many ways, this also has spoken volumes about some of my interviewees’ strong locus of control. This has linked back to what has been discussed in Chapter 4, where the interviewees have considered themselves to be part of an elite, where there has been reluctance for them to be categorised in the same space as other NESB women migrants who have not been quite as ‘lucky’ or have had the necessary skills to be successful in Australia. For instance, as has been discussed in the earlier theme of cultural fit, Sylvia has stated that she has had to work hard to be a cultural fit in Australia. Salerio has echoed Sylvia’s sentiments when she shared that:
“I mean with football, for example with footy here, I didn’t know anything about footy at all, “what the heck is this game? So I made myself understand the game. Say I’ll pick a team, and go with the team, and all of those kind of things. Yeah, so it’s very important to get that ability to fit in and talk to people, and have that office banter, the water cooler conversations”.

In what Salerio has described above, it has been important for her to display her mastery of Aussie hobbies/interests to fully participate in her workplace. However it has appeared as though she has mediated on a very conscious process of carefully adapting ‘only’ to certain predominant and popular Australian cultural elements that proved particularly beneficial for her acceptance and career success. However, in a very slight divergence to a full immersion in the host country culture, Nerida has felt that whilst it has been important to adapt, it has also been important to maintain her own uniqueness, as she stated:

“I think to be immersed in the whole Australian, that’s really important. I think you still need to be able to have your own uniqueness - you should be able to do both, like identity, and yet still be able to adapt”.

Therefore, what Nerida and Salerio have recounted above, that of a careful adaptation process of host country hobbies and interests, in a quest to distinguish themselves as successful people, has similarities with the ‘active’ assimilation process found in experiences of migrant Indian men in the Silicon Valley in California (Sandhu, 2012) and literature on elite Indian migrants (Khorana, 2014). In Nerida’s expression, there have been elements of an adaptation process, but not at the peril of losing her own cultural identity. Therefore, whilst it has not been implausible that my interviewees have had distinguished themselves from other NESB migrants, based on their ability to adapt to the majority Anglo Australian values (Khorana, 2014; Stratton, 2009a, 2009b), there has also never been a complete immersion in the dominant white Australian culture. For instance, Nerida has pointed towards an ability to identify on a multi-dimensional level. This has not been an uncommon phenomenon, especially in the Indians middle class migrant diaspora, to embody the quintessence migrant identity.
duality, based on their roots and routes (Ramanathan, 2015; Sandhu, 2012; Voigt-Graf, 2004). As another exemplar, Salerio has been very aware of her Indian cultural side and from what she shared, she has been also multi-dimensional in her ability to identify with the culture she has been born in and the culture that she has adopted in Australia (Iman, 2008; Ramanathan, 2015). Similarly, Ophelia has also discussed her multi-dimensional identity and described herself, “as someone Malaysian, Indian and living in Australia”. Sylvia has had a very similar take on her identity. In my interview with her, I have asked her directly what her cultural identity has been and she has replied without hesitation, ‘Manipuri’. When I probed further on what she identified as socially, she has retorted, “Manipuri, Australian”, not forgetting to add, “And a proud one”. Therefore my interviewees have been negotiating their way to career success in Australia through the dual benefits of continued links with their homeland, which have been enjoyed alongside economic and cultural capital acquired in Australia.

My interviewees’ multi-dimensional cultural fluidity has helped them in consciously adopting specific elements of the Australian culture, that have been meaningful to their social acceptance and career success, without compromising on their cultural roots and values of their countries of origin and this has made for an advantageous and meaningful identity development and adaptation outcome (Ibrahim & Heuer, 2013). Ophelia has also felt that her cultural ‘fluency’ and empathy have been what has, mostly, set her apart from other migrants and locals as well. She has felt that these attributes have helped usher her into their successful social adaptation and subsequent career success in Australia. She stated:

“I suppose your ability to fit in here or anywhere depends a lot on your cultural fluency, by your ability to adapt yourself to where you are, even if it is not your dominant culture or the way you necessarily deal with yourself. By that I don't mean changing yourself because I think you have to really be yourself to succeed anywhere...When in Rome, do what the Romans do and I think cultural fluency is something that has helped me...it is something that I think that has helped me succeed. It’s that ability to sort of just either step
forward or step back, depending on the situation you are in. And, and the
cultural fluency and being able to read people, and some situations demand
certain behaviours and even if it’s slightly uncomfortable to have to be, I
suppose initially, to be slight uncomfortable to be more out spoken than you
used to be”.

There have been a few things that would be pertinent to focus beyond
Ophelia’s cultural identity to understand her experiences of success. From what she
has stated, her cultural and identity fluidity has not been confined to a Malaysian or
Australian cultural paradigm but this fluidity has also transcended to multiple domains
(Bhui & Gavrilovic, 2012). My interviewees’ adaption process to their career success
in Australia has been conceptualised in a model that I have named multidimensional
synergetic advantageous adaptation (MSAA). The MSAA model has been explained
in more detail in the next section.

6.3 Multidimensional Synergetic Advantageous Adaptation (MSAA) Process and
Model

The MSAA model (as depicted in figure 6.1) has been, in essence, a framework
of the factors that has emerged from my interviewees’ individual experiences as NESB
skilled primary women migrants in Australia, which has led them to be considered
‘successful’ in navigating their career pathways while negotiating challenges
associated with their migrant status, ethnicity and gender. Therefore the model has
captured the various factors that have influenced their personal interpretations of
career success and their experiences of career success in Australia.

I have named it the MSAA model because the findings have reflected my
interviewees’ ability to adapt to multi-dimensional situations in their host countries
and to find advantageous opportunities that enabled them to become successful. While
my interviewees have been operating within an ethnic and cultural paradigm (which
contributed towards their identity development), my interviewees have also been
negotiating other social identifications (dimensions), such as strong personalities,
skilled migrants, women working with men, women of a certain age, mentors, mothers, wives, with a fluidity that allowed them to be to be successful. This emergence of an individual’s identification across multiple social dimensions has aligned with the literature (e.g. Bhui & Gavrilovic, 2012).

The term ‘synergetic’ has aimed to indicate that the combined dimensions of career success and the advantages outlined in my research yielded an outcome, i.e. career success, which outweighed the outcome that would have been produced by relying on one success factor alone. In other words, the career success achieved by my interviewees has been the result of a successful negotiation of the combination of (the synergy harnessed from) the multiple factors and the various dimensions described in the model.

My interviewees have described themselves as atypical success stories, and attested their success to a combination of elements, that has led to their advantageous adaptation. This has further led to a development of their multi-dimensional identity, which has been achieved through an integration of their Australian experiences and their strong ties with their cultural roots. As it has been discussed earlier, some of my interviewees have showed their ability to master pervasive Aussie hobbies/interests and values, such as taking the initiative to learn about ‘footy’ to facilitate better conversations and to fit in. Therefore my interviewees have journeyed on a very conscious and meditated process of carefully adapting advantageously to certain ‘white-Australian’ cultural elements. This adaptation to certain Australian cultural elements, deemed meaningful to their social acceptance and career success, without compromising on their cultural roots, has made for an advantageous and meaningful identity development and adaptation outcome. Their cultural and identity fluidity has not been contextually limited to Australia but they have been able to negotiate their multi-cultural identity, depending on the context, independent domains and spaces they were was negotiating their success in (Bhui & Gavrilovic, 2012). The inadequacy of a bi-cultural or an ethnicity paradigm in discussing my interviewees development, negotiation of multi-dimensional identities (Bhui & Gavrilovic, 2012), and adapting
to multiple cultural contexts has been addressed by proposing a multidimensional synergetic advantageous adaptation (MSAA) model.

