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CULTURE CROSS

**Foreign Students Intercultural Interactions on a New Zealand University
Campus**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Social Anthropology

at Massey University, Manawatu,

New Zealand

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Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Sensing Cultural Barriers	21
Chapter Three: Seeking Interactions.....	35
Chapter Four: Common Patterns	47
Chapter Five: Pros and Cons	62
Chapter Six: The Influence of Intercultural Interaction	73
Chapter Seven: Benefits	82
Conclusion	91
References.....	106
Appendix One.....	113
Appendix Two.....	114

Abstract

This MA Thesis examines foreign students on-campus intercultural interactions at a New Zealand university – namely, the Massey University Turitea campus in Palmerston North. Prior research has shown that many foreign students in New Zealand universities have tended to spend their on-campus activities with other international students, usually from their own countries, rather than New Zealand ones, while other foreign students are largely interested in and open to intercultural interaction with New Zealanders when on campus. The purpose of my research was to examine and assess the nature, degree and reasons that foreign students engage in intercultural interactions when on-campus, and determine what my findings indicated towards the greater international student community in New Zealand. One of two methods that I used during my fieldwork consisted of interviewing seven research participants, who I contacted through personal friendships and Massey University clubs and organizations associated with foreign students, about their on-campus intercultural interactions. The second method was a level of participant observation, in which I participated in and observed my research participants during their academic and social university activities to assess their on-campus intercultural interactions. Major findings include the significant role of social and sports organizations in helping foreign students establish intercultural interactions, which are also promoted for many foreign students new to Massey via orientation programs, and the importance of campus accommodation facilitating foreign students intercultural interactions. Major conclusions include the need for more emphasis on internationalization at the Massey campus and the necessity of increased opportunities for intercultural interaction in and out of class.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The objective of this MA thesis in social anthropology is to examine the intercultural interactions of foreign students in a New Zealand university environment, namely the Massey University Turitea campus in Palmerston North. This topic is one of contemporary educational anthropology, which originated from the development of social and cultural anthropology in the 1920's (Eddy 1985:84), and has focussed upon important issues including educational processes, culture, ethnicity, power and socialisation, along with the educational development experiences of different nations, communities, and ethnic groups (Schensul 1985:63). This topic is important to New Zealand because cultural knowledge is shared via elements such as travel, communication and globalisation (Shiraev and Levy 2004:16); because the 'Kiwi' experience, like the country's lifestyle and culture, motivates foreign students to come to New Zealand (Ward and Masgoret 2004:8); and because full-fee paying foreign students now represent an important part of the contemporary New Zealand economy.

Through interviews and participant observation with foreign students, the chapters of my thesis investigate the following topics:

1. How do foreign students perceive and approach cultural barriers on campus?
2. Do foreign students seek on-campus intercultural interactions with other foreign students, New Zealand students, or both, and why?
3. Do foreign students share common patterns of on-campus intercultural interaction?
4. What are the positive and negative experiences of foreign students in their intercultural interactions on campus?
5. How does intercultural interaction on campus influence the perspectives and habits of foreign students?

6. How do foreign students benefit from intercultural interaction in a New Zealand university campus environment?

The conclusion to the thesis reviews the answers to these questions. It is hoped that the thesis will help improve intercultural communication between foreign and New Zealand students and university staff, help address bias and prejudice many foreign students face in New Zealand universities, and contribute towards greater acknowledgement and understanding of cultural diversity within New Zealand society in general.

Background: Foreign Students in New Zealand

Foreign students temporarily residing in New Zealand to undertake studies constitute an active part of New Zealand's tertiary education sector. At Massey University's Palmerston North Campus, foreign students in 2009 numbered 1,743 out of a grand total of 3,752 foreign students in all Massey campuses that year (See Appendix One). Wellington's Victoria University had students from over eighty countries in early 2010 (*Dominion Post*, February 18, 2010:A9). Between the 1950s and 1980s, New Zealand universities hosted numerous foreign students, some arriving under formal assistance arrangements such as the Colombo Plan, others coming privately, mostly from Malaysia and Singapore.¹ During the 1990s New Zealand universities set out to recruit full-fee paying foreign students. The rise of globalization during that decade elevated the importance of learning English, and many foreign students, the majority from Asian countries such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), came to New Zealand for that purpose (Tarling 2004:196-197). By 1997, 4,489 foreign students attended New Zealand universities (Tarling 2004:223). During the early 2000s, foreign university student numbers, along with their nationalities and cultural diversity,

¹ The Colombo Plan was established in 1951 for cooperative and social development in Asia and the Pacific.

increased considerably in New Zealand. In 2009, the *National Business Review* (February 12) reported that the declining New Zealand dollar was attracting numerous international students to the country. Of the 20,153 foreign students attending New Zealand universities in 2003, 16,754 were Asian, 1,254 were European and 1,212 were from the Americas (Smith and Rae 2004:3). Between 2007-2008, the export education industry raised about NZ\$2.3 billion of foreign exchange for New Zealand (Infometrics *et al* 2008:1). In 2008, 21,136 foreign students were attending New Zealand universities as of June that year (Infometrics *et al* 2008:2). In the year to February 1, 2009, Immigration New Zealand issued 67,530 student visas (*National Business Review*, February 12, 2009). There was a 6 percent increase in international fee-paying student enrolments in New Zealand during 2009, compared with enrolments in 2008 (*Dominion Post*, April 23, 2010). The export education industry was worth almost NZ\$2.5 billion to New Zealand's economy in 2009, and was expected to climb by more than NZ \$250 million in 2010, with the average foreign student studying in New Zealand being worth around NZ\$22,000 a year (*Dominion Post*, February 18, 2010:A9). The professional service organization Deloitte (2008:1) reports that exposure New Zealanders obtain from overseas input enhances New Zealand education standards and the people-to-people links established are significant for younger people increasingly participating in a global arena.

The past decade has seen an increasing rise in students seeking overseas tertiary education worldwide, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimating that in 2004 there were over 2.65 million students undertaking tertiary education outside their home countries (Xiaoying and Abbott 2006:2). New Zealand universities foreign student intakes contribute significantly to campuses cultural diversity. But as De Vita (2005:75) notes, universities advocate transforming a culturally diverse student body into a

resource stimulating international connectivity processes. It is often assumed that foreign students will perform confidently with no problems adjusting to the host campus and culture, and associating with local people. De Vita (2005:76) argues that social cohesion and intercultural learning are more ideal than real.

Review of Literature on Foreign Students at Tertiary Institutions

The literature (both from overseas and New Zealand) concerning foreign students at tertiary institutions is plentiful and relevant. A considerable amount of the literature examines foreign students own perspectives, helping shape my understanding of foreign student lifestyles on a host campus. Other, largely statistical, information from the literature allowed me to understand the context of my thesis topic.

International Literature

Meyer (2003) argues that international students needs, especially those relating to cross-cultural adjustment and support networks, necessitate comprehensive international student orientation programmes. Zhao *et al* (2005), in comparing foreign student and American student relations, found that international students constitute a major source of diversity on college campuses, yet little is known about their host campus experiences or the level and extent of their relations. Selby and Woods (1966) note that a foreign student's priority on a host campus is study, as opposed to socialising with other students. Jochems *et al* (1996:325) state that universities need to address the academic performance of foreign students in relation to the foreign language and cultural difficulties they face. Meyer (2003) assesses significant factors in foreign students orientation programmes such as cross-cultural adjustment and establishing interpersonal relationships and social support networks, stressing the significance

of orientation programs in foreign students transition to their host environment, and helping them avoid being withdrawn from campus society.

New Zealand Literature

In an account of the making of New Zealand's policy towards foreign students since the inauguration of the Colombo Plan, Tarling (2004:7) states that the movement of foreign students is a significant issue of university life, but it has not been extensively studied. Tuoc (1968) notes that many foreign students arrive in New Zealand with little knowledge of the ways of their host nation. In their report for the Ministry of Education, the professional services organization Deloitte (2008) advocate that the presence of foreign students helps promote diversity and internationalism in New Zealand educational institutions. However, Deloitte (2008:59) also note a lack of cohesion between foreign students and their domestic peers, which indicates that New Zealand educators may be failing to internationalize their curriculum. The report by McInnis *et al* (2006) on internationalization in New Zealand tertiary education organizations examines the meaning of internationalization in the context of tertiary education, where it serves as a medium for integrating multinational and multicultural elements into the intention, means and execution of postsecondary learning. Ho *et al* (1996:9) reported that some Asian students felt their subject choices were restricted by inadequate understanding of their host society, and therefore felt less disadvantaged by taking science subjects instead of social science ones. In spite of this, Ho *et al* (1996:18) also found that many Asian students thought New Zealand's education and environment were more liberal than those of their home countries, helping stimulate their maturity and independence. Ward (2006:56) noted foreign students staying in New Zealand over long periods developed strong English proficiency and experienced greater contact with New Zealanders, little discrimination, positive perceptions of New Zealanders towards foreigners, cultural

inclusiveness during classes, and more positive perceptions of cities or towns they stayed in. However, Ward (2006:15) found that international students generally experience greater difficulties and considerable anxiety when making friends and have less satisfying friendships than local students.

Lewthwaite (1996/1997) significantly noted the importance of counsellors on campus in assisting foreign students adjustment to their host campus, and Graham (2009) examines the importance of the Massey University International Student's Office (ISO) in establishing coherent relations with foreign students in the internationalized education system. Smith and Rae (2004) examine international student numbers at universities, citing a need for ongoing research into managing student numbers, which could contribute to greater integration and diversity of the student population. The thesis by Skyrme (2008) examines Chinese students in a New Zealand university, noting issues that concern their perceptions of, and adjustment to, the host campus, such as their experiences of the campus and relations with staff and other students. In June 2002, the Massey Extramural student publication *Off Campus* reported on the hardships faced by some foreign students at Massey. Xiaoying and Abbott (2006) examine the relationship of the Chinese student market with New Zealand higher education.

Culture, Language and Academic Shock

Many international students arrive in New Zealand able to choose their own lifestyles, friends and activities. However, as Tuoc (1968) notes, some also come to New Zealand with scant information on the country and its society, entering the unknown. Such students can be easily overwhelmed by shock resulting from finding themselves in an unfamiliar environment. The shock can occur in cultural, linguistic and academic circumstances, and makes some foreign students seek on-campus company with other students from their home countries. De Vos

(1995:15) notes that common origins, beliefs, values and a feeling of survival have been central towards people uniting into self-defining in-groups, which are an easy avenue from shock for international students suffering this condition, which contributes to their withdrawal from the host environment.

Culture shock, according to Ryan (2005:149), is where elements including physical environment, food, transport, accommodation, personal relationships and clothing are different and take time to get accustomed to. Guanipa (1998) cites sadness, isolation, melancholy, lack of confidence, homesickness, negative thoughts about the new culture and psychological problems including anxiety and compulsive disorders as major culture shock symptoms. Central to culture shock is what Shiraev and Levy (2004) term 'traditional culture,' centred in customs, attitudes and regulations predominantly established in the past, generally conservative and opposing innovation. People from 'traditional cultures' often hesitate to accept new knowledge and sometimes fear a loss of cultural identity. Opposing 'traditional cultures' are what Shiraev and Levy (2004:9) label 'non-traditional cultures,' generally innovative and open to liberal individualism, emphasizing individual freedoms and freedom of choice. Therefore, foreign students from 'traditional cultures' may be more susceptible to 'culture shock' than those from 'non-traditional' ones.

Ryan (2005:150), and Butcher (2002:109) acknowledge that foreign students may experience difficulty adjusting to the mannerisms and attitudes of a host academic culture, as does the thesis concerning Chinese international students on a New Zealand campus by Skyrme (2008). Paltridge and Harbon (2008:56) argue that when inhabiting a different culture over a long time period, people often experience transformation demanding that they see the world from a different perspective frequently conflicting with their existing beliefs and values. Sluka and

Robben (2007:16), however, note the late 1950s anthropologist Kalervo Oberg's argument that culture shock is part of an adjustment to a new culture contributing to cultural awareness.

Another form of shock affecting international students intercultural interactions on campuses is what Ryan (2005:149) terms 'language shock,' where some foreign students experience difficulty adjusting to language in conversations, local accents and the speed of spoken language in their host environment. Liang (1990) and Andrade (2008) note that language difficulties can affect foreign students confidence in intercultural interactions. Liang (1990:38) notes how overseas students may become silent and not participate in group discussions due to not understanding all of the English they hear. Andrade (2008:32) reports that foreign students felt some lecturers were oblivious to some international students not understanding jokes or words spoken during classes.

Some international students also experience what Ryan (2005:150) refers to as 'academic shock,' when different approaches to teaching and learning in the host campus become apparent to them. These can include different attitudes to teacher-student relations, and differences like these result in many foreign students casting aside the academic customs of their home countries and adjusting to their host country's ones. However, if 'academic shock' becomes overwhelming to foreign students, their academic performance may decline, or they may feel alienated by, and inferior to, their host university's academic culture (Ryan 2005:150). Skyrme (2008:45) notes how the Chinese education system from an early age stresses conformity to teachers or lecturers, with students rarely questioning them during class time. Foreign students raised in such systems may suffer academic shock upon finding their traditional disciplinarian academic values conflicting with the 'laid back' New Zealand academic culture, where lecturers participate in a relaxed academic environment, are often

addressed by their first names (as opposed to 'Sir' or 'Miss' in some foreign students countries) and get frequently questioned or challenged over a subject by students during lectures. Butcher (2002:109) reported that many South-East Asian students in New Zealand were surprised by the academic culture in 'Godzone,' especially by the casual lifestyle and the lack of local students and lecturers in formal attire. Shock endured by foreign students is interrelated with their cultural, linguistic and academic liaisons, and one key to a campus becoming accommodating to foreign students is its acknowledgement and handling of situations where they encounter shock.

Intercultural Interaction

Intercultural interaction refers to dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment and the form of adjustment that an individual takes to a new role (Janssens 1995:156), such as a foreign student's adaptations and communications with the culture of a host university campus. Intercultural interaction entails knowledge of new cultures and contact with local nationals (Janssens 1995:157). Janssens (1995), James (1999) and Liberman (1984) define intercultural interaction as a cultural exchange between two or more individuals where participants openly relate to each other's cultural differences, learning and appreciating them in the process. This phenomenon is only possible if participants adopt an open attitude towards, and understand, each other's cultural perspectives, communicating under conditions they consider fair while experiencing each other's feelings, thoughts and experiences (James 1999:590). Often intercultural interaction is hindered by language and other communication difficulties between participants that may create misunderstanding, yet such difficulties may also stimulate participants curiosity towards each other and attempts at understanding (Liberman 1984:54). The frequency of intercultural interaction between foreign and New Zealand students is surprisingly, relatively rare. Thirty-two percent of New Zealand students surveyed

by Victoria University (2005:iv) never interacted with foreign students when not in class, although intercultural interaction barriers were not considered significant by participants in the survey.

Material relating to intercultural interaction in theory and in relation to the intercultural interactions performed by foreign students was broad and offered numerous perspectives. A considerable amount of the literature focussed on the significance of relationships in foreign students intercultural interactions. According to Jandt (2004:231), the main intercultural interaction problem is the relationship between an individual and other people. The pamphlet by Metge and Kinloch (1978) on cross-cultural communication problems focuses upon those between Pakeha and Maori and Pacific Islanders in the wider New Zealand society. However, it contains relevant ideas and solutions towards the problems of cultural understandings between culturally different people that were applicable to my research, such as the authors position that increased awareness of cultural differences will help improve communication between people during meetings and cooperation (Metge and Kinloch 1978:41). Turner and Robson (2008:66) note that local and foreign students may interact slowly, and only form distant or superficial friendships. Ward and Masgoret (2004:53) report that male foreign students have found making New Zealand friends easier than female foreign students, who found 'Kiwis' accepting towards people from other countries, but thought New Zealanders were not interested in befriending them. Nathan (2005) reports that foreign students she studied at a U.S. university were annoyed by the cultural ignorance and arrogance of the American students and faculty towards them and their countries, examples included Americans asking if an English student lived in a castle and a lack of appreciation for foreign students' customs and music. Ward (2006) argues that research generally indicates that foreign students expect and seek contact with their local peers and that domestic students

often want greater interaction with foreigners. However, international and domestic student contact is low, and institutional interventions must address this issue.