6.3.1 Success Factors in the MSAA Model

“The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together” (All’s Well That Ends Well, Act 4. Sc.3)

Amid all the factors that my interviewees have felt had facilitated their success journey, eleven ‘success’ factors have emerged important and they are identified as migration status, qualification/skills, age, English proficiency, personality drive, cultural fluency and their years of residence in Australia, gender, family, ethnicity/country of origin and the timing of their migration. These eleven success factors have been further distributed on two main categories: that of primary and secondary factors. The MSAA Model has been shown in figure 6.1.
Primary factors have been the elements those that my interviewees’ have stated had significantly contributed to their experiences of career success in Australia. Therefore the primary factors in the model have been the integral elements that helped my interviewees’ achieve their career success. Seven primary factors have been identified: migration status, qualification/skills, age, English proficiency, personality drive, cultural fluency and their years of residence in Australia. Secondary factors have been the ones that my interviewees have had not classified to be as important as the primary factors but those that have still impacted their experiences of career success in Australia. The secondary success factors have been that of gender, family, ethnicity / culture and timing of migration. They have been considered secondary because their importance have not been revealed unless the primary factors have been fulfilled. For instance, without the base primary success factors that have been screened and determined at the time of migration, such as migration status, qualification/skills, age, English proficiency, the secondary’ success factors such as gender and ethnicity would not have emerged. These primary factors have allowed my interviewees to migrate, secure employment, perform well, adapt to the local culture. Once those base factors have been covered, they have been able to count on secondary elements such as gender and family to draw success in Australia.

The personality drive of my interviewees has been identified as a primary factor because that has been what has instigated their motive to migrate in the first place and then navigate their migration process, early employment phase and pursue the careers they have been in. As has been discussed earlier in the findings, Salerio has spoken about how she has not given up raising her hands for projects despite having being rejected several times.
Cultural fluency has been classified as a primary factor because without it, my interviewees would not have been able to manage the multi-cultural dimensions associated with them migrating to Australia on their own accord as adults. Their ability to learn, absorb and adapt to the local lingo or cultural nuances have made them more relatable, more valuable by local employers. For instance, from what my interviewees have stated with me their cultural fluency have come from their efforts to adapt in Australia, however they have also been much centred in their own cultural identities. While they have been efficient in adapting to core elements in their host country to be successful (Bhui & Gavrilovic, 2012), their cultural fluency has not only just allowed for success in a Australian-home country paradigm but their adaptability and cultural fluency has been applicable in other areas they have been negotiating their success in.

Years of residence has been stated as a primary factor and linked to my interviewees’ resilience and their personality drive. In the findings, my interviewees have spoken of other NESB skilled migrants who have not been able to adapt and have left for their home countries. My interviewees have also spoken of their frustrations regarding childcare and housework chores impeding on their careers, however they have decided to stay back instead of going back to their home countries. They have stuck it out in Australia, as a result, their years of residence in Australia has given them opportunities to increase their cultural fluency, their qualifications, their years in Australian employment to mention a few.

The four secondary factors have been presented as gender, family, ethnicity / country of origin and the timing of their migration. They have been stated as important by my interviewees, however they have not influenced their achievements of career success in Australia to the extent the primary factors did. The timing of migration has been a secondary success factor because the migration policies and the skills in shortage at my interviewees’ time of migration (Hugo, 2014) have influenced their migration to Australia.

Gender has been a secondary factor as it has come only after my interviewees’ migration and their careers in Australia. It has been stated as a barrier initially, however
they have expressed it as a success factor in that it has helped bring a different perspective to the table, helping them in their journey of achieving career success.

My interviewees’ ethnicity and cultural background have been secondary factors as they have been ingrained success markers in my interviewees’ collective, such as reputation, knowledge, collective conformity, sense of duty and higher family expectations (Fouad et al., 2010; Fouad et al., 2008; Yu et al., 2016). These cultural markers have influenced my interviewees’ career choices, expectations and their definition of success. For instance, Capulet has shared that her family’s expectations, coming from a Chinese background, have guided her towards a profession that has made money. My interviewees have believed that their NESB collective cultural background made them collaborative and harmonious workers; they have felt they have been more resilient and better equipped to adapt anywhere (Pio & Essers, 2014). As an example, Salerio and Robin have capitalised on her ethnic knowledge/contacts, linguistic skills and cultural background characteristics to access leadership specific roles in the Asia Pacific arms of their organisation or dealing with Asian clientele in Australia (tapping into ethnically similar customer bases) (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Kramar, 1998).

Table 6.1: Table Representing MSAA Model of Primary and Secondary Success Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Factors</th>
<th>Primary drivers</th>
<th>Secondary drivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration status</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality / Drive</td>
<td>Cultural fluency</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timing of migration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These success factors have been further distinguished by their dichotomous attributes of their impact on my interviewees’ ‘personal’ definition of success and their dependency on time. These attributes are discussed in the following sections (6.3.1.2 and 6.3.1.3)

6.3.1.2 Factors Distinguished by Interviewees’ Definition of Success

The attribute of my interviewees’ ‘personal’ definition of success has been included because I have found it relevant to compare how their ‘lived’ success experiences have mapped out compared to their ideals and objectives of career success. The factors that my interviewees have stated as important in their personal definitions of what success looked like for them (different from actual experience of success though their definition could be derived from their experiences) have been a combination of the primary and secondary success factors, which have been exemplified by gender, family, age, personality drive, country of origin culture, cultural fluency and their years of migration in Australia.

6.3.1.3 Factors and their Dependency on Time

The dependency on time has been a significant attribute because it has shown to be a common element in most success factors. I have chosen to add this attribute because besides gender and ethnicity, which have been fixed, everything else has been fluid and changed with time, which has meant that their relative importance has varied depending on the time they have been at. For instance, in the early years of migration, my interviewees’ qualifications and English proficiency as key success factors could have been a priority because they have been trying to secure appropriate employment. Over time, my interviewees could have found their cultural fluency or family as key success factors in their career success.

Factors that have been time-dependent (denoted in italics) have been my interviewees’ migration status, their timing of migration, qualifications, age, family, personality drive, language proficiency, cultural fluency, and their years of migration.
Gender and ethnicity / country of origin culture have been elements that remained fixed over time (my interviewees’ gender or ethnicity did not change). The success factor of migration status has been time-dependent.

The interviewees’ timing of migration has also been time-dependent because the migration laws at the time that determined their entry and what professional shortages in Australia they have been fulfilling at that time (Hugo, 2014) have not been permanent deficiencies. For instance, *Ophelia* and *Ursula* have mentioned the criticality of the professions listed in Australia’s skills shortages and their application to migrate to Australia. *Ophelia* has had a straight-forward migration process as law, at the time of her migration, was listed on the skills on shortage, however when her younger sister applied a few years later, the same skills have been taken off as a profession in Australia’s critical skill shortage list.

Qualifications have also been time-dependent, as women over time could re-qualify to achieve success in their careers. One good example to state here would be that of *Ophelia*, who has qualified as an academic initially, pursued other avenues and have had over time, achieved the career success at the occupation and firm she wanted to work in.