Andrade (2008:32) notes many foreign university students assume their host university will initiate intercultural interaction, and lack abilities to comprehend cultural differences. Only thirty-three per cent of foreign students surveyed by Deloitte (2008:59) felt there were intercultural learning opportunities in classes. This suggests New Zealand educators may be failing to internationalize their curriculum. Simultaneously, New Zealand university students neglect to use resources offered by international students, missing opportunities to develop essential intercultural interaction abilities, leaving them with relatively weak intercultural competencies. Scupin (1992:51) argues that intercultural interaction reflects how a person can note how others behave, then imitate, or avoid, those behaviours. Ward (2001:28) notes that New Zealand educational institutions stage campus events and functions to promote foreign student interactions with host communities, such as International Day, student sponsored workshops, Global Week, international food festivals, institutional presentations and even community service programmes.

Elementary to the development of more purposeful and productive relations between domestic and foreign students is intercultural competence, which Turner and Robson (2008:67) argue allows students to analyse interaction, predict misunderstanding, adapt behaviours in different cultural environments and comprehend the cultural characteristics of others, avoiding stereotyping. According to Turner and Robson (2008:95), intercultural exchange development demands reflection on opportunities for social learning experiences with people from other cultures, opposing simply placing foreign and domestic students in classes, which does not guarantee intercultural interactions. What Pang (2008:74), when arguing along similar lines,

calls 'interculturalism' – learning and sharing across difference, allowing no single culture to dominate – is pivotal to creating an academic community out of university diversity, and must be widespread across disciplines and faculties to work. De Vita (2005 and 2007) points out that there is much potential for such intercultural learning for international students in academic environments.

Other literature addresses diversity in relation to foreign students intercultural interactions. Klak and Martin (2003) assess multicultural and international university students intercultural interactions during a Miami university Latin American celebration, ascertaining that foreign students appreciate cultural engagement precipitated by campus cultural events. Jandt (2004) states that one result of intercultural interaction is diffusion, the outcome of one culture possibly learning and adopting particular practices of another culture. However, an international student presence alone, even in large numbers, fails to promote intercultural relationships and understanding. Situations must be established to foster these processes. This is reflected in Pang (2008:74) acknowledging that student diversity, cultural diversity and intercultural interactions are intertwined, believing that they should not merely entail limited encounters or mixing foreign and domestic students in classes. Paltridge and Harbon (2008:56) note some international students may resist cultural differences, refusing to integrate them into their cultural worlds. Beaver and Tuck (1998) note a lack of coherence between foreign and *Pakeha* (New Zealand European) students in classes, most likely due to cultural and language differences.

Several sources specifically examine intercultural interactions between foreign students and their lecturers on host campuses. As noted, Selby and Woods (1996) stress that the priority for foreign students is study as opposed to social interaction with other students, so their

relationships with their lecturers and other faculty members are particularly important to them. Jochems *et al* (1996:325) suggest universities better address the academic performance of foreign students in regard to the language and cultural differences they face in class, and Leask (2007:87) argues that lecturers should be encouraged to act as mediums for intercultural interaction learning in classes where foreign students are present, and should adapt their teaching to a more internationally diverse study environment, as opposed to just expecting foreign students to adjust to a 'monocultural' one. Louie (2005) advocates creating a more balanced intercultural interaction between lecturers and international students, where both parties acknowledge each other's cultures when imparting them to each other during classes. McLean and Ransom (2005) argue that, in an increasingly internationalised education environment, educators should develop a framework to encourage the development of intercultural competencies for both their international and domestic students.

Other material focuses on the lack of foreign students intercultural interactions. Pang (2008:72) notes that despite Asia's centrality to New Zealand's national concerns, and numerous opportunities for intercultural interactions between New Zealanders and Asians, current research literature indicates relatively little New Zealander and Asian cooperation via student interactions. Some Asian university students have commented that 'Kiwi' classmates often avoided communication with them (Mills 1997:62). Just seventeen percent of foreign students surveyed by Deloitte (2008:83) felt New Zealanders wanted to know foreign students better, with twenty-nine percent believing 'Kiwis' were disinterested in befriending foreigners (Deloitte 2008:82). Only 25 percent stated they had never experienced discrimination from New Zealand students, sixteen percent of 'internationals' indicated that they did not socialize with New Zealand friends, and twenty-three percent did not study with 'Kiwis.' However, thirty-seven percent felt New Zealanders should take the initiative towards establishing

intercultural friendships (Deloitte 2008:82). Victoria University (2005) also assessed international students interactions and noted low or moderate levels of interactions between foreign and domestic students. Lewthwaite (1996) studied the cross-cultural adaptations of twelve foreign students at Massey University, who reported stress and a lack of adaptation due to a lack of effective intercultural communication, but also believed that bridging cultures was a casual and educational process that they chose to approach at varying levels, according to how much time each of them had for on-campus intercultural interaction.

Background: Foreign Students at Turitea

Massey University has a long tradition of educating foreign students at its Turitea Campus. The Colombo Hall of Residence at Turitea was originally established for students studying at Massey under the Colombo Plan, and there have been close links between Massey and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which for many years has selected Massey as a major training institution for students from developing countries (Graham 1999:51). Although numerous foreign students have enrolled at Massey for many decades, it was only after the early 1990s that the university broadened its internationalization approach. Internationalization in university circles is defined by McInnis *et al* (2006:16) as the process of incorporating an international, intercultural or global element in the purpose, functions or conveying of education. It identifies the responsibility of domestic education establishments and networks to prepare students for the ever-present personal impact of global developments, the principle transaction of which is the exchange of knowledge between systems, institutions and individuals over cultural, linguistic and national boundaries. Successful internationalization becomes embedded in the culture and practices of university authorities, staff, and, importantly, the student body (McInnis *et al* 2006:17). The 1990 Education Amendment Act motivated New Zealand tertiary institutions such as Massey to promote

programmes for privately-funded foreign students and to develop links with overseas tertiary institutions (Graham 1999:56). Student diversity has been a significant aspect of Massey University's foreign student intake in Palmerston North, which rose from 1,656 in 2008 to 1,743 in 2009. International students on the Palmerston North Campus in 2009 were culturally diverse and included 441 students from China, 96 from India, and 60 from Pacific countries such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga (Appendix).

A significant number of foreign students at Massey have gone through hard times, being cheated over accommodation, subjected to ethnic prejudice, or have suffered from depression and gone home (*Off Campus Magazine*, Massey University, Palmerston North, June 2002). Foreign students at Massey studied by Lewthwaite (1996/1997:175) reported frustration over not being able to participate in many New Zealand cultural activities. Some foreign students reported difficult bridging of New Zealand's culture and their own while on campus, due to a lack of opportunities for relaxed engagement with 'Kiwi' culture and the apathy towards foreign students displayed by local students in campus accommodation, although other students cited the helpfulness of hostel supervisors (usually mature postgraduate students) and academic supervisors as important brokers of the host culture (Lewthwaite 1996:176). Indeed, an increasing number of foreign students enrolling at Massey in the 1990s saw the establishment of an International Students Office (ISO) in January 1994, which is regularly the first positive experience and contact point for foreign students lacking network support, giving attention to support issues such as accommodation, and consideration of culturally sensitive issues (Graham 1999:53).

Foreign students constitute a sizable, culturally diverse section of the Massey Turitea student population. This diversity, combined with the conditions and problems some foreign students

encounter while studying at the campus, have necessitated the university establishing means to cater for student multiculturalism and to make the campus more accommodating for foreign students. However, foreign students at Turitea still experience problems concerning their abilities to perform intercultural interaction. I observed that participants on-campus intercultural interactions often occurred by meeting other students during classes and, or, participation in on-campus clubs, associations and recreational activities. Some participants had opportunities for cross-cultural interactions in campus accommodation, often inhabited by diverse domestic and international students, many of whom interacted with each other via organized residential functions and sports events, along with everyday activities such as walking to and from lectures and tutorials or meeting one another in the campus dining halls for meals. Therefore, participants intercultural interaction opportunities were numerous.

Participants

I applied for and received a Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) Low Risk ethics approval for my research, and then sought and found seven participants for my research via approaching foreign student friends of mine, and consulting Massey University's International Student Office (ISO) and student clubs and organizations on campus, asking if any of their members were keen to participate in my research. The participants were of diverse nationalities, cultures and ages, and of both genders to ensure the obtaining of differing perspectives on the thesis topic during my interviews and observation sessions. Four participants, although offered anonymity or the choice of using a pseudonym, chose to have their names disclosed in this thesis.

The participants were:

1. 'Phil' (a pseudonym), 29, from Cologne, Germany, studying in his second year at Massey for a PhD in Management studies.

2. Yan Yan, 33, from Naning, Guangxi Province, China, an NZAID scholarship student studying at Massey for two years, the first year undertaking Postgraduate Diploma studies in Business and Administration and the second year a Masters in Management.
3. Patric Nordbeck, 24, from Helsingborg, Sweden, completing his final year at Massey, taking a B.A. Degree in a Psychology and Philosophy.
4. 'Joseph' (a pseudonym), 32, from Mongu, Zambia, in the second year of a Masters in Resource Development and Planning.
5. Liezel Bobadilla, 25, another NZAID scholarship student, from Papangas, The Philippines, studying for a Masters in Resource and Environmental Planning.
6. Hana Horikoshi, 23, from Chiba, Japan, in her second year of studying Horticultural Science.
7. 'Papakwila'(a pseudonym), 46, from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG), studying in his second year for a Masters in Management.

Description of Research Methods Employed

My qualitative research methodology, which was centred around interviews and a degree of participant observation, permitted me to access numerous perspectives and insights into the lives of the participants. It also allowed me to observe and participate in their activities, which gave me as the researcher an interactive scope into the nature and extent of their intercultural interactions.

The unstructured nature of the interviews permitted me to engage in casual discussion, an integral part of intercultural interaction, with the participants. As a result of this, I was able to regularly engage in intercultural interaction with the participants via interview dialogue. The observation data sites for both the interviews and participant observation were often in

environments where the participants regularly engaged in intercultural interaction. I was therefore able to observe and comprehend the levels of the participants intercultural interactions often through being able to witness the interactions and converse with the participants over them in the course of my data collection. Although my participants only numbered seven, I was able to achieve a diverse multitude of intercultural interaction experiences, perspectives and insights from them on account of each participant being of a different nationality. I was also able to access a plentiful amount of relevant and diverse secondary information, which often cohered with the findings from my participant observations and interviews. For thesis illustrations I took photographs, which did not show any participants or identifiable people. The photographs were of areas of the campus where intercultural interaction occurs between foreign students at Massey, namely the Massey concourse and dining hall.

Significant parts of my research included my attendance at two international student events, one of which was an ‘International Food Night,’ where I observed participants intercultural interactions with fellow students from New Zealand and overseas, and how the function promoted these interactions. I also attended an orientation dinner for international students at the Turitea dining hall that was focused upon introducing foreign students new to New Zealand to their host country and campus. During the dinner I observed diverse cultural performances staged for the function, and how their foreign student audience received them.

To obtain a greater understanding of the level of foreign students intercultural interactions, I also attended two seminars at Massey that addressed international student issues. The first seminar, titled ‘Learning to be a Postgraduate Student,’ was presented by Kevin Heagney of Massey University’s College of Business. I attended this seminar because I had noted during

my research and participant interviews and observations that foreign students host campus intercultural interactions often occur during, or can be influenced by, their study experiences. The seminar addressed the importance of international postgraduate students being prepared for intense study, which is difficult for international students, who often academically struggle without assistance. It also emphasised how Massey provides a caring environment and a sense of family to its foreign students to ensure that they have the motivation and support to succeed in their courses, especially at postgraduate level. The seminar also mentioned that at undergraduate level, foreign students at Massey are helped by Massey University's International Student Support (ISS) to become used to the English language and words and terms they do not understand in classes and course material, thus ensuring that foreign students rarely encounter language problems at postgraduate level.

Another seminar that I attended was organized by the Massey University School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, presented by Franco Vaccarino and Emma Dresler-Hawke and titled 'Wanna Be My Friend? Forming Friendships Across Cultures.' Friendships are central to foreign students intercultural interactions, hence my presence at the seminar, which examined students making cross-cultural friendships, noting that six factors influence the cross-cultural friendship formations of international students. They are culture, personality, similarities between individuals, adjustment, communicative competence and foreign students contact with host nationals. The seminar noted that language is the biggest obstacle for foreign students making cross-cultural friendships.

I also consulted Bruce Graham, the International Director of the Massey University International Office, who provided me with data concerning international students at Massey University in 2009 (See Appendix One). I also emailed Terry McGrath of International

Student Ministries New Zealand (Mr McGrath also works at the Turitea campus as a Massey Chaplin), asking for information on foreign students. Mr McGrath emailed me a copy of the 2008 Deloitte report that provided me with useful recent statistical information on foreign students. I also contacted via email the Ministry of Education, asking them for international student information and they responded to my request by emailing me a copy of their 2008 joint report with Education New Zealand on the economic impact of export education in New Zealand.

Chapter Two: Sensing Cultural Barriers

How do foreign students perceive and approach cultural divides at a New Zealand university campus?

Cultural barriers are factors that prevent or inhibit relations between members of different cultures. Cultural divides on university campuses, although not severe, are significant hurdles for foreign university students intercultural interactions. Campus cultural divides often exist due to a lack of communication between foreign and local students. Foreign students also sometimes fight cultural changes presented by the host environment, refusing to incorporate them into their cultural knowledge (Paltridge and Harbon 2008:56). A foreign student may observe that students on campus are culturally stratified and therefore may be too intimidated and reluctant to cross-culturally interact with the host campus environment. Skyrme (2008:4) cites how some Chinese students comprised well over half of their class intakes, yet when socialising found themselves exposed to a local student body unused to their presence. However, foreign students can approach and overcome cultural divides through on-campus social and academic interactions. I believe researchers can develop solutions to this issue by examining how cultural barriers are perceived and approached by people within particular environments. I did this by interviewing thesis participants and observing how they bridged cultural divides via their campus activities. This reflected how most participants were adding their 'Kiwi' university experiences to their cultural knowledge.

Intercultural Campus Friendships

Intercultural campus friendships with domestic students are pivotal to foreign students intercultural interactions, yet British, Australian and American studies have revealed that

many foreign students lack local friends (Ward 2006:14). International students have the expectation that members of their host campus will initiate intercultural interaction, and frequently lack the means to comprehend cultural divides (Andrade 2008:37). This in turn affects foreign students abilities to formulate common cultural understandings allowing a society's members to adapt, communicate and interact with each other, enabling the society to function (Scupin 1992:55). Deloitte (2008:5) suggests there can be improvements to contact levels between international and domestic students in New Zealand, the former desiring more friendships and connections with the latter. Therefore, it was important for me to record the participants perceptions of cultural divides at Massey.

Hana thought that New Zealand students, who formed most of her agricultural class (agriculture being her initial study major at Massey), did not want to interact with her. But she has positive thoughts and fond memories of cross-cultural relations with overseas students during her first three years studying at Massey and living in campus accommodation. 'I met people from all different countries,' she told me. 'In hostels there are so many different peoples from overseas.' Because Hana now attends smaller classes, her 'Kiwi' classmates are more inclined to interact with her.

Patric felt that a significant cultural barrier in his host 'Kiwi' campus was a lack of cultural knowledge New Zealand students have about foreign students countries such as his one. 'I don't think New Zealanders know that much about Sweden,' he mused. Nevertheless, Patric believed that Massey is breaking down cultural barriers by encouraging foreign students to share information about their countries, cuisine and lifestyles with other people on-campus, which he thought makes foreign students feel at home.