Age has also been time-dependent like English proficiency. For example, *Desdemona, Nerida, Ophelia, Rosalind, Portia, Sylvia* and *Capulet* have stated that they encountered differences in the use of English in Australia and that over time, they have been able to improve and increase their Australian English capital to be able to negotiate success in their careers. My interviewees’ cultural fluency has been considered to be time-dependent, in that, as the years of residence increased in Australia, so did the cultural and social capital of my interviewees (Balasubramanian et al., 2016; Foroutan, 2008). Therefore, the longer their residence, the better their chances of adapting and relating culturally to Australia in their career progression. This classification of the factors by their definition of success and their time dependency has been shown below in table 6.2.
Table 6.2: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success Factors Distinguished by Success Definition and Time-dependency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that define success</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Migration status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td>Timing of migration</td>
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<td>Personality / Drive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural fluency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6.3.1.4 Factors – Direct and Indirect Links

Direct and Indirect links of the success factors have been determined by the dependency of the success factors to each other. In other words, the more connections it has with the other success factors, the more the other success factors have depended on it in my interviewees’ career success experiences in Australia. A direct link has been mapped between the success factors when there has been a clear dependency identified from the analysis of my interviewees’ stories. For instance, the strongest link of dependency to/from other success factors has been personality drive, with five direct connections to cultural fluency, years of residence, migration status, qualifications and gender. From a preliminary analysis of the interviews with my interviewees, I have been initially persuaded by a gender discourse with English proficiency and cultural fluency factors as the most influential factors in their career success in Australia. However, a deeper analysis of the findings has unearthed another ‘concealed’ possibility, and as shown in table 6.3 below, my interviewees’ personality drive has the most direct connections to the other success elements and therefore, has made it an important component in their career success in Australia. For instance, their
personality drive directly have impacted their cultural fluency (their adaptability), their years of residency (as described above), their migration status (it has been their personal decision to migrate, they could have come as spouses), their qualifications (they chose to educate themselves), gender (they have stated they have not been deterred by their gender and cultural barriers and have been negotiating ways and efforts to redefine positive and advantageous positions). Their personality/drive has been also what has imparted confidence in my interviewees and the driving force in them putting in the hard yards in realising the opportunities that have come their way. Along with the personality drive, cultural fluency also has direct connections with years of residence. As has been discussed earlier in the influence of time, presumably the longer my interviewee stayed in the country, the higher their cultural fluency. However their adaptability has depended on their individual personality drive as that has driven them to get out and gain local cultural knowledge outside of their work paradigms- such as Salerio investing her time to learn about ‘footy’ or Sylvia learning to speak with an Australian ‘accent’.

English proficiency has direct links with ethnicity/culture, cultural fluency, timing of migration, years of residence and migration status. Ethnicity/culture has direct connected links with gender and family. Gender also has direct links with family, personality drive and ethnicity/culture. Besides gender, family has two direct links to age and ethnicity/culture. My interviewees’ collective cultural backgrounds has meant that their families have been influential in their career success. The interesting observation about family is that it has showed up as a relatively weaker success factor, even though it has been stated as an important element in my interviewees’ definition of success. This could be explained by the reality of work-life balance in my interviewees’ experiences and the age of my interviewees. Most of them have been in their 30s to their 40s (apart from Salerio and Robin) and have been still negotiating to strike a balance between their careers and personal/family lives (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). My interviewees with young children have lamented on the issues and compromises relating to their work/family balance, similar to what has been found in women’s experiences in other researches (Baker, 2010; Carli & Eagly, 2016) and of
that of women in India (Kalantari, 2012). They have also talked about the lack of help and support in Australia, compared to their countries of origin, where hired help was cheap or family members stepped up to look after their children; this has been similar to what has been documented of other NESB migrant women in Australia (Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Foroutan, 2008; Ho & Alcorso, 2004). Family (mostly immediate) in my interviewees’ careers, as has been seen in Robin and Salerio’s experiences, have been described as beneficial as a success factor only when they have had no children or have been out of the child-rearing phase with grown children. This finding has aligned with literature that has related on the employment determinants of women of various migrant status and ethnic origins in Australia (Foroutan, 2008); however the same research ((Foroutan, 2008) has also reported that the family characteristics of having young children at home significantly affected the employment status of ESB migrant women compared to NESB women migrants in Australia (Foroutan, 2008). My finding has shown that the family characteristics also significantly affected my interviewees as NESB primary migrant women.

Timing of migration has direct links with years of residence, migration status, qualifications and age. The timing of my interviewees’ migration has determined how long each interviewee has resided in Australia from the time they have migrated. It has also determined their age, whether they could migrate as primary applicants and which of their qualifications has fulfilled the skills in demand at the time of their migration. Apart from its direct links to the timing of migration and family (discussed above), age has also direct links to gender, years of residence, migration status and qualifications. Age is directly linked to gender, especially in an Australian context because the age of women/mothers in Australia has determined what phase they have been at in their lives- young and unmarried, primary carer roles to their younger children (apart from Juliet), older interviewees such as Robin and Salerio with grown children. The direct links between age, migration status and qualifications have been determined with them being base essential factors that have been required of my interviewees under the point system at their migration. Besides its link with personality drive (as discussed earlier), years of residence has direct links with qualifications, cultural fluency and timing of
migration. Migration status has direct links with qualifications (base essential requirement during skilled point system migration), age (base essential requirement during skilled point system migration), personality drive (discussed earlier in the section) and timing of migration (which has determined whether they could migrate as skilled primary applicants to Australia).

An indirect link has been found when there has been a less-consistent dependency between factors. For example, an indirect link has been found between ethnicity/culture and qualifications because the ethnicity and cultural backgrounds of some of my interviewees, such as Capulet, have determined their choice of qualifications and career field. Cultural fluency has been indirectly connected to family. For instance, this has been similar to research which has documented that children of first generation migrants in the United States have sometimes played a crucial role in the development of their parents’ social and cultural capital and also in fulfilling their parental hopes and expectations of life success (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004; Sandhu, 2012). Similarly Juliet has spoken about her children, who were born in Australia, to have cultural fluency in Australia. Therefore cultural fluency can be taught by these second generation migrants to their first generation migrant parents. There have also been indirect links between family and personality drive. English proficiency has indirect links with personality drive. Age has also been indirectly linked to personality drive.

In the diagram of the MSAA model (Figure 6.1), the strong links and the dependency of the factors to each other have been denoted by the bold connecting lines and the indirect links of dependency are represented by the dotted connecting lines. The connections or links the success factors have with one another has been illustrated below in table 6.3. The primary and secondary success factors of my interviewees, distinguished by their personal definitions, their dependency on time and their connections to each other have been presented below in a combined table (6.4).
Table 6.3: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success factors and their Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No. of links with other factors*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration status</td>
<td>5 (5/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
<td>6 (5/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>4 (4/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>5 (3/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>7 (6/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td>6 (5/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality / Drive</strong></td>
<td>8 (5/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>4 (3/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural fluency</td>
<td>4 (3/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of migration</td>
<td>5 (5/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of residence</strong></td>
<td>6 (6/0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total number of links (direct / indirect)
Table 6.4: Table Representing MSAA Model of Success Factors, Individual Definitions of Success, Time Dependent Variables and Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors</th>
<th>Migraton status</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Personality Drive</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Cultural fluency</th>
<th>Timing of migration</th>
<th>Years of residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defines success</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary driver to achieve success</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of connection with other factors*</td>
<td>5 (5/0)</td>
<td>6 (5/1)</td>
<td>4 (4/0)</td>
<td>5 (3/2)</td>
<td>7 (6/1)</td>
<td>6 (5/1)</td>
<td>8 (5/3)</td>
<td>4 (3/1)</td>
<td>4 (3/1)</td>
<td>5 (5/0)</td>
<td>6 (6/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on / varies with time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total number of links (direct / indirect)
6.3.1.5 Limitations

The limitations of this model have been in its specific reflection and representation of the success factors of a particular group of migrant women. The framework has not been intended to be a universal representation to assess other groups. Therefore, there would be transferability issues as the elements of success in my research have been very specific, based on my interviewees’ definition of what success have meant and what their experiences of success have been in Australia. The elements that have been presented in this model have been based on the reality, captured and negotiated at a point in time, between them as interviewees and me, as an interviewer, in my hour and hour-half long interviews with them. So it has been only a facet of their experiences they have shared with me, and who has been to most of them, a complete stranger. For instance, Desdemona, whom I have met before through my network of friends, agreed to spare some time from her busy work schedule to be interviewed for the research. I have met and interviewed her in a café in the ground floor or her work building and I have found her to be proud, direct and very eloquent. Since we have met and known each other before her interview, I did not have to work on building rapport as I have with the other interviewees. The importance of approaching them as successful women could also have influenced the way they have shared their experiences of success in Australia, as it has been seen in them downplaying their struggles.

6.4 Conclusion

The relationship between objective and measurable outcomes of career success and introspect facets of my interviewees’ personal definitions of what success has looked like for them have been complex and symbiotic (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). By the way the measurable outcomes of the skilled migrant policy have been assessed without these introspect personal elements of success, the
Australian government could be missing out on an opportunity to maximise the economic returns it has initially aimed to realise. These improved returns have been argued to be achievable through a better utilisation of skilled migrants (e.g. Hugo, 2014), making it important to understand what their ‘real’ experiences have been. Hence, the potential disconnect between Australia’s skill shortage (that migrants have been brought in to fill) and the actual contribution of these skilled migrants has been discussed.

I have also explored the multi-level elements of success my interviewees have placed value on, for them to fully utilise the skills they have migrated with. A single focused discussion, for instance, on my interviewees’ perspective from one element of success, such as ethnicity would not have been adequate to completely capture their experiences of career success in Australia as primary skilled migrant women. Their voices, placed sporadically in male-centric NESB primary migrant research (e.g. Jackman, 1995; Ong & Shah, 2012), have also eluded us from acquiring a full understanding of how the NESB skilled primary migrant women have experienced career success in Australia.

However this has been not to suggest that these have been deliberate endeavours to avoid a ‘specific’ research on this group; it has been understandable as I have discussed in the introduction that their minority professional group status by ethnicity, gender and a specific migrant status have had rendered their employment movements less interesting compared to bigger challenges and difficult career fulfilsments that have been faced by a larger number of NESB migrant women in Australia (e.g. Alcorso, 2006; Lee, 2013). However, having migrated as valuable primary migrants and meeting all criteria to fulfil the country’s skills deficiencies, their voices have been argued to be very important to be put on the fore so we know how they have been negotiating the pressure, limitations and success at the cusp of gender, culture and migrant status. For instance my study has explored those early experiences
around gendered roles and cultural specific rules/perceptions, which has impacted their entry, participation and rise in the Australian workforce. This has also conveyed and offered a perspective into the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s visibility and experiences as managers or leaders in Australia, adding to the under researched area of NESB women’s work experiences (Syed, 2007; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009) of career success through the NESB women’s workplace experiences and perspectives.

Success could be viewed from two perspectives, one from an objective, nominal lens and another from a more subjective and personal outlook. There have been many different definitions of success and what it has meant to each of my interviewee in their journey. The elements of success factors, along with time and my interviewees’ individual definition of success have been presented in the MSAA model. What we have learned from the experiences of my interviewees, which have been underpinned in the MSAA model, has been that their milestones and personal interpretation of success may have been influenced and be subjected to change from many elements, which included gender, cultural backgrounds, cultural fluency, time, age, migrant, status, education/qualifications, English proficiency, personality drive and familial influence.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

“But this denoted a foregone conclusion” (Othello, Act 3. Sc. 3)

7.1 Introduction

At the very start of my PhD journey, the primary aim that has driven my research laid in answering, “What are the individual experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia who are deemed ‘successful’ in their career?”, followed by a secondary research question of, “How do NESB skilled primary migrant women navigate their career pathways while facing potential challenges associated with their migrant status, ethnicity and gender?”. Eleven NESB skilled primary migrant women joined me in this journey and they agreed to share their experiences of career success for this research. This relatively ‘small’ section of skilled primary migrant women in Australia have not specifically had their voices heard as they have been discussed along with other stories, plagued by plights of NESB migrant women (e.g. Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Foroutan, 2008; Ho, 2006; Lee, 2013; North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011; Syed & Pio, 2010) or their sporadic sightings in literature on NESB primary migrant (e.g. Jackman, 1995; Ong & Shah, 2012), which has also tended to be vastly male-focused. This research has provided me with an opportunity to momentarily refract from these vast, canonical discourses and to delve specifically into developing my understanding of eleven individual experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women, who have achieved career success in Australia.

There have been many fascinating incidents and findings that have emerged in the interviews, where the women have shared their stories with me and themes emerged, which have captured their career pathways at the cusp of their migrant status, ethnicity and gender. This chapter has been a presentation of the answers to my research questions and the theoretical contributions of this research.
7.2 Answering the Research Questions

To answer the research questions, I have drawn from the findings that have been presented in the previous chapters. For instance, I have presented findings that have been related to my interviewees’ experiences of cultural fit in chapter 4. In that theme in particular, the main focus has been placed on my interviewees’ statements on their experiences out of their cultural familiarity. As another example, they have spoken on how local Australians referenced people, events or societal experiences differently. Therefore their cultural inexperience in Australia with their initial unfamiliarity of a full participatory context within the local Australian culture (different from a tourist context, for instance), have created some restrictions in the workplace, particularly around their participation, conversations, office banter and interaction with local Australians. There have also been some feelings of uncertainty on my interviewees’ part on the norms and ways of ‘proving their worth’ at the workplace, and their home cultures influences, which they have stated, was manifesting in their relatively low-comfort levels of participating or challenging a boss’s ideas.

In the many settings surrounding the stories they have shared with me, an obvious one has been that of their collectivist cultural norms, which has been displayed, for instance, when they have shared that, in their opinion, the ‘locals’ have been very ‘vocal’ or Australia has lacked a ‘proper hierarchy’. It has appeared that their cultural backgrounds along with their ‘quieter’ personalities have amplified issues concerning ‘speaking up’ or in the perception by others, of their contribution in the workplace. As common in people from collectivist cultures, my interviewees have stated that they have tended to approach their thoughts and spoken words with trepidation, making sure of their appropriateness before speaking or that they are not entirely comfortable challenging their manager’s ideas, and that has impacted negatively on how their confidence has been perceived and the way they have
presented themselves. Compliant subordinates who have not challenged their superiors have not always been appreciated by Australians, which has been characterised by low power distance socialising. Therefore there has been an apparent clash of cultural differences on what my interviewees have shared, on collectivist/individual and power distance on national culture dimensions.

There has been some very important observations in my research findings which has helped address how NESB skilled primary migrant women have navigated their career pathways at the challenges they have faced at the cusp of migrant status, ethnicity and gender. One remarkable reflection has been that, despite facing issues of cultural differences, owing mostly to them migrating as adults, my interviewees have appeared to have identified the need to change and have stated that they are reasonably comfortable to do what is required of them to succeed in the Australian workplace. That has been mostly enabled by my interviewees’ personality drive, which has encouraged them to immigrate to Australia on their own accord. Therefore from what most of my interviewees have shared, changing their attitudes to embrace cultural and social aspects such as speaking up or marketing themselves have been identified as important in having a successful career progression in Australia.

English language proficiency has been an area where my interviewees have experienced some challenges that have been associated with their migrant status and ethnicity. It has emerged that, while English skills has been very important in my interviewees’ experience of securing their employment in Australia, it has also been the command of ‘Aussie’ English that has impacted on their employment and their integration in the work environment. This has implications for them overcoming cultural barriers such as in understanding culturally implied humour, slangs which have initially constrained office banter and conversations. An important aspect of speaking ‘Aussie’ English has been related to accents, which my interviewees have raised as an essential element in their cultural fit into the Australian society and
workplaces. They have divulged issues with strong accents impairing other migrants from being understood by others and how some accents have served to ‘locate’ a migrant’s country of origin and almost mostly negatively for NESB migrants. Therefore my interviewees demonstrating an interest and ability to adapt in understand the cultural nuances in how English is spoken in Australia has been important. Another interesting perspective based on their experiences has been their length of residency in Australia, impacting on their ability to adapt and learn to infuse Australian cultural aspects into their identities. The extent of this ability has implications for how they have been perceived and they have perceived themselves.