‘Joseph’ did not perceive campus cultural barriers at Massey to be challenging, although he felt that one barrier for foreign students lay in them becoming accustomed to one another. ‘It takes time for foreign students to know each other,’ he remarked, when reminiscing about how he met international students from diverse cultures while living on campus in his first year at Massey. ‘Joseph’ believed foreign students are unique because of their cultural backgrounds, which often become cultural barriers on campus due to their different attitudes and values being introduced to and being accepted by local and other international students. ‘The things we (foreign students) value are different, the way that we socialize is different,’ he explained, adding that he also felt campus intercultural interactions between New Zealand and foreign students hinge upon people’s personalities.

Yan Yan did not perceive cultural barriers at Massey to be significant. She immersed herself into so many intercultural activities that she overcame cultural divides, regularly interacting with New Zealand students and numerous foreign students of nationalities other than her own. She told me that she thought that Massey was ‘internationalized.’ Yan Yan believed that language differences formed a significant cultural barrier for her and her international classmates, and were a common challenge for them.

‘Papakwila’ thought cultural barriers were present in the Massey campus, but felt that they could be simply overcome by foreign students widely interacting with other students from countries and cultures other than their own. ‘In many cases I only see people (at Massey) in their own groups, ethnicity,’ he explained. ‘Sometimes we need to probably open up a little bit more (rather) than sticking to our own people.’ ‘Papakwila’ was also not inclined to perceive cultural barriers as a significant problem at Massey, especially when he reflected upon his experiences of studying at ease alongside other international students in his class,

and how the international students relate to each other well via group activities in class. I asked him if he found relating to foreign students from other countries and cultures difficult: 'Well there are difficulties sometimes, where ones tend to speak English in an essence that belongs to their own vernacular (such as) the Indians or the Asians...nevertheless everything goes well,' he replied.

Liesel was also undaunted by cultural barriers at Massey, although she believed she had more experiences relating with other international students instead of New Zealand ones. Liesel related best to foreign students because there were more of them than local students in our Master's study group. Liesel felt that the majority of her regular intercultural interactions being with other foreign students was due to her 'not exposing' herself enough to meet local students.

'Phil' did not consider cultural barriers as significant obstacles to on-campus intercultural interaction at Massey, which he perceived to offer more cultural acceptance for foreign students than the university he previously attended in Britain. He enjoyed meeting numerous students from Pakistan and India. 'Phil' believed that the intercultural interaction levels between local and foreign students at Massey were 'quite open,' compared to those at the British university: 'One of the most (important) differences between (university campuses in) Britain and New Zealand,' he explained, 'is that people in New Zealand (universities) are much more approachable...My contacts with British students were quite limited...whereas here (at Massey), it is much easier (for foreign students) to get in touch with and have real relationships with local students...(there) is quite a mix of international students (at Massey).'

It also came to my attention from conversations with some participants how ‘internationals’ are often segregated from locals in Massey campus accommodation, except in some hostels like the ones Hana and ‘Papakwila’ stayed in. This results in a lack of interaction between foreign and ‘Kiwi’ students there. Yan Yan reflected upon this when she told me about her living at Massey Turitea’s Atawhai village and I asked her if there were many New Zealand students residing in her flat complex: ‘In my flat, no (New Zealand students),’ she replied. ‘In other flats we have some Kiwi students, but we (foreign students) don’t have much contact with them because we don’t share the same flats.’

Social Integration

Social integration on campus as a means of overcoming cultural barriers was taken up by most participants. They actively participated in various academic and recreational clubs with a large membership of both foreign and New Zealand students, with whom they interacted during club activities, in the process building meaningful friendships. However, cultural comprehension is not experienced equally by a society’s members. Different people learn different cultural aspects – to a certain degree culture varies among people, subgroups and regions, along with age and gender. In spite of such variation, shared cultural perceptions permit a society’s members to adapt and interact with each other and a society could not function without them (Scupin 1992:55). Such cultural sharing was evident in observations I made of participants activities. During my observations of Patric coaching handball, I noted how he was effectively teaching other overseas and local students who formed his team how to play a game that in Sweden is massively popular to the point of being an element of culture, in the way that rugby or cricket is to New Zealanders. Through coaching handball to students from cultures different to his own, Patric was promoting intercultural interaction among international students such as himself and local students.

Hana was equally assertive in facing cultural barriers. She met many students from different countries and cultures through her friends and classes. ‘The best part of knowing (other foreign students) is that we can introduce different cultures to each other, different values in many things, so that our understanding, knowledge and future interest can be widened,’ she told me.

In spite of the aforementioned segregation, some on-campus international student cultural barrier crossing is promoted via Massey University’s on-campus accommodation, albeit mainly through foreign students interacting with one another via the sharing of dwellings. For example, Yan Yan’s Atawhai flat was shared between herself and four other female students – a Pakistani, a Malaysian, a Columbian and another student from Malawi. Yan Yan felt that she and her Atawhai flatmates were all on good speaking terms, and did not feel any cultural difference living together. There was considerable cultural sharing between the flatmates. I observed how Yan Yan spoke to her Malawian flatmate about her ethnic Chinese dinner that she had shared with me, sharing leftovers with her fellow resident. I then shared some New Zealand confectionary with both of them, which led to a discussion about New Zealand food between the three of us and a conversation about African culture with the Malawian flatmate. Such ‘internationalization’ occurring in campus accommodation is a factor in the participants overcoming on-campus cultural barriers through them getting to know each other via casual and social cultural exchanges.

Yan Yan was also not overwhelmed by cultural barriers during her on-campus intercultural interactions, and her assertiveness towards overcoming cultural barriers was evident in our conversations: ‘I think I have to be exposed more to the Kiwi culture,’ she explained. ‘In order to achieve this, I think I need to have more contact with the Kiwi students, with the

locals. So I just try to be more actively involved in the activities of the local students.’ One such example of Yan Yan’s engagement with local students was the ‘International Food Night’ that ‘Phil’ and I also attended. The meeting’s purpose was to help promote understanding and cooperation between international and local Christian students at Massey. Yan Yan actively interacted with local students hosting the event, conversed with them about New Zealand culture, and also enjoyed sampling New Zealand food during the dinner. Yan Yan also made frequent contact with other international students, from the Pacific Islands, India and Europe in her class. She also met them for a self-study group, where they often shared intercultural discussions together.

‘Papakwila’ was also un-intimidated by cultural barriers at Massey and had assertively approached them through engaging fellow foreign students in intercultural interactions, such as when he shared a campus hostel with African, Pacific Islander and New Zealand, mostly Maori, students. I asked ‘Papakwila’ what he thought of meeting other international students and Maori students. ‘Ah, it was awesome,’ he replied, ‘(the other hostel students) were friendly, there were many instances where we cooked, when we ate together. Our relationship was quite awesome, we also supported each other. I think we interacted very well in terms of culture because many of these international students were from all over the continents of this world, so it gives us a scope, a picture of so many diverse cultures that we are sharing at the same time. Whatever the culture, whatever the customs, traditions, some of those you can share.’

‘Papakwila’ and I enjoyed exchanging information about our cultures during my interviews and observation sessions of him. Intercultural interactions like this enable foreign students to get local students to know them and their cultures and *vice versa*, overcoming cultural barriers

through socialising. For example, I asked 'Papakwila' about the cultural significance to PNG of the Goroka Mudmen, tribesmen I had studied in a social anthropology paper, whose ceremonial mud masks are culturally unique to PNG, which he told me about. He also explained to me the significance of the *Kumul*, the Bird of Paradise, as PNG's National Bird. I reciprocated his cultural information by telling him about the cultural significance of 'Kiwiana,' such as the Silver Fern and Captain's James Cook's ship *The Endeavour* to New Zealanders.

'Phil' approached cultural barriers on campus through actively engaging with local and international fellow students. For example, when 'Phil' attended the Massey Surf Club, which he was the president of, he participated in regular intercultural interaction during activity sharing between foreign and local students members, who exchanged information about each other's cultures during conversations at meetings and surf trips.

Liezel's confidence towards crossing cultural barriers was apparent in her enthusiastic involvement in our Master's study group. I observed how she actively displayed her culture to the foreign students in our group, often making Filipino food that she shared with us after our meetings. She enjoyed talking about the food and introducing it to staff and fellow students from New Zealand and overseas. I observed how one such talk Liezel had with an Indian lecturer became a wider discussion on overseas food. She enjoyed sharing information with me about the Philippines and New Zealand. For example she explained to me elements of her country's culture such as the significance of the eagle as the Filipino national bird, and I told her about the significance of the Kiwi to New Zealand's culture and as the New Zealand national bird.

'Joseph' confidently crossed cultural barriers during academic activities, interacting with international and local staff and students during our Master's Group sessions and social gatherings after the meetings. During one session he showed a clear understanding of what the lecturer was explaining to him in a group meeting and an adjustment to the 'Kiwi' academic culture. He was un-intimidated by the foreign environment of the class, largely understanding of the language of his host nation and campus, and actively engaged with New Zealander and foreigner alike. At a morning tea I observed his confidence in intercultural interaction with other international students and local lecturers, while socializing and conversing with them.

Adjusting to the English-Speaking Environment

In spite of a widespread perception that foreign students have difficulty adjusting to the English-speaking environment of a New Zealand campus, as implied in works on international students such as those by Liang (1990), Ryan (2005) Andrade (2008) and Skyrme (2008), my research participants largely felt that the language barrier was not a significant intercultural interaction obstacle on the Massey campus. For example, Liezel did not recall having a major problem adjusting to the English language in New Zealand, apart from the New Zealand accent. Indeed, she was so at ease with the local language, she was confident enough to study a regional topic for her Masters project at Massey. Both Yan Yan and Hana experienced language difficulties while on campus at Massey, but have made efforts to understand English and New Zealand terms and phrases through actively associating with New Zealanders and English-speaking international students, often via clubs, study groups and organizations. Other English-speaking participants noticed vernacular difficulties, but did not encounter any communication problems at Massey. Most participants perceived learning language differences on the Massey campus as a part of the intercultural element of their New Zealand university experience.

Host Campuses Academic Cultures

Host campuses academic cultures have also been perceived as significant cultural barriers problematic towards foreign students. Many foreign students cultures advocate disciplined respect towards lecturers, notably those of Asian countries such as China, where lecturers are perceived to be authoritative, almost parental, figures demanding respect and obedience and are therefore not to be interrupted during lectures by questions from the students (Skyrme 2008:44). Such cultures also demand formality of lecturers, who often wear suits and ties during classes, and are often addressed as ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’ by the students. This contrasts sharply with the academic culture of a New Zealand university such as Massey. Participants from such rigid academic cultures, notably ‘Joseph,’ Yan Yan and Hana, therefore found that the comparatively relaxed academic culture of Massey, where students frequently asked lecturers questions during classes, often addressing them by their first names, and where the lecturers dressed casually, took some time to become accustomed to. However, they were now used to their host university’s academic culture and had begun to appreciate it’s relative freedoms, treating exposure to these as part of their New Zealand university experience.

Another cultural barrier faced by foreign students in New Zealand universities is the lack of understanding that they have with ‘Kiwi’ students and the knowledge called on by lecturers during their courses (Skyrme 2008:38). Deloitte (2008:59) states that only 47 percent of foreign students surveyed in their report felt ‘included’ in their classes, while only 33 percent of foreign students in the survey felt that opportunities exist for other students to learn about their cultures in class, which implies that New Zealand educators may be neglecting to internationalize their courses. Chinese participants felt the least culturally included, while Korean students largely felt that their classmates were un-accepting of cultural differences,

did not believe that students from different cultural groups cooperated well during classes, and felt academically alienated and that their host educational institutions did not respect cultural diversity (Deloitte 2008:64). Such a lack of understanding was experienced by Hana when she found that local students at Massey were reluctant to interact with her. What is needed in classrooms shared by both foreign and local students in New Zealand universities are what Skyrme (2008:38) calls ‘socioacademic relations,’ which are relationships that both foreign and international students can build through academic interactions and involve classroom intercultural interaction.

‘Socioacademic Relations’

‘Socioacademic relations’ have been the most effective way that participants have broken down campus cultural barriers. For example, a major on-campus cultural barrier is the reluctance or inability of some foreign students to participate in intercultural interactions due to the commitment many of them place upon tertiary studies, hindering opportunities to make cross-cultural friendships (Beaver and Tuck 1998:175). Participants study commitments often led to them postponing interviews and observation sessions with me, the same way that their campus intercultural interactions were hindered. However, this cultural barrier has been approached successfully by ‘Phil,’ ‘Joseph’ and Liezel via their participation in ‘socioacademic relations,’ merging intercultural interaction with academic commitments via participation with other ‘internationals’ and local students in academic study groups, such as a Master’s Group these participants and myself were active members of. Those participants could therefore compensate for any lack of social or class-room intercultural interaction through extra-curricular meetings with other, culturally diverse students and staff, which also assisted their adjustment to the New Zealand academic environment. During our Master’s Group meetings, in between learning skills to facilitate our postgraduate studies, these three

participants and I performed intercultural interaction through learning facts about each other's countries and cultures through 'socioacademic relations' as we conversed during breaks during and after group lectures.

An aspect of Massey where cultural barriers were very apparent was campus accommodation. I observed and recorded accounts of the segregation of foreign and domestic students in the Turitea campus flats, which Yan Yan and Patric lived in. The accommodation separation of overseas and local students often ensures a lack of regular contact with each other. The participants living on campus cross-culturally interacted with international neighbours and flatmates as a substitute to local-international student intercultural interaction. I believe such division hinders potential for widespread on-campus intercultural interaction between foreign and New Zealand students in general. Accommodation segregation has a continuing negative effect of perpetuating cultural barriers between foreign and domestic students and preventing them interacting with each other.

Social integration is a key approach towards cultural barriers that foreign students can make while on-campus in New Zealand. On-campus indications of social integration include the number of host friends foreign students make, and the number of university clubs and organizations they participate in that involve New Zealanders (Lewthwaite 1996:170). However, as is shown by Hana's experience of hostel living, where she found New Zealand students inconsiderate (she described them as 'noisy') and disinterested towards her presence, some foreign students may find that sharing hostel space with international students in mixed student accommodation still does not promote major intercultural interactions between themselves and New Zealanders, because many reported 'Kiwi' hostel students to be immature and reluctant to appreciate and befriend foreign students. A solution to such apathy

in the hostels is for foreign students to regularly consult the residential advisor (RA) of the campus residential community that they inhabit for advice on performing intercultural interactions on their host campus (Lewthwaite 1996:176). Failing that, foreign students can consult campus facilities catering for their needs and concerns, such as the Massey University International Student Office (ISO) for such advice. Yan Yan found the ISO useful for establishing cross-cultural relations and understandings at Massey.

Beaver and Tuck (1998:171) note how Asian students participating in their study were more concerned about making on-campus friends than *Pakeha* (New Zealand European) and Pacific Island student participants. Beaver and Tuck (1998:176) cited significant differences amongst ethnic groups in their importance rankings of student cultural mixes within classes, the mixture of classroom language comprehension, the cultural mixture of students in classroom groups and the presentation of moments for social interaction. This is reflected in my research participants varying perceptions of intercultural interactions as a means of overcoming class cultural barriers: Some participants found class-time intercultural interaction useful but not particularly important, especially if intercultural interaction can be achieved via concourse socialising or involvement in clubs or organizations. To other participants, class-time intercultural interaction is imperative and useful towards adjustment to the environment of the host New Zealand campus.

Conclusion

The participants perspectives on the cultural barriers at the Massey campus varied. Some took to the social environment at Massey well, barely noticing any cultural division. Those who noticed cultural barriers on the Massey campus felt they were prominent between foreign and domestic students, because New Zealand students were sometimes reluctant to participate in

intercultural interaction with their overseas colleagues. Such a lack of interaction may result from some New Zealand students introverted attitudes or negative perceptions of overseas students. Beaver and Tuck (1998:177) note that Pakeha students perceived culturally diverse classes and groups as unimportant and being in a class with students with a level of English comparable to their own instead as more ideal, and that the attitudes of such Pakeha students towards class-time intercultural interaction may contain elements of self-interest and independence along with elements of ethnic prejudice.