My interviewees have also shown an aversion to being pigeon-holed with other NESB migrant women who have been associated with lower skilled sectors and have faced cultural, social and employment challenges. My interviewees have downplayed their own unpleasant experiences, such as not initially being given the same opportunities as local Australians or how their names or ethnicity have raised doubts in local employers of their English proficiency and professional skills. They have brushed off those unpleasant experiences as of little consequence and instead, they have chosen to express their pride, strength and resilience, perhaps asserting that they have been above social and economic challenges and discrimination; hence, emphasizing the distinction between them (as primary migrants) and the ‘other’ underprivileged NESB migrant women, who regrettably, bore the prevailing perception of being less-educated, illiterate and passive. There has been an unspoken unanimity in my interviewees representing a ‘special’ class of highly educated, mobile, socially aware, adaptive and resilient women, who have shared a strong internal locus of control and adapted with ease to Australia, courtesy of their upbringing, education, language skills and careers, as opposed to other subservient Asian women migrants. They have indicated that their cultural flexibility and English proficiency, amongst other factors, have abetted their adaptation process, with a general acceptance of dominant Anglo-Australian culture and representing ‘Australian’ values.
In the context of their work environment, my interviewees have expressed that they have faced challenges associated with their gender. For instance, some of my interviewees in positions, which have been strongly associated with masculinity, have had to adopt masculine traits, such as to be intimidating. But they have also attested to the paradox, where they have to don masculine traits to be effective, and yet, have endured patronising comments from men and have gone through experiences where they have been loathed. These gender challenges have appeared to also have stemmed from my interviewees’ early socialisation in their countries of origin.

Some of my interviewees in managerial situations have expressed contradicting demands and expectations in their work and social. Specifically, their frustrations have been around raising a young family in Australia and in them, as women, not being able to continue with an uninterrupted and successful career. These lamentations have been usually expressed in comparison to their home countries where they have had help and support with childcare and the routine management of household chores. Therefore, the family dynamics frustration in my interviewees’ lives in Australia may not just be a gender impediment, it has been a limitation that has been associated with them migrating in an Australian context. They have left their support system behind and this is, perhaps, a limitation that they have had not considered before their decision to migrate in Australia. For instance, had they migrated to France or Denmark, child-care would not have been such a limitation as in these countries, skilled migrant women have not faced impediments in their labour integration as they have access to state-sponsored childcare (Liversage, 2009). Therefore, in an Australian context specifically, having a young family has created a negative effect on the careers of my interviewees while those with older children or with no children have increased their chances in greater employment participation. That has suggested that though work-life balance has been expressed as an important element in my interviewees’ personal definitions of career success, raising a young family has not been conducive in them putting in the effort and time that has been taken to achieving it in Australia.
This has pointed to some potential shortcomings in the current set-up of the Australian work-place, particularly in its support and career advancement opportunities for individuals with family responsibilities.

By migrating to Australia as adults, another element that has also disadvantaged my interviewees as new Australians has been in their loss of formal network and connections in their countries. That has meant that they did not have access to some of the strong networks created through common institutionalised socialisation such as early schooling. That has also meant that, in a relatively new environment that they have not been culturally experienced in, they have had to deal with local employers for their initial and subsequent employment opportunities. Some of my interviewees have stated they struggled to be taken seriously at their work, especially with ESB skilled migrants from the UK or the US being held in a much higher esteem in their employment and career progression than them. Therefore this has been another challenge that they have faced at the intersectionality of their migrant status and ethnicity.

If familiarity in the Australian educational system has been a factor in assisting with network and connections, my interviewees who arrived as international students have not experienced the benefits of acquiring Australian graduate qualifications and in them overcoming their challenges related to their migrant status or their employability. This has been despite Australian qualification being listed as a critical element in the Australia migration scheme (e.g. DIBP, 2017). Even with their migration status as skilled primary applicants, they have still been subjected to the employment disadvantages endured by other NESB migrant women from less-privileged streams in Australia. This has pointed towards perception challenges related to their ethnic background and this has not improved even when they arrived as highly skilled individuals. If ethnic stereotyping challenges have been identified as an issue for ‘Asian’ people born in western countries such as the USA (Oguntoyinbo, 2014;
Sandhu, 2012), then it has been exacerbated in the case of my interviewees as they have migrated to Australia as adults. Their ethnicity has created impediments in them being perceived as poor leadership material, which has been aggravated by their culturally ingrained aspects, such as their reservations on speaking up or challenging their superiors. For instance, *Nerida* has related her experience of being told to speak up more to show better leadership skills.

However while my interviewees have faced these many challenges associated with their gender, migrant status and ethnicity, they have also appeared to be atypical personalities who have managed to negotiate and turn disadvantages into advantageous situations for themselves. For instance, some of them have suggested that their gender has been a success factor, in that women’s lack of complacency in marketing themselves as men has brought in a diverse viewpoint, which has worked to their advantage in their career progression. Some of my interviewees have expressed being in awe of their women leaders in powerful positions. Other salient characteristics such as culture and ethnicity have offered a deeper significance to this discussion; for some of my interviewees have stated the importance of seeing relatable elements and ethnically similar women in in high positions so they are perceived better. Therefore, this has demonstrated the importance of women leaders, particularly of similar backgrounds, culture and ethnicity to engender and inspire other women like them and in changing my interviewees’ and general perceptions about NESB women, and thus, in assisting their career progression in Australia.

Therefore besides gender which has been brought up as a success factor by my interviewees, another success factor that has emerged pervasive in my interviewees’ interpretation of career success has been related to their cultural characteristics (e.g. Hofstede, 2010) and ethnicity (e.g. Fouad, 2010). My interviewees’ high expectations to succeed in Australia have been owed to their culturally ingrained success markers and values in their cultural backgrounds. Success markets, such as reputation,
knowledge, education, collective conformity, family influence, respect for their elders and their superiors have affected some of my interviewees’ propensity in their individual career choices or in meanings of what success have meant to them.

Some of my interviewees also have believed that their cultural qualities they brought as NESB migrant women have set them apart from others and enabled them to achieve success. For instance, as has been discussed in the earlier chapters, some of my interviewees have credited their collective cultural background for enabling them to thrive in collaborative working environments, where they worked with others in harmony, whereas the locals have not always been team players or have been argumentative and complained about ‘trivial matters. My interviewees have felt they have been more advantageous, well-versed in understanding people’s situations and better equipped to adapt anywhere because their cultural background and experience have made them more resilient. Therefore my interviewees have endorsed the positivity of being born in NESB backgrounds and some of them have been more candid and confident of their cultural and experience ‘advantages’, alongside their high technical skills and have stated that harnessing their differences as migrants into strengths have helped them stand out from the local crowd. Their ‘heightened’ cultural appropriateness and ability to work and relate with a wider diversity in the workforce (such as cultures, religion, accents etc.) have held them in good stead compared to local managers. This has included them using their South-Eastern cultural background as an advantage to access leadership specific roles in the Asia Pacific arms of their organisation or dealing with Asian clientele in Australia (tapping into ethnically similar customer bases).

My interviewees have also stressed on their ability to use their cultural stereotypes, social and cultural capital to their advantage, besides their technical capital, as critical factors in finding career success in Australia. This has allowed some of my interviewees to become assets for their multinational companies. My
interviewees’ educational/qualifications and proficiency in English have been important factors to consider in this context of their career success experiences in Australia. However these factors have not necessarily translated to an easier adaptation process or career success for them as NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia, more than other NESB migrant groups (from Vietnam or Thailand). But my interviewees have considered themselves atypical examples and have socially compared themselves, indicating their distinction from other NESB migrants, who have similar opportunities, education and similar cultural backgrounds as them but which they have stated, have been limited by their rigid, uncompromising, traditional mindsets to fluidly accept changes. The main context of this social comparison with other NESB migrant women has been done on the premise of their ‘cultural fluency’. According to them, this ‘cultural fluency’ (which had enabled their ‘cultural fit’ in Australia and led to their career success) has been something that other NESB migrants did not possess. There have been inclinations suggesting that they have had more ‘perseverance’ and willingness to work hard compared to other NESB migrant women, who have struggled to fit in, speak good English, and have been unwilling to change and find employment in Australia. As has been discussed in the findings earlier, some of my interviewees have demonstrated their ability to master pervasive ‘white’ host country hobbies/interests and values, such as taking the initiative to learn about ‘local’ cultural nuances to facilitate their cultural fit in Australia. Thus, their comparison to other similar NESB women migrants has also been essentially an indication that they have been well adapted and accepted in Australia, owing to their perceived ‘superior’ cultural and social capital, which has assisted in their adaptation and career success in Australia.