My research participants found the lack of cultural inclusiveness on their host campus noticeable in both academic and social situations. The main cultural barrier they cited was the reluctance of New Zealand students to get to know, converse with and respect them. However, my participants have all seen eye to eye with other international students during studies and socialising, relating well to one another and finding common ground during intercultural interaction. Also significant was the accommodation separation between foreign and domestic students some participants noticed in campus residential areas, although overall the participants felt that the Massey Turitea campus is generally well-integrated. The participants approached cultural barriers at Massey mainly through two mediums: The first is social intercultural interaction occurring in varying forms. The second is academic intercultural interaction. However, some participants also sought to cross campus cultural barriers through obtaining information about the culture of their host country and campus from university authority figures such as RAs and facilities such as the Massey ISO. Whatever the form of the medium for foreign students approaching cultural barriers, it is apparent that the social and academic environments of a host campus, along with its facilities, are significant factors and must be open to and accepting of foreign students ambitions and concerns.

Chapter Three: Seeking Interactions

At a New Zealand university, do foreign students prefer to seek on-campus intercultural interactions with other foreign students, New Zealand students, or both? Why?

The Importance of Seeking On-Campus Intercultural Interactions

Foreign students in their host environment find themselves completely uprooted from the culture they have been raised in and placed into an environment with a new culture (Meyer 2003:5). It is important to ascertain the extent and nature of their intercultural interactions in their host campus to learn how they adapt to it. Upon arrival at a host university, a foreign student seeks to establish intercultural interactions with both local and overseas fellow students there, as a key part of adjustment to the new environment. This intercultural interaction entails learning about different people and different countries, which is perceived by foreign students as central towards their ‘overseas experience’ during their time at a host university. Many foreign students aim to cross-culturally engage with the students of their host universities as a means of adjustment, acquiring cultural knowledge, establishing coherent relations with the host university’s students, and broadening their knowledge to educate themselves. Seeking intercultural interaction rests upon the fact that individual foreign students choose how to respond to environmental and situational demands that are presented by their host environment differently (Lewthwaite 1996:171). Whether or not foreign students seek campus intercultural interaction with foreign or domestic students rests upon the perspectives they have towards their host university’s culture and its people. Lewthwaite (1996:176) notes how some international students did not feel at ease associating with ‘Kiwis,’ or embracing New Zealand lifestyles, often preferring instead to spend their campus social lives within university clubs and societies associated with their own cultures.

Through interviewing and observing my research participants, I obtained insights into the nature of their intercultural interactions, ascertaining in the process if the participants sought on-campus intercultural interaction with foreign students, domestic students, or both. This was important because it is apparent that Massey's foreign students either intentionally or through circumstance regularly interact with one another in various campus situations, such as during classes, participation in clubs, playing sports, living in campus accommodation and socializing. As shown by the findings of Lewthwaite (1996), Nathan (2005), Deloitte (2008) and Skyrme (2008), foreign students' perceptions of their host campus environment are influenced by their abilities to seek intercultural interactions with local students on their host campus, and the hospitality and cultural openness of the local students towards international students is pivotal to the latter's confidence in embracing the culture of the host campus.

The Means of Participants' Campus Intercultural Interaction Seeking

Hana sought intercultural interaction with both international and local students at Massey. She regularly enjoyed the company and culture of many Malaysian students there, after befriending a Malaysian student in her first year while residing in Massey campus accommodation. She had also sought interactions with 'Kiwi' students, but found it difficult to find New Zealanders at Massey who wished to know her. That said, Hana was successful in seeking the company of a small number of New Zealanders fluent in Japanese, and found that some of the New Zealanders in her horticultural science classes were willing to speak to her and displayed an interest in her Japanese origin. Interestingly, Hana rarely associated with groups of Japanese students at Massey, preferring instead to socially engage with local scholars or students from other nationalities to expand her cultural knowledge and experiences, the primary reasons that she engaged in intercultural interactions. This was

reminiscent of findings made by Lewthwaite (1996/1997:177), where two of his international student participants, who were also Japanese, avoided contact with fellow nationals at their host campus for similar reasons.

Patric also sought intercultural interactions with both New Zealand and international students, such as Americans. 'In first year psychology (classes) there are lots of different internationals with New Zealand students,' he told me. 'But the more higher up you go, the greater the percentage of local New Zealand students...But I socialise with anyone from any country. Before I came to New Zealand, I didn't have much positive things to say about the U.S...but now that I've started personally meeting American (student) people (at Massey), especially talking to them and gaining knowledge...you gain an understanding of their country's issues and accept it more.'

Living on-campus also gave Patric the opportunity to meet and exchange thoughts with students from not only America, but Europe and Asia as well, for his accommodation was largely inhabited by international students. He also sought on-campus intercultural interaction via recreation, particularly through introducing fellow students to his favourite sport of handball at the Massey Recreation Centre. I told Patric that handball is largely unknown in New Zealand and asked him if many New Zealand students at Massey have been interested in the sport. 'The first couple of years, no. It was mainly international students (interested in handball)...This year, more New Zealanders have come along,' he replied. Thus Patric sought intercultural interaction with both foreign and domestic students via his promoting of a team sport popular in Sweden. Patric engaged in intercultural interaction with fellow international and domestic students because he realized that it was pivotal towards him actively socializing on campus, particularly when in the company of his foreign student flatmates. 'The social

interactions with the people you live with are quite important,' he told me, 'and if you don't share much cultures or values, it has a negative impact on socialization.'

Liesel mainly sought on-campus intercultural interactions at Massey via her international student friends due to common experiences adjusting to the host campus. 'We (foreign students) can probably relate (to each other, over the) things we miss, the steep learning curve, the adjustment period, the food,' she explained. Liesel was committed to studying extramurally, the result being that the only regular contact that she had with 'Kiwi' students was during block courses and when participating in study groups, and the interaction she had with them in those situations was usually more scholarly than cultural. Most of Liesel's intercultural interactions occurred during her socializing with her fellow academics, and consisted of her learning new customs and cuisine, and sharing her Filipino food during functions after our Master's Group study. It was apparent that the main motivation for her intercultural interaction was to get to know her fellow students, both internationals and the very few 'locals' such as myself she knew, through learning about their cultures and in turn teaching them about her own culture while socializing.

While living in on-campus accommodation, Yan Yan actively sought intercultural interactions with fellow foreign students during community activities such as pot-luck dinners. She appreciated how the Massey environment is 'internationalized.' While Yan Yan attended cultural exhibitions on the Massey concourse and learned from them, she was often occupied with study and unable to participate in intercultural interaction with other foreign students on the concourse or in class. However, she enjoyed cultural communication with her overseas flatmates at her campus flat, especially during dinner. Yan Yan suggested New Zealand students are separated from foreign students in the campus accommodation, and often found

intercultural interaction with 'Kiwi' students problematic on account of language difficulties. Nevertheless, Yan Yan actively sought contact with New Zealand students as part of her New Zealand experience of getting to know 'Kiwis' and learning about their culture. Overall, she sought intercultural interaction as a means of socializing, as culture was often central to the lifestyles and values of the people that she associated with at Massey, and was often entailed in her understanding of, and relationships with, them.

I observed 'Phil' socialize with students at the International Food Night, where he was very engaging with both local student and overseas student friends of mine who I introduced him to. Phil conversed actively with my friends at the International Food Night we attended, enquiring and sharing information with them about their countries and his country. He also appreciated intercultural interaction with New Zealand students, agreeing with many of their environmental attitudes, and conversing with 'Kiwis' who were interested in overseas perceptions of New Zealand. 'Phil' pursued intercultural interaction with both foreign and domestic students because he appreciated cultural diversity, which he found hard to experience in the culturally stratified British university that he previously attended. He enjoyed meeting international students from different cultures and learning about where they came from, which he treated as part of an overseas experience, which is also why he actively experienced and observed elements of New Zealand culture at Massey, particularly Maori culture.

'Papakwila' sought intercultural interactions with both foreign and local students while at Massey. He recalled his associations with Maori, Pacific Islander and African students when he occupied campus accommodation, and how they supported each other's adjustment to Massey there. He also enjoyed socializing with other New Zealand students like myself,

conversing with them about New Zealand and PNG culture during library study or campus functions. In such exchanges between 'Papakwila' and myself, I told him facts about New Zealand culture that he did not know, such as about early European arrival in New Zealand, and he reciprocated by telling me about aspects of PNG culture that I was unaware of, such as PNG's coffee drinking. Conversations such as those were in effect the sharing of cultures, which broadened the knowledge of their participants. 'Papakwila' also liked meeting fellow Pacific Island nation students at Massey for shared cultural exchanges via involvement with 'Pasifika' the Massey University Pacific students association. He enjoyed participating in many of their cultural events. 'Papakwila' sought intercultural interaction with both foreign and domestic students because he viewed the sharing of culture as not only an experience of overseas study, but also as a means of getting to know and understand culturally diverse people and establish meaningful relationships with them.

'Joseph' engaged in intercultural interaction on the Massey campus with both foreign and local students, especially during study group meetings such as those for our Master's Group. Our meetings were held and organized as classes of Master's students, and 'Joseph' would broaden his cultural understandings through communication with other, mostly overseas, students, and myself. This cohered with Skyrme (2008:220) noting that classroom interaction provides an opportunity for mutual interest and learning. In the classes, 'Joseph' regularly conversed with other students, telling me that one tends to learn things about other people in such environments and adding that he enjoyed learning to appreciate diversity from meeting students of different nationalities on campus. 'We (foreign students) are different people, because of our cultural backgrounds. The things we value are different, the way we socialize is different,' he said. 'Joseph' enjoyed meeting New Zealanders at Massey, although his meeting of 'Kiwi' students was often restricted by his extramural studies, so he did not

interact with Resource Development students from New Zealand as much as he did with international students who were studying his discipline. That said, he still found time to seek and mingle with international and local students at Massey via academic circles to learn about their cultures, which were central to the development of his relationships with his fellow students and lecturers, in turn assisting his adjustment to the Massey campus.

Why Participants Sought On-Campus Intercultural Interactions

Inter-student interaction is pivotal to internationalization, and therefore intercultural interaction. However, individuals involved in this interaction must be motivated to succeed in it (Leask 2007). All of the thesis participants sought intercultural interaction with the motivation to learn from other cultures and to teach fellow students about their own. When seeking interaction with New Zealand students in particular, participants aimed to learn about their host country and its people via intercultural exchanges. Developing one's intercultural sensitivity is incremental, phenomenological and depends upon the actions of the individual (Klak and Martin 2003:463). All of the participants displayed a strong initiative to participate in regular interaction with both other foreign and local students in social situations, often to casually socialize with and get to know fellow students, or to seek help in understanding terms or expressions that were new to them in academic scenarios.

It is clear that a reluctance of foreign students like the participants to engage in intercultural interaction with other foreign students and local students would have widespread negative consequences for their overall adjustment to the host campus environment. Self-isolation would become widespread, and would in turn lead to foreign students experiencing little productive communication with local students and fellow internationals. More foreign students would tend to socialize mostly with people from their own countries and cultures, as

described by Lewthwaite (1996/1997), unable or preferring not to engage with or take in the experiences of the host environment and the people within it. Intercultural interaction is therefore a valuable tool that foreign students can use to relate to each other and their New Zealand peers, while also gaining a foothold on the host campus environment and the host country in general.

I found that the participants levels and nature of their intercultural interactions rested upon their abilities to seek contact and interaction with both fellow foreign students and domestic students while on campus. While all of the participants were willing and eager to cross-culturally interact on campus, their abilities to do so were often compromised by their academic commitments, as in the cases of Liezel and 'Joseph,' who on the other hand were able to cross-culturally interact with fellow foreign students, although that was partly because of the considerable presence of foreign students in both their study and religious groups. Indeed, some participants involvement with various groups, clubs and organizations was their principle means of achieving intercultural interaction at Massey, although the form and nature of the associations that they were members of (in other words, the purpose of groups, clubs and organizations, their appeal to both foreign and domestic students and the degree of their participation in them) often dictated the extent to which they interacted with fellow internationals and local students in the associations.

The social and academic cultures of the Massey University campus are open enough to enable foreign students to seek intercultural interaction there. However, it is evident that to a certain extent there is a misbalance, as some participants sought intercultural interaction with fellow foreign students more than they did with their domestic peers. Interactions such as those may not be intrinsically due to prejudice or aloofness on the part of local students toward their

overseas peers, but due to academic circumstances in which a foreign student may be unable to regularly seek intercultural interaction socially due to academic priorities. When a foreign student in such a situation is able to perform intercultural interaction, it may only be with fellow international scholars due to the intake of the classes or study groups that he or she participates in. There is no easy solution to this issue, but I believe that it could be possible for foreign students in such scenarios, as part of the 'socio-academic relations' discussed in the previous chapter, to be introduced to elements of New Zealand customs and culture during study period by lecturers and other faculty, to compensate for any inability to interact with New Zealanders. For example, this could be done through lecturers simply incorporating New Zealand perspectives on class topics in a way comprehensible and informative to foreign students.

My research participants levels of seeking intercultural interactions fluctuated between associations with foreign and local students at Massey University. Foreign students pursuing intercultural interactions with the domestic students of their host campus may in some cases seek but not find them, due to the lack of interaction with locals discussed in the previous chapter. This can be a major source of frustration for some international students (Deloitte 2008), for whom intercultural interactions are pivotal to their being at ease with their host campus, especially if they use them to alleviate culture shock. Forms of on-campus intercultural interaction were diverse and occurred in numerous everyday social and academic scenarios on the campus, both intentionally and inadvertently through cultural exchanges that reflected how what Louie (2005:24) refers to as 'meta-cultural awareness' is created by an individual understanding one's own culture in relation to another one.

Cultural Learning

Many foreign students come from rapidly changing cultures, and those who succeed in adjusting to the host environment do so by embracing new cultures (Louie 2005:23). Lewthwaite (1996/1997) reported that his participants perceived intercultural interactions as a learning process. This is reflective of how my research participants sought intercultural interactions with both other international students, to learn about the cultures of people from other nationalities, and New Zealand students and university faculty members, to experience and obtain an understanding of, and adjust to, the host social and academic cultures. Some participants obtained greater English speaking proficiency through seeking and establishing regular intercultural interaction with New Zealanders, the English-language abilities they obtained from this helping them improve their career prospects in international work. Other participants realised the importance of communication between themselves and local students in order to perform well academically, particularly Yan Yan, Hana and 'Joseph.' Otherwise, according to Skyrme (2008:38), divides between the understanding that the participants shared with the local students and lecturers on a host campus could have left them without a sufficient cultural background to understand local terms and issues.

'The Big O.E'

Most importantly, what also has to be considered in regard to the issue of overseas students seeking intercultural interaction on a host New Zealand campus is that they often do so as a part of the experience of being a foreign student in a foreign environment, what is essentially an 'overseas experience' or 'the big O.E,' as 'Kiwis' often refer to it as. For most of the participants, seeking intercultural interaction was not merely an academic or social adjustment issue, but a way of experiencing culture in their host nation for the sake of broadening their knowledge and experiences, in the same way that tourists or so-called 'backpackers' seek to

experience culture in the countries that they travel through. Because of this, I believe foreign students should not merely be regarded as scholars from overseas, but also as tourists in their own right. They seek intercultural interaction with other foreign students from various nationalities to obtain culturally diverse insights and perspectives for the purpose of broadening their knowledge and experiences. Some participants such as Yan Yan considered this imperative for their ambitions to work outside their home countries upon completing their tertiary studies. They also seek intercultural interaction with New Zealand students to experience the culture of their host country, treating that as part of their overseas experience in New Zealand and of becoming acclimatised to their host social and academic environments in order to succeed in their studies.