Therefore the discussion above has indicated that my interviewees’ individual personalities and drive have piloted their conscious efforts to fit culturally in Australia, which has resulted in their atypical success experiences. For example, my interviewees have clearly articulated their conscious efforts to adapt by being knowledgeable,
acquiring clear ‘accents’, social and cultural capital of Australia. In bring aware of local employers, attracting and employing people who have displayed similar characteristics, my interviewees in endorsing ‘Australian’ values have made sure they have been given work opportunities in a predominantly white Anglo cultural context. But their individual personality has held more imminence than a complete cultural immersion in Australia, ensuring their cultural fit has not come at a sacrifice of their own cultural identity. Instead they have developed multi-dimensional identities by integrating their host country experiences and fostering strong ties with their cultural roots. Therefore from these findings, my interviewees’ personality drive has helped them journey on a very conscious, ‘chameleon’ like adaptation to certain ‘white-Australian’ cultural elements, which has been advantageous to their career success outcome in Australia, while holding on to their own values, cultural or individual.

There have been other success aspects that informed my interviewees’ experience of career success and they have been derived from their migrant status as skilled primary applicants to Australia and their timing of their migration. For instance, their decision to migrate as primary applicants has been based on choice and career prospects (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016) and having their essential high employability factors, screened at time of their migration (e.g. DIBP, 2017), their potential or propensity to succeed has been very ‘high. Some of my interviewees’ timing of migration to Australia has coincided with the Australia labour market boom, where the policies and the skills in shortage at their time of migration have enabled them to migrate as primary applicants and also helped some of them in landing opportunities and subsequently, achieving career success in Australia. This adaptation process has also been aided by my interviewees’ length of residence in Australia. To mention a few examples, length of residence helped in them gaining more confidence, in them building their employment portfolio and experience, in understanding the Australian culture or their local colleagues or employers more or in their ‘Aussie’ English skills.
My interviewees’ adaptation fluidity has also not been contextually exclusive to Australia but one that transcends to multi-dimensional platforms and, depending on the context, independent domains and spaces they have been negotiating their career success in. It has not been a single success factor, but a synergy that they have derived from a combination of success factors, and negotiated their experiences of career success in Australia despite facing challenges at the intersectionality of gender, migrant status and ethnicity. This synergy has been provided by the various success factors discussed above and my interviewees’ ‘chameleon’ like adaptation process has been illustrated in a multi-dimensional synergetic advantageous adaptation (MSAA) model. The MSAA model has been a conceptualisation of the responses provided by my interviewees to my research question. This has been discussed in the following segment of my research’s contributions followed by avenues for future exploration.

7.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

My research’s originality has been owed to its focus on an important group of women, who have originated from NESB countries and who arrived as primary migrants, being selected on their employability factors under the skilled migration system in Australia. Therefore the contribution of my research in the wide skilled migration literature has been in its inception of filling a gap that did not research these NESB skilled women migrants before. It has also unravelled the broad definitions in research-dominant gender-neutral skilled migration, and has also taken the emphasis from NESB spousal secondary migration to a more modern female migration lead to NESB skilled primary migrant women. My research has challenged the simplification and has started to expose their multilayered nature of challenges through an exploration of their individual ‘lived experiences’.

The findings on my interviewees’ experiences of cultural fit has alluded to the difference between their countries of origin culture and the Australian culture. My
research has built upon the literature on Hofstede’s cultural (e.g. de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 1998, 2010; Hofstede et al., 1990), mainly around the collectivist/individual and power distance dimensions in understanding the values my interviewees placed on concepts in light of their national cultures. Therefore the various experiences around English skills or their unfamiliarity with ‘Aussie’ English created barriers in understanding culturally implied humour or slangs. This experience has not been confined to my interviewees as a lack of command and a ‘sophisticated’ English professional fluency has been cited as obstacles for NESB skilled migrants’ employment in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014; 2010; Hewagodage & O’Neill, 2010; Lee, 2013; Ressia, 2010), with similarities found in the US (Carliner, 2000; Xi, 2013), Canada (Chiswick, 1988; Chiswick & Miller, 2011; Grenier & Zhang, 2016) and New Zealand (Li & Campbell, 2009; Pio, 2005, 2007). My research has supported research that has stated that when the cultural distance of the migrant has been greater from Australia, English has played a more important role of English the cultural adaptation, settlement and economic life of NESB Indian women migrant entrepreneurs (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016) and Korean migrant women’s experiences in Australia (Lee, 2013). However it has challenged the reasoning that skilled migrants originating from former Commonwealth colonies such as India, Sri-Lanka, Singapore or Malaysia would fare better professionally than other NESB migrants because they have been culturally closer to Australia (e.g. Hawthorne, 1996; Lee, 2013; Ramanathan, 2015). even though their education and proficiency in English could be related to their colonial legacy (Ramanathan, 2015), but it has not necessarily favoured my interviewees any more in their adaptation or employment success than it has for NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia, more than other NESB migrant groups (from Vietnam, Thailand or the Middle East) as literature has suggested (Lee, 2013).

Some of the leadership challenges around gender have had their influence from my interviewees’ early gender role socialisation, organisational roles and their limited
exposure to women leaders in their countries of origin has been described in literature around women in India (e.g. Haynes, 2012). However the gender challenges faced in their employments have been relatable to what women in general have been facing, such as in them having to take on masculine traits to be seen as effective leaders (e.g. Kawakami and White, 2000). Some of my interviewees experiences enduring men patronising them has also supported research around gender in leadership that women leaders have been as aggressive for the same behaviour men were seen as assertive (e.g. Scandura and Williams, 2001).

The findings around the responsibilities of frustrations of raising a young family in Australia and that interrupting my interviewees’ careers has supported the family embeddedness theory (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016), Not different to other research findings (Alcorso & Ho, 2006; Hawthorne, 1996; Ho, 2006), most of the issues have been around childcare support and household chores At a glance, that would have indicated a gender issue, however my research has indicated that this issue has been related to migration and therefore, family embeddedness theory has been contextual to the host country they have migrated to.

My research has also expanded on the theory of ASA (Attraction-Selection-Attrition) (e.g. Van Hoye, 2015) where local employers could overlook them as suitable candidates over an unfamiliar sounding surname as that could easily be perceived as someone not fluent in English and therefore different to them. The findings have also attested to the perception of their leadership skills based on their ethnic backgrounds. My research has also shown that this perception did not improve even for skilled migrants who has been in Australia longer as international students supporting literature in the field (Parasnis, 2008). This has indicated that ethnicity perception challenges has still lingered even after living and securing Australian qualifications. My research has supported literature on how stereotypes surrounding certain cultural ethnicities have not diminished with increased years of migration as
has seen ‘Asian’ Americans in the USA being perceived as poor leadership material, which has been aggravated by their culturally ingrained aspects, such as their reservations on speaking up or challenging their superiors (Oguntoyinbo, 2014). These culturally ingrained aspects have been equally important in my interviewees’ choices of career, their high expectations to succeed in Australia and the way they interpreted their career success. This validated the cultural collective markers and values such as reputation, knowledge, collective conformity, sense of duty and higher family expectations in Asian backgrounds (e.g. de Mooij, 2010; Fouad, 2010; Hofstede, 2010; Yu et al., 2016).

Another theory my research has contributed to has been to the triple package theory of superiority, sense of inferiority and impulse control (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014), where my interviewees have appeared to display all three traits in their career success. The findings have suggested that they appeared to have felt the pressure to succeed and prove themselves given their high educational attainment in light of their lower status in Australia and their willingness to persevere and work harder than others.