International students place considerable importance on intercultural learning in the classroom, a significant factor in their seeking intercultural interactions with other students, especially in their classes (Deloitte 2008:4). Foreign students also seek help from any New Zealanders they befriend (Deloitte 2008:81) on account of their local knowledge of the host environment, which is a significant reason for them to seek on-campus intercultural interaction with New Zealanders. Participants did not prefer to seek intercultural interactions solely with either other overseas or local students on campus, seeking instead interactions with both categories of students. Often, however, the participants found themselves interacting more with fellow international students than 'Kiwi' ones due to circumstances, such as campus accommodation and study habits, rather than preference. Nevertheless, when free from constraints the participants interacted with both foreign and domestic students on campus, or were willing to do so. This suggests that foreign students at New Zealand universities often pursue intercultural interactions through exposure to both international and local cultures, in order to adjust to the host campus environment while simultaneously broadening their cultural

knowledge, both of which contribute significantly and beneficially to their university study as an overseas experience.

Conclusion

In sum, my research findings suggest that foreign students actively seek contact with both other foreign and domestic students in order to broaden their understandings and perspectives of the cultures of other countries, and those of their host nation, in this case New Zealand, in order to incorporate a broad cultural knowledge or 'meta-cultural awareness' into their life experiences and skills. For foreign students such as the thesis participants, studying outside their home country is not merely a scholarly exercise, it is 'the big O.E' as well. However, as in the cases of some of the participants, due to academic or social circumstances some foreign students contact with fellow internationals and New Zealanders on campus can be disproportionate or variable. I therefore argue that New Zealand universities such as Massey should strive to ensure that foreign students get the chance to associate with both fellow internationals and domestic students in equal measures, thereby guaranteeing that they will get the best of both foreign and local student worlds in terms of intercultural interaction.

Chapter Four: Common Patterns

Do foreign students share common patterns of intercultural interaction at a New Zealand university campus?

Membership in multiple communities, such as those of universities, allow individuals to enact varying roles and satisfy numerous needs (Skyrme 2008:26), which often occur in common situations on campus settings. At Massey University, the roles that were performed by my research participants included leadership in multinational, culturally diverse groups on campus, while the needs met at the campus entailed individual students experiencing both New Zealand and overseas culture. This broadened their experiences of cooperating with other foreigners and New Zealanders, through their participation in numerous extracurricular situations and associations that constituted common intercultural interaction patterns. Deloitte (2008:5) suggests that most foreign students are relatively well integrated into New Zealand life. This was evident in the participants campus intercultural interaction patterns, which were all based on cultural exchange opportunities in various social settings.

Many foreign students away from home for the first time become concerned about making new friends and establishing effective interpersonal relationships in a host environment (Meyer 2003:4), and use intercultural interactions to establish these connections at their host campus. To do so however, foreign students must learn how to relate to people who are different from themselves in instances such as dealing with faculty, administrators and domestic students, by forming interpersonal relationships and developing social support networks. This can be achieved via comprehensive student orientation programs (Meyer 2003:5). International students can also relate to different people through seeking intercultural

interaction by themselves, via participation in clubs and organizations, on-campus socializing, or in socio-academic circles when cooperating with fellow students from New Zealand and overseas. The latter medium is evident in the findings made by Deloitte (2008:59) noting how numerous students felt ‘included’ in their classes.

Socio-Academic Circles

A common socio-academic situation that some participants engaged in was participation in study groups, either during classes or as an extra-curricular activity, which often presented them with opportunities for intercultural interaction. Yan Yan and Hana reported that academic coherence with international and domestic classmates during lectures and study groups occasionally enabled them to cross-culturally interact in casual conversations concerning their cultures and those of fellow students. Through participation in our Master’s Group meetings, both Liezel and ‘Joseph’ were also able to cross-culturally converse with foreign and local students, as well as staff members, during breaks in the meetings or morning tea or lunch functions that occasionally followed them.

Participation in Religious Organizations and Functions

Religious associations were significant focal points for some participants intercultural interactions, and often created a pattern of participants exchanging cultural knowledge of, and with, each other while participating in religious observance. Hana sought on-campus intercultural interaction via association with, and participation in events involving members of, Massey University’s Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF), which enabled her to socialize with, and in the process learn about the cultures of, other foreign students. For example, this style of intercultural interaction occurred at the aforementioned International Food Night for Christian students, where Hana and her friends enjoyed wearing and learning about each

other's traditional Asian clothing, and experiencing diverse ethnic foods, while listening to talks concerning international Christian theological perspectives. During the event, attendees were encouraged to speak to fellow students seated by them and learn about each other's cultures, and their cultural experiences of New Zealand. For example, Phil enjoyed interacting with a Japanese student who I introduced him to at the meeting, observing how the Japanese student wore traditional Japanese festival clothing and a headband, learning from the Japanese student about the significance of such attire to Japanese culture, and talking about their adjustment to New Zealand living.

Liesel also associated and cross-culturally interacted with students from other countries on campus via meetings at another religious organization, one for Seventh Day Adventists. There she enjoyed regularly meeting Massey students from different countries who shared her Seventh Day Adventist faith, recalling how amazed she was to learn that 'Joseph,' a Zambian, was a Seventh Day Adventist too. Students she associated with at her Seventh Day Adventist Massey group were from culturally diverse nationalities, such as Pakistan, Kenya, New Zealand and PNG. 'It was different to be with a mix of people from around the globe,' Liesel told me. I agreed, telling her how another Massey Christian group I am involved in also often saw students from diverse cultures, such as those of New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Australia, unite under their shared faith. Hana and Yan Yan also enjoyed participating in Christian campus events, where they learned about the cultures of New Zealand and overseas students while observing Christianity, such as during the International Food Night where they learned about the food, dress and customs of different cultures.

Recreation on Campus

Recreation was another common intercultural interaction pattern. It was common for some participants to meet and exchange cultural perspectives with both New Zealanders and fellow internationals while organizing and playing sport at Massey. Phil and Patric were actively involved in sports clubs, Phil being the president of the Massey Surf Club, and Patric the president of the University's Handball club. Phil viewed his presidency of the Surf Club as being 'really rewarding' and reflective of the mixed student community at Massey. He thought that many international students in the club, who were mostly European or North American, participated in it as part of their 'Kiwi experience.' 'When we (Surf Club members) do trips together, there is a lot of intercultural interaction between students of different countries,' Phil said. He added that he believed intercultural interaction was a by-product of the diversity of the Surf Club's membership. He also learnt about the significance of Sir Edmund Hillary to New Zealand's popular culture while participating in the Massey Alpine Club.

Through handball coaching, Patric demonstrated sport's ability as a unifier across people of different cultures. During handball practice, I observed how he enjoyed wearing his yellow Swedish National Football Team shirt – Patric told me that soccer is the most popular sport in Sweden. When I observed Patric, he was attentive towards two new Asian team members - one of whom was evidently having problems adjusting to the host campus environment - who were unfamiliar with the game and its rules in their own cultures. Patric advised them how to play handball properly. In reflection of handball being popular in European countries, the team's goalkeeper was German. International and New Zealand team members interacted coherently during the practice session, getting to know one another and helping an injured player. Patric performed intercultural interaction through a group activity, namely team sport,

through cooperation with both New Zealand and international students. Hana also became interested in campus recreation as a means of cultural experience at Massey by signing up to an Indian music club, after becoming close friends with an Indian person. However, Hana found that she did not have the time to attend the club's meetings because of other commitments.

Participation in Cultural Exhibitions (or 'Swinging Spinach')

A popular form of campus intercultural interaction for foreign students that I observed during my research were cultural exhibitions, particularly those which were established by the university's student associations or endorsed by the university to promote a particular region, faith, nationality or culture to the greater student body. Through exposing students to different cultures, languages, customs, religions, heritages, histories, and cuisines, cultural events such as these, whether focusing on a particular foreign cultural or international in scope, help expand foreign students cultural knowledge and awareness when they are at university.

Klak and Martin (2003:445 and 463) note that large-scale events emphasising cultural diversity are a way that universities are promoting intercultural sensitivity among students and also indicate that foreign students are regularly attracted to such international cultural events on account of the emphasis that they place upon, and their promotion of, diverse and accessible cultural experiences. Therefore, attending cultural exhibitions has become a common form of intercultural interaction for foreign students like my research participants. For example, Yan Yan told me about her interest in attending an Islamic Day function at Massey with students who were mostly from countries with significant Islamic populations, such as Malaysia. Significant parts of the function were displays relating to Islamic culture, which Yan Yan later told me was also promoted in a film screened during the exhibition.

The Christian International Food night, which Yan Yan also attended along with 'Phil' and Hana, was another example of foreign students participating in cultural exhibitions. During the food night, attended in equal measure by both overseas and local Christian students, guests were invited to learn about the unity of Overseas Christians at Massey, while sampling diverse meals from Asia, Africa and New Zealand. They were also encouraged to meet one another prior to our dinner, and learn about each other's cultures. 'Phil,' who told me that he had experienced intercultural functions similar to the international food night when he was studying in England, was enthusiastic towards participating in this activity. We both spoke to some students from Africa and Asia. 'Phil' interacted well with those foreign students, enquiring about where they were from, how their studies were progressing, and how long they had been studying in New Zealand. I also engaged in intercultural interaction with 'Phil' and his girlfriend, who was Spanish, asking them and learning about their cultural experiences in their home countries and at universities in other countries that they had studied at. An intercultural mindset, such as that of a researcher like myself, involves a comparison of cultural contrasts (Turner and Robson 2008:67), especially when engaging with participants during an event like the food night.

Klak and Martin (2003) assessed the effect that a Miami university Latin American Celebration had on multicultural participants. Although they noted that the celebration did encourage and promote intercultural interaction, they also noted that some international or ethnic students who attended the exhibition were not fully aware of its purpose or significance due to language difficulties. This was also the case at the International Food Night. Although 'Phil,' who was very proficient in English as he was in German, could comprehend the full intent of the meeting, other foreign students could not, especially when listening to

Christianity-themed lectures spoken in English, which many could not understand. Furthermore, some foreign students visibly preferred to socialize with students from their own countries or ethnicities during the meeting, perhaps due to language difficulties and cultural familiarity. As Turner and Robson (2008:95) note, the mere presence of international students does not establish intercultural friendships.

Although I was casually dressed, many of the New Zealand Christian students who attended and helped organize the International Food Night wore 'international' clothing, such as Asian costumes. However, only a small group of internationals (such as Hana, who, as an OCF member, also assisted in running the function) wore ethnic attire. Overall, I felt that this was somewhat patronizing to the foreign students. I also found it concerning that a principle purpose of the meeting seemed to be promoting an idea that in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, people from all nations would become Christian, which would not appeal to the entire foreign student population at Massey, especially those of non-Christian faiths and secular individuals like Patric. This would not have been an issue from my perspective, except for the fact that some students, like 'Phil,' did not appear to be fully aware of the religious element of the meeting when they came to it. To put it bluntly, and although bearing in mind that the function in question was primarily a Christian student event, there was a subtle religious bias evident at the International Food Night. I wondered afterwards if many of the Christian foreign students that 'Phil' and I interacted with would be capable of forming meaningful and productive intercultural interactions with local and overseas students of non-Christian faiths.

Some of the other activities performed at the International Food Night which entailed intercultural interaction included a quiz on New Zealand topics, a fun, simple but effective means of helping the international students present gain cultural knowledge of their host

country via trivia concerning history and life in New Zealand. The attendees also heard religious songs sung in a Malaysian language by a Christian Malaysian group. One such song that the group performed, an event organizer told me, was about people being united and strong, and was titled, '*Kampung, Kampung*' (sic), which translates in English to 'Swinging Spinach!'²

Cultural Performances

The Malaysian singing at the International Food Night also showed how some foreign students are often drawn to campus cultural performances, especially film, music and dance, or also consider participating or become involved in culturally diverse performing arts themselves, such as when Hana signed up to the Indian music club, as a means of intercultural interaction. I observed how diverse cultural performances were central to many international student events on the Massey campus. I attended an international student orientation³ event focussed on introducing newly-arrived foreign students to the Massey campus. Culturally diverse performances, such as Chinese music, Pacific Islander singing, and Irish and Indian dance played a significant role in the staging of the event. I observed that those cultural performances, through their use of ethnically diverse clothing and music, presented means of aural and visual intercultural interaction to attending foreign students through them observing the performances and learning from the cultural elements that they entailed. I found it interesting to note that the organizers of the function used such cultural performances, for this suggests that Massey University acknowledges the importance of foreign students observing

² I have been unsuccessful in attempting to verify this.

³ 'Orientation' or 'O-Week' is when during the first week of the first semester at Massey, foreign and domestic students, particularly those new to the university, are introduced to, and helped in their adjustment towards, the campus environment by university staff like RAs. This is often done through tours of the institution and the staging of various functions.

cultural diversity in order to broaden their experiences of, and adjustment to, their host campus environment.

Culture Clubs

Another common pattern observed in intercultural interaction amongst some participants was that which took place via their memberships in cultural clubs or organizations. Although Hana was unsuccessful in participating in an Indian music club, 'Papakwila' was actively involved in 'Pasifika,' the Massey University Pacific Students organization. He described to me how he once attended a 'Pasifika' farewell function for a Fijian senior consultant of the organization. At the meeting, 'Papakwila' and other 'Pasifika' members presented the consultant with a farewell gift of pearls on behalf of PNG and the members prepared traditional meals from their countries, such as taro, sweet potato and pork dishes. While at 'Pasifika,' 'Papakwila' enjoyed intercultural exchanges with other Pacific students from countries such as Samoa, Tonga and Fiji.

'Neighbours, Everybody Needs Good Neighbours...'

Some participants often performed intercultural interactions with fellow international scholars within their campus accommodation. I observed the participants make, or recorded their accounts of participation in, cultural exchanges with fellow international students while living in Massey hostels and flats. This intercultural interaction varied, examples being participants and their neighbours exchanging knowledge about their countries cultures, sharing ethnic cuisine in accommodation dining areas, viewing culturally significant items each other possessed, and learning how to greet one another in accordance with their cultures. I believe that a partial explanation for this common form of intercultural interaction by some of the participants was due to their situations in campus accommodation where they were separated

from, or did not feel welcomed by, domestic students. Apart from the case of 'Papakwila' interacting with New Zealand students at his hostel, I did not record accounts of or observe foreign student participants interacting directly on a regular basis with local students in campus accommodation. This suggests that intercultural interaction in student accommodation between foreign students often takes place because foreign students are sometimes unable to coherently and productively interact with 'Kiwi' students on a regular basis, either due to the disinterest of New Zealand students towards their overseas peers cited by Deloitte (2008:82) or the segregation in some campus accommodation between foreign and domestic students.

Learners and Leaders

The research participants displayed common patterns of intercultural interaction typical of overseas students seeking cultural knowledge through experiencing different cultures and in some instances associating with people from those cultures. They mostly performed roles of learners during their campus intercultural interactions, although in some cases participants gained leadership roles amongst their peers. These interactions assisted the participants multicultural experiences and knowledge at their host university, and helped them develop cross-cultural friendships in the process. Many student clubs and organizations, such as 'Pasifika' or the Indian music club that Hana was interested in, are often centred upon aspects of a culture, or cultures, from overseas that are often eagerly accessed by foreign students for the purpose of participating in intercultural interaction. Most intercultural interactions were incorporated by the participants into their campus socialising, often during breaks that the participants had from their academic activities. Such interactions were usually very relaxed and casual, although events organized by clubs proved significant in promoting campus intercultural interactions for foreign students.

Bon Appetite!