My interviewees have also stressed on their ability to capitalise on their ethnic knowledge / contacts, linguistic skills and cultural characteristics, besides their technical capital, as critical factors of career success in Australia. They have used their South-Eastern cultural backgrounds as an advantage to access leadership specific roles in the Asia Pacific arms of their organisation or dealing with Asian clientele in Australia (tapping into ethnically similar customer bases), which has aligned and extended the literature on the reversal of disadvantages into advantages for NESB women and what has been researched on Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia (Azmat, 2013; Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). This has allowed some of my interviewees to become assets for their multinational companies and for them to cater a more international and global market as it has been researched (e.g. Kramar, 1998).
I have argued that the value derived from employing skilled, culturally global savvy and customer-relatable migrants have also helped their employers as much as it helped my interviewees; this has been conveyed from their experiences of capitalising on their cultural uniqueness and making that work to their advantage in serving the globalised interests of the companies they have been working in. Therefore, my research has made further contribution through my interviewees’ detailed and personal accounts, in expanding the diversity management’s literature argument of value proposition and has substantiated the claims of migrants bringing advantage to companies in their international operations or in serving a wider clientele.

The finding around my interviewees’ timing of migration and their decision to migrate as skilled primary applicants to Australia, based on choice and career prospects aligns to research on primary applicants in Australia (O’Dwyer & Colic-Peisker, 2016). Some of my interviewees’ timing of migration to Australia has coincided with the Australia labour market boom, where the policies and the skills in shortage at their time of migration have enabled them to migrate as primary applicants and also helped some of them in landing opportunities and subsequently, achieving career success in Australia. The adaptation process has been aided by my interviewees’ length of residence in Australia and this has also aligned with literature on other migrant women in Australia (e.g. Foroutan, 2008). The finding that the length of residency in Australia has had a positive impact on with adaptation in Australia and increased chances of career success has aligned with research showing the importance of migrants adapting to Australian standards and increasing their chances of employment (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Hawthorne, 1994; Lee, 2013).

The findings around my interviewees downplaying their unpleasant experiences and showing their difference from the general perception of NESB migrant women have also been seen in research on skilled Indian migrant women in New Zealand (e.g. Pio, 2014). My interviewees have socially distinguished themselves
from other NESB migrants, who have failed to change and adapt in Australia. This has
been similar to research on successful Indian migrants (mostly men) in California, who
have distinguished themselves from poorly perceived Indian migrants (Sandhu, 2012).
Therefore they have considered themselves different to other NESB migrant women,
who have been described in literature as still needing the validation from their families,
to get out of the household and further their careers (e.g. Azmat and Fujimoto, 2016).

As has been discussed earlier, my interviewees demonstrating their ability to
adapt and learn Aussie hobbies/interests and values, have also built on Sandhu’s
(2012) research. My interviewees’ conscious adaptation efforts to learn ‘Aussie’
hobbies and interests has extended the existing research on the ‘active’ assimilation
process of successful migrant Indian men in North America (Sandhu, 2012). Thus,
their comparison to other similar NESB women migrants has also essentially been an
indication that they have been well adapted and accepted in Australia, owing to their
perceived ‘superior’ cultural and social capital, which has assisted in their adaptation
and career success in Australia. Their eagerness to learn and adapt to be a cultural fit
and find suitable employment in Australia has indicated their general acceptance of
white Anglo-Australian values which has also allowed them to be accepted in the
Australian society supporting migrant social adaptation literature in Australia (e.g.
Stratton, 2009). But in them challenging their cultural ways has indicated an ability to
be culturally flexible, attesting to their personalities with a strong internal locus of
control, not necessarily confined to their gender, which has been cited as an important
trait in the career success literature (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). However, another
finding has also indicated to my interviewees’ ability to function on a multi-
dimensional level. This phenomenon has not been isolated to my interviewees as it has
been stated that the Indians middle class migrant diaspora has been described as the
epitome of migrant identity duality, negotiating career success in their host countries,
alongside a continued identification with their homeland (Ramanathan, 2015; Sandhu,
There have also been philosophical views expressed by my interviewees on their ‘overarching’ success as some of them have likened it to a constant state of evolution. In that situation, their meaning of career success has not been much different from how it has been generally described in literature, as a continuous construction and maintenance of a healthy self-concept and continuous learning of self-fulfilment (Adamson & Doherty, 1998). However, what has emerged interesting has been the changes in their success parameters and milestones over time. The findings have revealed a women-specific career development discussion which has rendered their career developments to be distinctly different from those of men. My research has extended the age-related model of women’s careers and its phases of idealistic achievement, pragmatic endurance and reinvented contribution with each phase characterised by differences in career pattern, locus, context and beliefs (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). While younger interviewees have expressed a more astute approach in their success parameters, interviewees with children have divulged on achieving work-life balance. That has appeared to be common with what has been researched on women adding their family to their success meaning as they have been more likely to be the primary care-givers to their young family (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Some have expressed that getting fulfilment from their personal lives and family support have been important in achieving professional success. This has supported research arguing the broader subjective life success of psychological accompaniments, instruments and indicators which provided meaning to career success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Therefore the ‘life’ success my interviewees have shared have been echoed in literature on women’s careers where their ‘true’ biographical success have included a combination of different lasting values (such as family and professional self-actualisation) in different areas and ages of women’s lives.(O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Riach et al., 2015).

However my interviewees’ adaptation fluidity has not been contextually exclusive to Australia but one that transcends to multi-dimensional platforms and,
depending on the context, independent domains and spaces they have been negotiating their career success in. In conjunction to their career trajectories, NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia have been argued to play broader life roles, not only contextual to gender and age but also to other dynamics such as ethnicity and migrant-specific considerations, as has been argued in literature (e.g., “English proficiency, family roles, skill recognition, societal stereotypes, cross-cultural and religious differences, and gaps in social capital”) (Syed & Pio, 2010, p.133). Therefore I have alluded, in the earlier chapters, to the inadequacy of current models and paradigms of women’s careers, and even ones created specifically for women, such as the O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) age-related model have not sufficiently encapsulated my interviewees’ multilayered challenges, their development, negotiation of their multidimensional identities and in them adapting to multiple cultural contexts. This need and inadequacy has been addressed by deriving a multidimensional synergetic advantageous adaptation (MSAA) model from the findings from my interviews with these women. My research’s contribution has been in identifying and understanding the profounder elements of intersectionality, such as migrant status or ethnicity and culture, explored beyond the elements of age, qualifications and work-life trajectories. What has been particularly interesting about my research, mostly through the conceptualisation of the research findings in the MSAA model, has been in its argument for an awareness on NESB skilled woman careers as a measure of migrant policy success and possibly changes in policy. The MSAA model has provided a useful mechanism for further research. I have discussed the future research avenues of my research in the next section.

7.2.2 Future Research Avenues

The MSAA model’s contribution has laid in its potential application outside the boundaries and beyond the Australian context I have chosen for my research. Therefore, it would be worth exploring the applicability, transferability and extension
of the MSAA model elements to present and future research agenda. As an example, the model could be tested on other groups of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia or other women in different contexts. It would thus be interesting to assess how the MSAA model could be compared or weighed in on research on other sections of population and other insights from the wider female skilled migration phenomenon.

The MSAA success elements could also provide an exploratory qualitative, experienced based perspective for a quantitative undertaking on a similar sample of NESB primary migrant women. Further complimentary qualitative avenues could also be undertaken on the model to provide further focused insight, such as detailed narratives of one or two NESB skilled primary migrant women managers and leaders in Australia. My research has focused on the synergy harnessed from various factors to create a favourable outcome, which has been career success for my interviewees. Another area of interest could be on exploring on a single MSAA success factor to see its significance on career success of the interviewees.