Food consumption alone was in certain contexts also a common pattern of intercultural interaction for the participants, for eating food from different countries and cultures is an integral part of cultural experience, as I learned from observing participant activities involving the consumption of ethnic cuisine. Meals served during the International Food Night were ethnically diverse, ranging from East Asian stir-fry and noodle meals, Afrikaner South African cinnamon dumplings, Italian lasagne, and Indian-style curry dishes, along with local 'Kiwi' fare - fish and chips, and hokey-pokey ice-cream for dessert. Many of the dishes were prepared by foreign students. The culturally diverse meals created much intercultural interaction between many international students via the conversations they made over the different dishes that they piled onto their plates and enjoyed eating. That said, when I asked 'Phil' how he found the food, he replied that he was pleased to simply get a free meal at the event, no matter how messy it looked (many attendees, including me, overloaded our plates with multicultural meals, some of which were not compatible with each other, examples being Asian noodles sharing space with chips and lasagne!), although he did not like the fish and chips!

Other instances of food being a focal point of intercultural interaction were demonstrated by both Liezel and Yan Yan. During morning teas or lunches held after our Master's Group study meetings, Liezel prepared traditional Philippine desserts to share with us in our school staffroom. At one lunchtime, she served *buko pandan*,⁴ a honey-flavoured pudding made with condensed milk, coconut and gelatine, the dessert coloured green from another principle ingredient, *pandan* leaves. The *buko pandan* became the focus of discussion between Liezel and students and staff members of varying nationalities, including myself, who enjoyed

⁴ *Buko* is a Philippine word for coconut.

sampling the pudding and listening to Liezel tell them about the food of the Philippines. A South Asian lecturer commented to Liezel that coconut contributes greatly to South East Asian tastes. Liezel performed intercultural interaction via socializing and sharing and discussing food unique to her country. Liezel also told me how the beef steak she was eating during that time for her main meal was an example of American-influenced dishes common in the Philippines.

Yan Yan used dinner as a focal point for intercultural interaction between her and I. One night she prepared Chinese food for dinner for me at her Atawhai flat, the meal consisting of honey soy chicken, cabbage and pumpkin. During the meal Yan Yan enjoyed pointing out to me differences between Chinese and New Zealand cuisine, such as how pumpkin in China is often eaten as a snack rather than how New Zealanders eat it as part of a main meal. I found the information she gave me about Chinese food interesting, and reciprocated by giving her some New Zealand liquorice allsorts sweets, which she found to be an interesting form of 'Kiwi' confectionary, as she did not know New Zealanders liked to eat liquorice. Patric also interacted cross-culturally with me via the serving of ethnic cuisine, showing me how Swedish people prepare pasta, which was part of the dinner that we shared together, using only butter instead of cheese or tomato bolognaise sauce.

'Papakwila' also enjoyed intercultural interaction with me via morning tea meetings and lunches between us at the Massey Library cafe, often conversing about the beverages we drunk in relation to our cultures. For example, I told 'Papakwila' how many New Zealanders like to drink tea when socialising, and 'Papakwila' explained to me how coffee is significant to the way of life in his country, coffee cultivation and production being important to PNG's economy, and how many types of coffee are consumed there. These observations suggest that

the consumption of culturally diverse cuisine between two or more people of different cultures who are actively seeking and experiencing intercultural interaction indicates that experiencing different food is significant in a foreign student experiencing culture, or in some cases promoting one's own culture to culturally different people. The Turitea campus dining hall, which several of the participants visited regularly to eat meals or meet up with other people, enabled further potential for mealtime intercultural interaction between foreign and local student patrons by serving diverse ethnic cuisine from Asia and Europe such as curries, stir-fries, fried rice, pasta and pizza.

During times when food was prepared by international students for their peers and university staff, exchanges of culture-specific customs and values were apparent. In the cases of Liezel and Yan Yan sharing food with other people at university, including myself, it was evident that hosting and hospitality are taken very seriously by their cultures, with the participants preparing generous amounts of food for the guests. 'Papakwila' remarked how there was an abundance of food prepared for the attendees of a 'Pasifika' function he attended, which is reflective of Pacific cultures attitudes to generosity during meetings. I became aware of some participants attitudes to generosity during interview or observation sessions where food or drink was being served, often bringing food to mealtime appointments or buying participants coffee or snacks when conducting interviews with them near cafeterias.

During another Master's Group study break, Liezel served a dessert called *maja blanca*, a custard square-like pudding made with coconut cream, corn starch, sweet corn and roasted nuts. Once again, the presence of a Philippine dessert prompted considerable discussion between fellow international students and myself over the cuisine of Liezel's country, which then led to them discussing issues relating to one another's cultures. I participated in the

discussion, telling the international students about the culture of New Zealand and its indigenous and rural people which drew considerable interest, especially from Liezel, who was unfamiliar with Maori and rural culture in New Zealand. This highlighted another common pattern of intercultural interaction taken up by the participants, casual discussion.

Casual Discussion

Casual discussion was a primary factor in the participants interaction patterns, a key part of intercultural interaction that can help foreign students develop feelings of acceptance during casual talks, particularly when they are conversing with locals (Holmes 2002:34-35). During the Orientation Week International Student Dinner, I observed how foreign students there took it upon themselves to perform intercultural interaction, by sitting next to New Zealanders like me at the event, and engaging in conversation about their countries and cultures, and the culture of New Zealand. Casual discussion also occurred over the dinner table between Patric and myself over how New Zealanders perceive Swedish people and their culture, which led to a considerable amount of joking between the pair of us over the issue that made us both laugh loudly.⁵ It also reflected a simple form of intercultural interaction that the participants all performed, which was casual conversation at campus eateries over food or a hot beverage in the middle of the day, such as when ‘Papakwila’ and I would relax over coffee at the library cafe, exchanging information about each other’s cultures as part of social conversation. I observed that casual conversation offers foreign students moments to relax from hectic study schedules while simultaneously presenting them with opportunities for intercultural interaction via casual discussions with other people about their cultures, and gave them chances to establish new intercultural friendships.

⁵ Patric was highly amused when I told him that New Zealanders often stereotype Swedish people as being blonde, amorous, fond of folk music and having names such as ‘Olaf,’ especially in television commercials. Patric thought this was funny because he saw such stereotypes as a reflection of New Zealanders knowing very little about Sweden, rather than as an insult to Swedish people.

Conclusion

The research participants intercultural interaction patterns all displayed signs of an active adaptation in which individuals move between more than one cultural frame of reference so as to gain an understanding of intercultural issues (Klak and Martin 2003:450). The participants shared common patterns of intercultural interactions on the campus, through casual interaction with other foreign students and local students in various campus environments and situations outside study and in socio-academic circles. This indicates that New Zealand campus intercultural interactions of foreign students rely significantly on socialising. New Zealand universities can, and in the case of Massey University have helped to, promote this recreational socialising through the provision of situations to make it and the resulting intercultural interaction available. These situations range from the promotion and establishment of events and organizations for international students to participate in and socialize with each other, to simply enabling and encouraging foreign students to interact with fellow students, both international and domestic, during on-campus study breaks or during class or study group activities.

Overall the findings from my research indicate that foreign students share common intercultural interaction patterns that are entailed in both their social and academic campus activities, and which to some extent may be shaped by the degree of interactions that they are able to achieve with fellow ‘internationals’ and local students on the host campus. The findings suggest that universities could and should provide opportunities for foreign students to broaden their campus cultural experiences via the promotion of cultural diversity in academic activities, accommodation, clubs and organizations, at student functions, and in campus social environments as a whole.

Chapter Five: Pros and Cons

What are the positive and negative experiences of foreign students intercultural interactions at a New Zealand university campus?

Foreign students intercultural interaction experiences in New Zealand tertiary institutions vary. On the positive side, foreign students have largely reported cultural inclusiveness in their educational environments (Deloitte 2008:59). However, other foreign students have recalled negative on-campus intercultural interaction experiences such as cultural mismatches, frustration at a lack of deep integration with ‘Kiwis’, and annoyance towards aspects of their host culture (Lewthwaite 1996:167). These reflect the nature of the participants positive and negative intercultural interaction experiences at Massey, which were shaped by their engagement with other students and the host campus environment.

For some foreign students, their negative intercultural interaction experiences of their host campus outweigh their positive ones. Nathan (2005) notes that some foreign students she studied at an American campus were annoyed and appalled at the ethnocentric attitudes of local students and their ignorance towards and biases against international cultures. Many of them complained that some American students and staff expressed a sentiment that the USA was superior to their countries. A Mexican participant complained that the only things US students asked about Mexican culture was food. An English student complained that American impressions of a British person were that one might drink tea off a silver tray or dwell in a castle (Nathan 2005:85)! These stereotypes of foreign students formed by their domestic peers are comparable to those made by New Zealand students toward internationals, such as a local student perception noted by Bird and Holmes (2004:12) that foreign students are usually Asian. Such stereotyping can present negative experiences in some foreign

students intercultural interactions, such as bias and misunderstandings on the part of locals. However, foreign students also have enjoyable cultural experiences on host campuses. Nathan (2005) records how some participants in her study appreciated liberal aspects of the US campus culture, particularly social elements such as casual dress and academic freedoms such as questioning lecturers in classes and the ability to choose diverse subjects, liberties often frowned upon in their home countries universities. Indeed, some of my research participants positively commented on the relative social and academic freedoms and liberal attitudes that Massey offered in comparison to those of their own countries universities.

Participants Positive Intercultural Interaction Experiences at Massey

Hana fondly recalled her intercultural experiences of Massey hostel life. ‘In hostels there are so many different peoples from overseas, it was a really nice experience there,’ she told me. She recalled her best Massey campus intercultural experience as making more international student friends than she did in Japan. Hana enjoyed New Zealand food and watching rugby games with friends. I asked Hana what people at Massey thought of her Japanese origins and heritage: ‘When I say I am Japanese, they know a lot about (Japanese) drama, *geishas*, (cartoon) animations...and people like sushi here, among other things from Japan,’ she replied. Her experiences of companionship with some ‘Kiwi’ students, who spoke Japanese well, contrasted sharply against the report by Holmes (2002:41) that some students of East Asian origins fail to establish cooperative friendships and relationships with New Zealand students. Hana appreciated New Zealand’s culture being ‘more relaxed’ and ‘easy going’ than that of Japan, where people were ‘really rushing.’ Massey’s casual culture, which Hana considered ‘more friendly’ than Japanese university culture, also made study easier for her.

'Phil' praised the accepting culture of New Zealand students at Massey. He found them much more approachable for foreign students than local students in the British university he previously attended or in German universities, where international students struggled to cooperate with domestic peers. 'Phil' appreciated Massey's campus environment for having 'quite a mix of international students from all over the world.' He commended New Zealand's indigenous Maori culture being well-promoted at Massey. 'Phil' rated his best campus intercultural interaction experience as his Massey Surf Club presidency. He appreciated 'the possibility of having an international student run a local club.' 'Phil' liked how Massey's community was completely mixed between 'Kiwis' and 'internationals,' with an open atmosphere that for him was an ongoing experience, where he was constantly meeting people from other cultures on campus. He was also appreciative of the New Zealand student culture's positive and active inclinations towards environmental awareness and conservation.

Patric enjoyed intercultural interaction with American students at his campus flat, as he shared most interests with Americans and related well to their culture. His most positive intercultural interaction experience at Massey was the university catering for diverse students needs, which allowed them to express their nationalities. For example, Patric enjoyed wearing Swedish national sport clothing (particularly a national football jersey he kept) during recreational activities, and displaying the Swedish Flag in his campus flat – he even gave me a Swedish flag as a gift. Patric explained to me that apart from formal occasions such as during sporting events or political meetings, a person expressing patriotism in Sweden through acts such as displaying the country's national flag or wearing national sports clothing would be frowned upon as 'racist' by Swedish social and political culture. He therefore appreciated how Massey's campus environment encourages foreign students to express their nationality via acts like wearing national sports team or ethnic attire, and displaying their national flags to

fellow students. He felt that Massey encourages foreign students to show others what their country, cuisine and people are like and said that this makes foreign students 'feel at home.' When Patric's American flatmates left New Zealand, some Chinese students replaced them. Patric enjoyed observing and experiencing their traditional cooking, which he thought was 'interesting.'

Liezel's best intercultural interaction experience at Massey was her participation in the Festival of Culture. She explained the procedures of this festival to me: 'Each of the (student participants) countries will present something, like a dance or anything on the stage...(That way) you will get the perspective of how your culture (will be) relating to other cultures...'

Liezel also appreciated the Massey campus culture's open attitude to gender equality, particularly in sport. She found it remarkable and impressive that a female friend of hers played rugby at Massey, and how some American female students enjoyed playing soccer. She also commended New Zealand students environmental awareness, particularly that of students who recycle. Liezel appreciated Massey's campus culture for being largely peaceful and encouraging students to amiably cooperate with each other, unlike that of her Luzon university, which she said possessed 'a much harsher collegiate society' plagued by fraternity rioting.

At Atawhai, Yan Yan enjoyed intercultural interactions within organized community activities, such as 'pot-luck' barbeques where she enjoyed sharing food with other students, both local and overseas. The most significant intercultural interaction experience that Yan Yan appreciated at Massey was the internationalization of the campus, in comparison to that of her university in China. Yan Yan believed most Chinese universities are not internationalized. She explained: 'In most Chinese universities I think most students are

from...all over China, instead of all over the world...for the universities in our capital, Beijing, we have a lot of international students. But for the university where I come from, Guangxi University...We have some international students, but they are only a minority, not the majority. Not like (at) Massey.’ The internationalization of the Massey campus enabled Yan Yan to interact coherently with culturally diverse people.

The best personal on-campus intercultural interaction experience ‘Papakwila’ recalled was him and his hostel friends greeting each other in their own languages, which he thought was a fun way to introduce themselves and their cultures to each other. He felt that the Pacific student organization ‘Pasifika’ assisted Pacific students cultural adjustment to the Massey campus well. Like Phil, ‘Papakwila’ appreciated the promotion of Maori culture on the campus, which he hoped would aid understandings of what he terms ‘both sides of the Kiwi,’ Maori and *Pakeha*. ‘Papakwila’ also appreciated how many people at Massey were interested in the culture of PNG.

‘Joseph’ thought that his best intercultural interaction experiences at Massey were those that he shared with Filipino students. He appreciated their lifestyles, values, family networks and cuisine such as sea fish dishes, meals he rarely experienced in landlocked Zambia. ‘Joseph’ also enjoyed living in the Ruahine Apartments at Massey the previous year with mostly international students from regions like Asia and the Caribbean. At Ruahine he ‘learnt a lot’ about lifestyles and cultures of people from other nationalities. ‘Joseph’ elaborated on his adjustment to campus accommodation culture and cross-culturally interacting with other international students: ‘At first it was a bit difficult, it takes time for them to know each other, but over time we got to know each other...we are different people, because of our cultural backgrounds. The things that we value are different, the way that we socialize is different.’

Summary of Participants Positive Intercultural Interaction Experiences at Massey

The participants positive experiences of intercultural interaction at Massey largely related to their relationships with other students, both international and local. Intercultural interaction is a cooperative exercise between two or more people, and it is interesting that Massey promotes it via encouraging foreign students to express their nationalities to their overseas and domestic peers, which some participants enjoyed doing. Other participants cited meeting and regularly associating with culturally diverse students during recreational activities and club membership as positive intercultural interaction experiences. Indeed most participants were complementary towards experiencing Massey's campus cultural diversity and general internationalization, which 'Phil' and Yan Yan rarely experienced in European and Chinese universities respectively. Other participants cited functions such as cultural exhibitions and meals as being positive intercultural interaction moments. The liberal cultural attitudes that were experienced at Massey, such as favourable attitudes to gender equality, were also the subject of participant praise, along with 'Kiwi' cultural attitudes to environmental awareness. The participants perspectives suggest that positive intercultural interaction at the Massey campus, and perhaps other university campuses in New Zealand, is accessible to foreign students via numerous mediums.

Participants Negative Intercultural Interaction Experiences at Massey

Participants negative intercultural interaction experiences varied. When she was living on campus, Hana often found it hard to tolerate domestic students rowdy behaviour, especially drinking and partying. She also found relating to many New Zealand students hard, partly because in hostels international students were largely segregated from domestic ones, and partly because many New Zealand students on campus and in classes were reluctant to engage with her. 'Some (New Zealand) people may think that we international students won't

understand English much or don't want to mix around...like some prefer to stick with their own nationalities...thus (foreign students like myself) end up being avoided,' Hana stated. She added that she felt some 'Kiwi' students 'avoid or look down on international students.'

'Phil' believed foreign students were subject to 'institutional segregation' from local students in accommodation at Massey. 'In terms of institutional segregation,' 'Phil' stated, 'the Massey University Halls of Residence organization, they seem to put different people in different houses according to their nationalities...for example the Americans ended up in one place at Atawhai, (and) one Pakistani student ended up living in the same flat, which makes me think this is not by chance, they (foreign students) are segregated (from local students).'

'Phil' cited cultural divides between foreign students as being his most negative campus intercultural interaction experience. 'I think relationships remain rather superficial in a way...I think there are...groups of students which tend to be...sorted by culture, more or less,' he mused. When we dined together at the International Food Night, 'Phil,' upon realizing the gathering's Christian focus, whispered to me that he had heard Islamic foreign students at Massey were being harassed over their faith by some Christian students.

I asked Patric what he thought 'Kiwi' perceptions of Swedish people were: 'I don't think New Zealanders know that much about Sweden,' he answered, smiling. 'Half of New Zealand thinks that Sweden is full of blue-eyed blondes!' This is an example of stereotyping by local students towards foreign students countries cited by Nathan (2005). Patric sometimes struggled to engage with the Chinese flatmates who replaced his American friends at Ruahine. One new flatmate was reclusive, and Patric found it hard to converse with the others due to language differences, therefore rarely cross-culturally interacting with them except at mealtimes. Patric also told me that he was annoyed by the student Christian organization

‘Pulse,’ when on campus. He said that ‘Pulse’ members often tried to convert him to their belief system.

‘Joseph’ cited an inability to meet with and learn from local students, due to the nature and extent of his study regime, as a negative experience at Massey as it restricted his ability to cross-culturally interact when on campus.

Liezel was concerned by the ‘car culture’ of numerous students she observed driving automobiles to Massey, as she believed that those students, both foreign and domestic, were increasing their carbon footprints through excessive automobile use and their resulting fuel consumption and emissions. She found that the reckless behaviour culture displayed by some New Zealand Massey students was unsettling, although not overwhelmingly intimidating when compared to that of Luzon students. ‘Papakwila’ also noticed unruly behaviour by some students at Massey, particularly ‘Kiwis,’ but was light-hearted, amused and philosophical towards it. ‘It’s only environmental in academic life,’ he laughed.

Yan Yan was unable to join Massey clubs, which have been major intercultural interaction avenues for other foreign students, because of expensive membership fees. She also cited study commitments as a personal obstacle for intercultural socialising with her Atawhai flatmates. Her most negative intercultural interaction experience occurred upon her arrival at Massey. The campus accommodation services assumed by the pronunciation of her name that she was a man and placed her in a unit occupied by male students! Yan Yan acknowledged that it is largely acceptable in ‘Kiwi’ culture for students of both genders to share flats, but she felt uncomfortable with this attitude and participating in such a living arrangement. Upon her request, the accommodation services eventually moved Yan Yan to a neighbouring unit,

the occupants of which were all female. Yan Yan did not consider understanding the English language as being problematic to campus intercultural interactions, although she struggled to understand terminology used by New Zealand lecturers.

Summary of Participants Negative Intercultural Interaction Experiences at Massey

Participants largely cited the inability to get along with other culturally different students, local and in some cases international, as a significant negative intercultural interaction experience. Some participants felt uneasy interacting with New Zealand students because of reckless behaviour that the locals sometimes displayed. Other participants cited the campus accommodation segregation of foreign students and liberal elements of New Zealand culture on campus such as mixed-gender accommodation as negative intercultural interaction experiences. In general, the negative intercultural interaction experiences of the participants at Massey can be traced to issues concerning inter-student relations, differences in cultural values and the availability of intercultural interaction. This suggests that Massey, and other New Zealand universities, should establish further cooperation between students of different nationalities and cultures via making campus life less segregated. The sensitivities and attitudes of some Massey religious groups towards foreign students may also need to be questioned.

What my Findings Suggest for Massey

The positive and negative on-campus intercultural interaction experiences of the foreign student participants were shaped by their socialization experiences and the circumstances that their intercultural interactions entailed. The participants positive cross-cultural experiences largely consisted of concourse interaction situations or occurred in campus accommodation, as did most of their negative experiences. What therefore must be assessed at Massey and in

the wider New Zealand tertiary student environment is whether or not campus concourse and accommodation facilities provide adequate opportunities for international students to confidently and successfully cross-culturally interact with other students, both foreign and domestic. Some participants perspectives indicated that elements of campus life, particularly accommodation arrangements, are segregated according to students nationalities and cultures, which sometimes inhibited participants successful intercultural interactions, particularly with local students.

I ascertained that the majority of intercultural interaction problems do not lie with Massey students but with campus authorities. These include residential service administrators, who should realign accommodation policies and arrangements to provide for more intercultural interaction that foreign students desire, such as more shared accommodation between foreign and domestic students. Promoting and improving campus clubs and cultural organizations accessibility, and the attitudes of some of them (particularly religious groups), to foreign students also requires significant attention, as these elements shaped some participants positive and negative intercultural interaction experiences at Massey.

Conclusion

The participants intercultural interaction experiences, both positive and negative, were shaped by the level of communication and engagement that they had with their host campus and in some cases the extent to which the host campus cohered with their ideals. A significant factor in the participants positive experiences of intercultural interaction at Massey was their overall ability to communicate regularly and well with fellow students, both foreign and local, and staff in both social and academic campus situations. Overall, the participants cited multiculturalism resulting from such communication as their main positive intercultural

interaction experience. Some participants also appreciated the lifestyles and values evident in New Zealand student culture, such as acceptance and welcoming towards foreign students, and environmental awareness.

The participants negative intercultural interaction experiences were also rooted in communication abilities. Some participants reported being unable to culturally cohere with New Zealand students, or in some cases finding themselves at odds with elements of New Zealand student culture in terms of beliefs and values. Other participants also found cross-culturally interacting with New Zealand students at Massey accommodation difficult, due to segregation and a lack of understanding between foreign and local students. Language difficulties were also cited as a significant negative aspect of intercultural interaction, accounting for a lack of coherence between some participants and other individuals on campus.

Overall, my findings indicate that foreign students positive intercultural interaction experiences at a New Zealand university campus are shaped by their ability to cross-culturally cohere with other students and staff, both local and international. My findings also suggest that foreign students negative intercultural interaction experiences on campus result from a lack of such relating, and are often rooted in local attitudes and the state of university facilities and groups. These factors should be addressed to ensure that foreign students attending New Zealand universities become at ease with their host campus environments.

Chapter Six: The Influence of Intercultural Interaction

How does intercultural interaction on campus influence the perspectives and habits of foreign students?

Context

Foreign students perspectives and habits on their host campus environment are largely shaped by their intercultural interactions within it. Foreign students initial encounters with their host environments have been recorded in terms of culture shock, or as a fusion of desocialization - urgency to break away from certain attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours prevalent in their home cultures, and socialization – an urgency to adapt for learning new attitudes, values, and beliefs, and participation in the host environment’s culture and social order (Skyrme 2008: 25-26). Foreign students perspectives can be significantly shaped either negatively or positively by this aspect of on-campus intercultural interaction. Simultaneously, intercultural interaction also contributes positively to foreign students habits on campus, through coherence with other international students and domestic students in both social and ‘socioacademic’ (Refer to Skyrme 2008:38) contexts. An example of the former is how university-endorsed cultural events help engage students with each other’s diversity (Klak and Martin 2003:464). An example of the latter is how class-based interpersonal contact involving students in cooperation, collaboration and small group interaction can increase cognitive skills and enhance learning (Skyrme 2008:26). For foreign students, intercultural learning is not merely based upon the acquiring of new international knowledge or being introduced to culturally diverse fellow students. It also entails the finding and appreciation of diversity through experiences of intercultural interaction involving social and academic activities, and emotional and intellectual participation in them (De Vita 2007:165). This was

reflected in how intercultural interaction influenced the habits of my research participants at Massey.

How Intercultural Interaction on Campus Influenced the Participants Perspectives

Hana felt that intercultural interactions at Massey made her realize that she was capable of being open to people from diverse nationalities: ‘The best part (of intercultural interactions)...is that we can introduce different cultures to each other, different values in many things, so that our understanding, knowledge and future interests can be widened,’ she explained. ‘I feel the cultural barriers are getting low in myself and getting to understand and accept more about differences. It will make me more open and help me interact more with people and learn from them.’

Yan Yan appreciated intercultural interaction as a widely promoted cultural knowledge medium at Massey. ‘I need to know about different cultures,’ she told me. ‘I think the Massey Campus is very student friendly. They have all kinds of facilities, all kinds of services to facilitate communication among students of different countries and also facilitate the living and studying of students. I really appreciate this...I am very impressed by the international cultural capacity of the university.’

Patric was very casual towards intercultural interaction, which he perceived to be casual and widespread at Massey: ‘I socialize with anyone from any country,’ he told me, adding that he had become very confident at communicating cross-culturally with local students. ‘They (the local students) treat me like anyone else,’ he said, also adding that he thought intercultural interactions at Massey were effective in helping foreign students express and learn about each other’s nationalities.

‘Phil’ considered intercultural interaction at Massey to be a normal phenomena within student life. He explained: ‘Cultural exchange, and this is (from) my own personal experience, works best when it’s not labelled as cultural exchange...in the Surf Club we meet as people who are keen to go to the beach...there is a lot of intercultural interaction between students of the different countries...(intercultural interaction) works best when it’s not labelled as intercultural experience...(it) is a by-product (of student meetings), basically.’ That said, ‘Phil’ felt that intercultural interaction encouraged foreign and local students at Massey to effectively cohere with each other more than they would have done in the European universities he attended.

‘Papakwila’s perspectives were also positively influenced by intercultural interaction: ‘The cultural environment here (at Massey) is quite large compared to what I would expect at Papua New Guinea because here there are more numbers of international students...I think the (Massey) environment is great,’ he told me.

Liezel felt that intercultural interactions were central to student activities, especially during her block courses, when culturally diverse people introduced themselves to each other and shared information about their cultures to establish dialogue and establish friendships with their classmates.

‘Joseph’ felt that intercultural interaction at Massey influenced his engaging with, and his understanding and appreciation of the lifestyles of, culturally diverse foreign students he met in campus accommodation. ‘I learnt a lot about other people’s living,’ he said. ‘I learnt some Chinese (language) a bit. I learnt how the Indian (students) interact.’ He added that he also

learned about the cultures of students from Singapore, Oman and the Caribbean while living in the Ruahine flats at Massey. ‘At first it was a bit difficult,’ he explained. ‘It takes time for them to know each other, but over time we got to know each other.’ ‘Joseph’ believed on-campus intercultural interaction with other students enabled him to learn about other people and their different cultures. ‘It builds my character,’ he said.

Summary of Participants Perspectives Influenced by On-Campus Intercultural Interaction

The participants perspectives were influenced by the considerable extent to which they were exposed to intercultural interaction on the Massey campus. They felt largely confident in embracing the campus society due to the presence and ease of intercultural interaction in both social and academic environments. In general, intercultural interaction significantly influenced participants perceptions that adjustment to the host campus environment at Massey was an easy and enjoyable experience, by helping them establish good intercultural friendships and social coherence across a wide range of nationalities in diverse settings.

How Intercultural Interaction on Campus Influenced the Participants Habits at the Massey Campus

Hana experienced difficulty when communicating in English with New Zealanders on the Massey campus due to unfamiliarity with the ‘Kiwis’ dialect. Thus it became important for her to interact intercultural with New Zealanders at Massey whenever possible. Hana saw her regular intercultural interaction with non-Japanese students as a way for her to broaden her understanding of the English language, which was central to her understanding the host country and its people, and the broadening of her international linguistic experiences. ‘Through that I got to know more people other than Japanese,’ she said.

Hana was frustrated that many New Zealanders on campus were reluctant to interact with her, for she also aimed to expand her cultural knowledge of her host country via intercultural interaction with 'Kiwis' at Massey. However, Hana found that campus intercultural interaction expanded her multicultural knowledge as she befriended foreign students from diverse nationalities. She explained: 'I enjoy seeing my friends from all over the world and saying hi (to them) whenever I see them on campus...The best part (about) knowing them is that we can introduce different cultures to each other...so that our understanding, knowledge and future interest can be widened...cultural events held on campus by groups of people from various nationalities helps us start being interested to know them and their cultures. I have a lot of friend(s) who I would never have been able to get to know if I didn't choose to study at Massey or (go to) whatever the (cultural) event I've attended.' Hana recalled that many of the students she befriended via regular participation or interest in clubs, organizations and cultural events were from different countries across the world.

Yan Yan was motivated to participate in campus intercultural interaction by her belief that as a foreigner it is important for her to cross-culturally engage with her host environment. 'I think I have to be exposed more to the Kiwi culture,' Yan Yan told me. 'So in order to achieve this, I think I need to have more contact with the Kiwi students, with the locals. So I just try to be more actively involved in the activities of the local students.' These activities consisted of both academic and social ones, examples of the former involving Yan Yan interacting with her domestic peers during study groups or research in the campus library – she also actively interacted with fellow students from other nationalities during such occasions.

Yan Yan sought intercultural interaction with fellow foreign students at Massey because she believed that this would expose her to internationalism, which would be useful to experience if she sought a career overseas after completing her tertiary studies. Yan Yan's social activities involving contact with 'Kiwi' and other international students usually consisted of her attending organized campus events such as the International Food Night and cultural exhibitions, or casual socialising with 'internationals' or 'Kiwi' students like myself during common study breaks such as lunch or afternoon tea in the dining hall. She also related well to her Massey lecturers. Yan Yan was able to achieve intercultural communication through questioning and answering, and exchanging opinions and ideas between people. In the process, she achieved interpersonal skills via cooperative learning and interacting with lecturers. Intercultural communication and these approaches to it are significant yet challenging for Confucian heritage culture students (Holmes 2002:41), and therefore it was interesting to note Yan Yan's confidence towards them through intercultural interaction.

Patric considered that he interacted with New Zealanders on a social and recreational, not intercultural, basis. However, he enjoyed seeking intercultural interactions with American students, mainly because he related well to their cultural perspectives, which allowed him broaden his knowledge and understanding of the USA. He was contemplating future study in the USA, and saw intercultural interaction with US students as a means of gaining insights and ideas on how to adjust to the culture of an American campus environment while he was staying in New Zealand. Through intercultural interaction at Massey, Patric expressed his nationality and identity to other foreign students and learned about their own nationalities and identities.

‘Phil’ actively engaged in sharing cultural information with diverse students at Massey, both academically and socially, on a regular basis as part of his student lifestyle.

‘Papakwila’ had a simple explanation for intercultural interaction influencing his relationships with fellow students at Massey. He believed that it allowed students to introduce themselves and their cultures to each other as a means of opening up and establishing meaningful friendships and dialogue. This was reflected in how the two of us would exchange information about each other’s cultures during our meetings.

Intercultural interactions influenced Liezel establishing friendships with fellow students, particularly in our Master’s Group, introducing her classmates to Filipino cuisine as a way of expressing her country’s culture and her identity. She also used intercultural interaction with New Zealanders to learn about her host country’s culture, such as when I told her about the significance of ‘Kiwiana’, New Zealand identity symbols such as animals like the Kiwi and the Tuatara. She reciprocated this information by telling me how the Eagle is the national emblem of The Philippines.

I observed how ‘Joseph’ engaged in intercultural interaction during our Master’s Group meetings as a means of getting to know fellow students and lecturers, sharing ethnic cuisine prepared by other students during our group’s morning teas and conversing with people from other nationalities, including myself, about the cultures of their countries. While socialising over lunch, ‘Joseph’ discussed topics such as manners and the lifestyles of Zambians in comparison to those of countries of other people who he was talking to, as a means of broadening his cultural knowledge and understandings. In class, he also used intercultural

interaction with me to understand New Zealand academic terminologies, to assist his academic abilities at his host campus.