Another useful contribution of the MSAA model could be in its potential use to be tested in quantitative research, where the elements can be empirically tested and regression analysis used to rank them in scale of importance. It would also be interesting to explore how my research could provide a justification for future research initiatives - how and where my study could apply and contribute in different contexts. To mention an example, among the success drivers identified in the MSAA model and especially the factors that have been identified as being time dependent, time has enabled my interviewees to improve their success drivers by allowing for a more successful acculturation process, English proficiency, family circumstances, and education amongst other things. My research findings thus, has strong practical implications for the government, public policy, organizations, and managers. For instance one significant idea that the MSAA model has pointed out to has been the importance of selecting migrants based on the factors that can improve over time.
instead of basing migrant selection on factors that do not change over time, such as gender, ethnicity, culture, religion or country of origin. This idea, for instance, presents an opportunity for further exploration and research. However as I have mentioned earlier, with all its usefulness and potential, there have also been limitations associated with the MSAA model. The limitations of this research has been presented in the following section.

7.3 Limitations

Some of the limitations of this research have been associated with the exploratory nature of the semi-structured interviews with the interviewees. Adopting such an in-depth interview process has also meant that the testimonials have been considered true during that moment of interaction between the interviewees and myself, the elements in the findings that have presented in this research have been contextual to what they have shared with me and them being approached to be interviewed as successful women. Nevertheless it could be that their then ‘current’ perceptions may have not been impacted by their experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Also the findings and what they have shared in their interviews with me could have had been different in varied circumstances, for instance, an ethno-graphic process of observing them in their work would provide a different context to the semi-structured interviews which have been adapted for my research.

The second limitation has been based on the generalisability and transferability of the data, themes, findings and analyses of this study to research other groups of skilled migrant women. This has stemmed from the premise that my research has been based on the subjective interpretations of my interviewees’ realities shared at the time of interview and their specific targeting and profiling by their migrant status (at time of migration), countries of origin, NESB backgrounds, ethnicity and employment as leaders and managers in Australia. Therefore the limitation with my research findings (elements presented in the MSAA model) has been on its focus on a specific group of
migrant women and their individual definitions and experiences of success in Australia. For instance, one area that has been related but has not been explored in my research, which could be fodder for further consideration have been cognitive dissonance and the cultivation of cultural intelligence by NESB skilled migrant women (Earley & Ang, 2003; Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Sternberg & Grogorenko, 2006; Thomas & Inkson, 2009), and their significance in their career success in Australia or across cultures. However as has been discussed in the previous segment, the elements of the MSAA model could be utilised in exploring a broader population and different sample of other NESB skilled primary migrant women groups in Australia or other cultural or country contexts.

7.4 Significance of this Research

My research’s novel contribution has been in adding the voices of NESB skilled primary migrant women in Australia and their construction of career success in their individual experiences, which has indicated a combination of different lasting values at the intersectionality of profounder elements, such as gender, migrant status and ethnicity. Therefore in order to better appreciate the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s career and broader life roles, my research has provided deeper dimensional influences beyond gender and included important dynamics such as ethnicity. My research has strengthened the importance to continue the gender discourse, with additional ‘focal’ distinctions at the intersectionality of factors, which has influenced my interviewees’ career success experiences.

This research has contributed to the literature of highly skilled women’s migration and women’s representation in organisational leadership in their host countries and in this particular context, Australia. The interpretive phenomenological research method has also assisted in providing an important insight into some of the NESB skilled primary migrant women’s experience and explored elements, based on their individual perspectives with special regards to their career pathway(s) as well as
the barriers and success factors faced in their career progression, post migration. The relevance of studying this group is timely and is deemed to be of interest of beneficiaries such as the government, diversity management initiatives, and future NESB primary applicant skilled migrant women.

7.4.1 Government

The government could realise the economic benefits it initially aimed when the skilled migrant policy has been introduced. The insights provided by this group could help evaluate the economic benefits/losses between what has been intended to achieve with the current skilled migration scheme and what migrants themselves have actually experienced. That way, strategies could be adopted to optimise the contribution skilled migrants could bring to fulfil the skills shortages and enhance Australia's economy. It has been important that the Australian skilled migration scheme quantitative “success story” has been made concurrently with a qualitative analysis of migrants’ experiences of ‘satisfactory’ or successful employment and the gap between the top-down quantitative definition figures and ‘success’ defined from the perspectives of its skilled migrants’ were closer, if not completely matched. It has been important more attention be paid to the career-success aspects of skilled migrants, post-migration because they have been selected to fill skill shortages and contribute positively to the Australian economy and society. They have migrated through via a rigorous selection process with emphasis on employability factors such as skills and occupations in demand, age, English proficiency, Australian qualifications and relevant local or international work experience (e.g. DIBP, 2017), and it has been important to know if the skill shortages they have been brought in to fill have been actually met. With skilled migration being Australia’s important contributor to economic growth (ABS, 2017e) and in a current, highly competitive global environment, these experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women will assist in Australia’s efforts in being seen as a leading country for future highly skilled migrants. With this commitment to continue attracting highly
skilled migrants, these experiences of NESB skilled primary migrant women have been argued to be instrumental in gaining an understanding of how they journey in fulfilling their potential and providing their greatest possible contribution, as highly skilled employable resources in Australia, post migration.

7.4.2 Diversity Management Efforts and Employers

In a highly globalised competitive world, employing diverse individuals have ensured companies in increasing their quality of problem-solving, better utilisation of talent and enhanced creativity (e.g. Hugo, 2014). Knowing how these skilled migrants experience their career pathways will assist in their efforts to distinguish themselves in providing jobs aligning with potential employees’ needs in competing for skilled work-force (e.g. Balasubramanian, 2016) and to cater for a larger customer base and international market (representing different migrant groups, language skills and having the required cultural understanding). The importance of diversity efforts in the workplace have been becoming more important (e.g. Fisher, 2011) and these experiences have been a way to enhance the company’s initiatives in addressing skills shortage and retaining talent. The findings from the ‘lived’ experiences of successful NESB skilled primary migrant women could thus assist with the further development of cultural and gender management policies and practices within Australian organisations.

7.4.3 Future NESB Skilled Primary Migrant Women

The gap that this research has filled is important for NESB skilled primary migrant women themselves, and especially for younger migrant women. The real life success experiences of my interviewees have been inspiring and will assist in the decision making of younger women in their migration and career pathways. The importance to see more women role models in bringing down the barriers and
perceptions is instrumental, thus helping women to progress in their career and attain higher organisational roles (e.g. Dimovski, 2010). As I have explored in my research, the experiences of my interviewees has challenged many perceptions of the impediments or advantages associated with their gender, culture/ethnicity and migrant status.

As a famous play wright once wrote, “What's past is prologue” (The Tempest, Act 2. Sc. I), what my interviewees have experienced are lessons for many and certainly, for themselves. It has undoubtedly given my interviewees a moment to reflect on whether they have been making their best contribution to Australia, their employer, themselves and their families after they migrated as NESB skilled primary migrant women managers and leaders.
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Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions

The interview structure has been based on an in-depth, semi-structured format. The interview questions has been open-ended and the general purpose has been to enable us to explore and to know more on the participants’ experiences. While the interviews have been exploratory and have been more on listening to the interviewee’s stories, to align the conversations and stories back to the research aims, a schedule of sample questions has been created. This has not compromised the exploratory nature of the interviewees as every interview has been different the sample questions have been created so all the information if not covered in the stories have been covered. The schedule has been presented as follows:

Interview Structure

Introduction

General background introduction.

Started with a big overarching question, for instance I have asked their backgrounds, how and what led the women to migrate to Australia?

One of the respondent criteria has been that the respondents represent part of the primary skilled migrants’ population. Therefore it has been important to know if they applied for skilled migration to Australia as previous International students or as skilled workers, directly from their home countries.

Personal information such as age, marital status, religion, children etc. to be volunteered by the respondents during the interviews.
Career pathways

What career aspirations did they have when they arrive in Australia as primary applicants?

How does their current situation (post-migration) compare to their expectations (pre-migration or on arrival in Australia)?

How have their experience and career expectations been in reaching their current employment status?

How have the women been navigating their career pathways?

Experience of success

What and how would success translate for them?

What has been their experience of success, have they achieved it?

What have been the obstacles or opportunities that would have obstructed or facilitated their interpretation of ‘success’?

Conclusion

Anything we have not covered or what the participants would like to add to the list.