Summary of Participants Habits Influenced by On-Campus Intercultural Interaction

In terms of habits, the participants pursued intercultural interaction at Massey in order to make the most of their host campus experiences. These experiences included relating to other students, both local and international, experiencing New Zealand lifestyles and culture, and experiencing multiculturalism to broaden and shape their international outlooks and perspectives. Campus clubs and organisations, along with socio-academic situations and environments, were key areas in which the participants pursued such intercultural interactions. As 'Phil' implied, intercultural interaction does not necessarily have to be purposefully established, but can be a naturally occurring phenomenon during casual interactions between culturally diverse people. This can theoretically be all that clubs, organizations, and socio-academic environments at Massey need to promote for them to achieve cultural diversity and coherence between students.

The Significance of My Findings Towards New Zealand University Campuses in General

My findings suggest that through promoting intercultural interactions New Zealand university campuses can provide a diverse multicultural environment that foreign students will actively participate in with both their international and domestic student peers. They are also reflective of the Deloitte (2008:5) report indicating that foreign students are largely satisfied with their experiences of, and have adjusted well to, New Zealand life. Overall my findings indicate that universities in New Zealand should take care to ensure that foreign students have significant and regular intercultural interaction with both local and other foreign students, particularly via

campus events, student associations and study environments, in order to become acclimatised to their overall host environment and experience and engage in cultural diversity as part of their overseas student experience.

Conclusion

Foreign students perspectives and habits are influenced by their levels of intercultural engagement with their host campuses. Regular opportunities for on-campus intercultural interaction positively influenced the participants perspectives, particularly in regard to the internationalism of Massey University. The numerous opportunities for on-campus intercultural interaction influenced the participants habitual cross-cultural exchanges with both their fellow international and local student peers in various social and academic settings. Massey and New Zealand universities in general can help establish such positive perspectives and habits of foreign students through student functions, clubs and organizations, along with students classes.

Chapter Seven: Benefits

How do foreign students benefit from intercultural interaction in a New Zealand university campus environment?

Context

Foreign students benefit immensely from intercultural interaction in all aspects of living and studying within a New Zealand university campus environment. It is essential for foreign students to seek on-campus intercultural interaction in order to form intercultural competency and develop future networks (Bird & Holmes 2004:5). Sixty-one percent of foreign students surveyed by Deloitte (2008:4) wanted to have more New Zealand friends. This is a constant motivation for foreign students initiating intercultural interactions with host nationals. Central to foreign students social integration on the host campus are, along with the number of local friends that they make, the number of university organizations which they participate in that have 'Kiwi' members (Lewthwaite 1996:169). It is beneficial for foreign students to learn to communicate with others in a culturally appropriate way, in order to undergo and achieve cultural adaptation. Often, foreign students far away from home for the first time fret about forming new friendships and interpersonal relationships on the host campus, having been uprooted from the home environments that they have been accustomed to (Meyer 2003:4). They need to learn how to manage cultural change in order to adjust to the host campus environment (Louie 2005:23). There is thus a necessity for foreign students to culturally engage with their host campus environment upon arriving in it. Foreign students cross-cultural communication competence on the host university campus can be achieved by on-campus intercultural interactions in which they actively participate in sharing and expanding cultural knowledge between themselves and other individuals, both international and local.

How the Research Participants Benefitted from Intercultural Interaction at Massey

Intercultural interaction benefitted Hana by helping her acclimatise herself to the cultural environment of the Massey campus, while simultaneously seeking to effectively communicate with local students. She cross-culturally interacted with fellow foreign students because she appreciated cultural diversity, and viewed multiculturalism as a key experience of studying at a host university. Intercultural interaction at Massey, especially with locals, also exposed Hana to English on a regular basis, helping improve her communication abilities with the language. Hana also benefitted from making new friends and associating with people from different countries and cultures. Hana also found acceptance from, and became familiar with, New Zealand students who spoke Japanese and were interested in her country and its culture. ‘(Intercultural interaction) makes me realise that I’m capable of being open to people of diverse nationalities and feel glad being remembered by people,’ she said. Hana added that intercultural interaction enabled her and her international student friends to introduce their different cultures and values to each other, thus widening their understanding, knowledge and future interests. Hana summed up the benefits of intercultural interaction that she has experienced in the Massey campus environment with the following statement: ‘Being at Massey University and meeting friends with many different cultures through many events I happened to experience, now I’m sure that I have an open mind towards cultures and the willingness to know them.’

Regular intercultural interaction at Massey enabled Yan Yan to become at one with her host campus environment. She wished to experience more of the local culture through actively engaging in intercultural interaction mediums such as discussions and campus social activities, which she used to cross-culturally interact with fellow international students. Yan Yan also benefitted from intercultural interaction with more international students than she did at her

university in China. She felt that her interacting with internationally and culturally diverse students could help her relate well to people of different nationalities and cultures if she pursued a career in overseas work after completing her studies. Yan Yan also found that intercultural interaction helped bring foreign students together under common circumstances and challenges, which helped her cohere with her international classmates during study sessions and group activities. Intercultural interaction enabled Yan Yan to participate in, and share various elements of, local and domestic students cultures, particularly cuisine. Intercultural interaction also allowed Yan Yan to communicate on good speaking terms with her overseas student flatmates at Atawhai. The following statement that Yan Yan made about her relations with her fellow Atawhai residents also very much summed up the overall benefits of multicultural exposure that she has experienced from intercultural interaction at Massey: ‘We communicate lots and lots of things about local cultures, different kinds of festivals, how to cook the food. We are very good friends.’

Patric benefitted from intercultural interaction because it allowed him to share ideas with and understand culturally and nationally diverse people. This was the case with numerous American students he lived alongside and interacted with, which helped him gain an understanding of life at a US university, where he was interested in undertaking further study after leaving Massey. Intercultural interaction in this case assisted his proposed overseas ambitions, like in the case of Yan Yan. Intercultural interaction was also pivotal in Patric’s sports team organization abilities, his handball team consisting of a wide mixture of student nationalities. Intercultural interaction in the form of cooperation between these diverse students was central to Patric being able to ensure team spirit and coherence. Intercultural interaction helped Patric broaden his knowledge and appreciation of other cultures, and to assert himself in his host campus environment.

‘Phil’ thought that intercultural interactions at Massey, in the context of students of diverse nationalities meeting and cooperating under one cause (such as during participation in his Surf Club) were beneficial to foreign students such as himself through their promoting unity and cooperation between them. Overall, ‘Phil’ felt that the benefits that he had gained via intercultural interactions were environmental, helping him participate in, and appreciate the internationalism of, Massey’s social and academic environments.

‘Papakwila’ benefitted from intercultural interaction at Massey via communication and cooperation with culturally diverse students there. ‘Papakwila’ shared campus accommodation with and studied alongside fellow students from both New Zealand and various international backgrounds. As a result of this, ‘Papakwila’ had benefited from being able to ‘open up’ to other students from New Zealand and overseas, sharing his culture with them, and learning from theirs. This enriched his world perspectives and his outlook on New Zealand as well. Through intercultural interaction he also felt at home on the Massey campus, for many locals had heard of PNG and liked to speak to him about the culture of his home country. ‘Papakwila’ became very appreciative and informed about Maori and Pakeha culture in New Zealand via intercultural interactions with domestic students like myself. Indeed, intercultural interaction also played a significant part of his social life at Massey, through his attendance of campus cultural events (where he learned about traditional cultures from overseas students from countries such as China) and the ‘Pasifika’ Pacific student organization. At ‘Pasifika,’ much emphasis was placed upon Pacific cultures as a means of promoting unity and identity amongst its members, which helped ‘Papakwila’ get acquainted with and know fellow attendees.

Intercultural interaction helped Liezel establish friendships at Massey – she told me that she liked how students on her host campus related to one another – especially with fellow internationals who she could identify with by being ‘on the same boat,’ needing to adjust to a host environment. Intercultural interactions also benefitted Liezel by acting as an effective medium for her to learn the ways of her host country, such as when she and I exchanged ideas and information about each other’s cultures and national identity symbols and cuisine. I believe that such benefits for a foreign student like Liezel can be considered educational, both as a means to broaden their knowledge and become adjusted to the host environment and get to know locals via that knowledge. ‘It really widens your perspective,’ said Liezel, when reflecting on the benefits of intercultural interaction.

Intercultural interactions helped ‘Joseph’ associate actively with fellow students, and learn about the cultures of fellow students countries. He also used intercultural interaction to become adjusted to Massey’s learning systems and to help improve his academic performance. ‘Joseph’ felt that intercultural interaction had contributed towards his overall confidence towards life in foreign universities. ‘I think it’s a rich experience to me,’ he mused, adding that if he moved to another university in Europe or America, he would not have any problem adjusting to a new host campus environment.

Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration

A significant finding in my research was that intercultural interaction on the Massey campus often benefitted the participants via three successive developmental stages pivotal to settling into a host campus environment: acceptance, adaptation and integration (Klak & Martin 2003). The participants active engagements and understandings with culturally diverse internationals and locals were examples of acceptance, which in a behavioural context

acknowledges that communication differs across cultures (Klak & Martin 2003:450). This then allowed the participants to undergo adaptation, where individuals move between diverse cultural reference frames to comprehend intercultural issues (Klak & Martin 2003:450). Examples of this include the participants learning from the cultures of fellow internationals and locals by exchanging ideas, values and sometimes physical mediums (such as cuisine, performances and possessions). The participants, via sustaining their intercultural interactions, then experienced integration, transcending cultural frames. This often came about through the participants and the people they interacted with reaching understanding, appreciation and acceptance of each other's cultures. In coherence with the notions of Klak & Martin (2003:451), this empowered the participants by allowing them to better understand themselves, cultural practices and how to act sensitively in various cultural settings.

How the Participants Benefitted from Intercultural Interaction in a New Zealand University Campus Environment: Summary

Overall, the participants largely benefitted from intercultural interactions at Massey that helped them experience cultural diversity, as part of their host university experience and as a means of understanding fellow students cultures, as well as a way of making friends. Intercultural interactions were also used by participants as a means of becoming adjusted to the host campus study environment. They also helped participants as a means of understanding their own cultures through the perspectives of other students, both internationals and 'Kiwis.'

How Massey University can Help Enable Foreign Students to Benefit From Intercultural Interaction

Massey should help support the potential for multiculturalism, and therefore intercultural interaction, within campus students clubs and organizations. Lecturers at Massey should be aware that in some cases foreign students seek beneficial intercultural interaction that helps them adjust to, and learn more about, their host environment and understand the English language well. This can help foreign students like the thesis participants achieve their desires to establish adjustment to Massey, along with intercultural competency abilities and establishing multinational, multicultural networks. Such support can also extend to campus accommodation, where it is evident that foreign students have the potential to regularly interact with each other via sharing living areas or participation in student communities. As I have noted and suggested in previous chapters, Massey could also promote and facilitate regular cooperation between foreign students and their domestic neighbours in campus accommodation areas. This could assist foreign students in achieving improved intercultural interaction via regular contact with New Zealand students which helps them learn about elements of New Zealand culture such as lifestyles, values, customs and cuisine. Such elements are pivotal in an international student's experience of a host country, both in terms of adjustment and taking in an overseas experience.

How New Zealand Universities in General Help Foreign Students Benefit from Intercultural Interaction

The forms of participants benefits from intercultural interaction suggest that foreign students in New Zealand universities generally benefit from intercultural interaction by finding friends and developing support networks, developing confidence, seeking assistance, learning more about their host country and its people, becoming involved with others (both internationals

and locals) and maintaining a sense of adventure (such as in the cases of 'Phil' and Patric and their respective sporting involvements in Massey's surfing and handball scenes). Such incentives have been cited as being pivotal to one's cultural adjustment and for dealing with culture shock (Sluka & Robben 2007:17). My research participants seeking intercultural interaction for the aforementioned benefits via social and academic groups again raises the significance of Skyrme's (2008:38) 'socioacademic relations' in students lifestyles. The significance of 'socioacademic relations' in the research participants benefitting from intercultural interaction suggests that New Zealand universities should aim to make social and academic environments like clubs, study groups and campus accommodation central to foreign students adjustment. It is important for university staff, such as lecturers, to acknowledge that by promoting intercultural interaction in various activities, particularly group-focussed ones, they can often serve as mediums for the development of foreign students cultural adjustment and language skills. Foreign students can therefore easily achieve cultural adjustment to a host campus, broadening their cultural knowledge and experiences, and overcoming any culture shock through meeting culturally diverse people during regular recreational socialising and academic situations.

Conclusion

When on a host campus environment, foreign students like the thesis participants, need to learn how to relate to people different from themselves, especially faculty members, administrators and domestic students, establish interpersonal relationships, and build social support systems (Meyer 2003:5). International students should develop approaches facilitating cross-cultural understanding, communication and adaptation (Meyer 2003:3). The benefits of intercultural interaction experienced by my research participants associating with students of diverse nationalities and cultures reflected the above necessities for overseas students to

adjust to a host campus. The benefits the participants experienced in academic situations were indicative of the building of global networks, which can be achieved via a foreign student associating with students of different nationalities to learn as much as possible about other cultures during classes (Bird & Holmes 2004:11). It is evident from my findings that the developmental stages of acceptance, adaptation and integration (Klak & Martin 2003) are important benefits from foreign students intercultural interactions on campus. Overall, the benefits that the participants experienced from intercultural interaction also suggest that in general foreign students in New Zealand university campus environments are helped in their adjustment to their host environment by their seeking of such interaction. Engaging in intercultural interaction on campus may assist them in their adjustment to host environments, while simultaneously allowing them to gain new cultural experiences, and perspectives.

Conclusion

When undertaking this research on foreign students intercultural interactions on a New Zealand university campus, I did so aware that the presence of foreign students at Massey has seen cultural diversity become an accepted, integral function of life on the Turitea campus, on account of the university's internationalization and participation in a global arena. I partially expected my research participants to be encountering significant adjustment issues to life on their host campus, particularly in regard to the presence of cultural differences affecting their ability to engage in intercultural interactions and thereby adjust to their host campus environment. However, during the course of my research, I found that while the participants did indeed have problems adjusting to the Massey campus, they were largely confident and assertive in overcoming cultural adjustment barriers, embracing the Massey Campus culture and environment as part of their overseas experiences.

The research itself had an impact upon my own attitudes and perceptions of foreign students on-campus intercultural interactions in the same way that I hope it may impact upon New Zealand university students nationwide. Prior to the research, my attitudes towards foreign students were somewhat generalized. I was under the perception from commonly held views and stereotypes expressed in the media and amongst local students like myself that foreign students in New Zealand universities were often ignored or shunned by their domestic peers, and that they regularly chose to keep to themselves or usually associate with compatriot students. Therefore, I commenced this study with a preconception that the intercultural interactions of foreign students like the thesis participants would be sparse and marginalized. I was proved wrong as my thesis research and observations indicated that foreign students

intercultural interactions on campus were in fact regular occurrences in their everyday university activities.

It became apparent from my studies that intercultural interaction serves as a widely-accessible and multi-dimensional means by which foreign students socially and academically engage with and adapt to their host university campus environment and the people within it. Through observing my research participants, I also realized that intercultural interaction serves as a means by which foreign students build international competency, learning and appreciating the cultures and languages of diverse students as they prepare themselves to engage with the global arena after completing their studies. I learnt that intercultural interaction helps foreign students lead confident, active and productive lifestyles on a host campus through regular cross-cultural exposure and experiences. Above all, I learnt that thanks to intercultural interaction, foreign students, especially at Massey, are not a marginalized group, but constitute a well-integrated part of the student community, actively engaging in and contributing towards on-campus student diversity.

A 'Jump into the Unknown' and 'Meta-Cultural Sensitivity'

Upon arriving in their host countries, foreign students find themselves making what Tuoc (1968:63) describes as a 'jump into the unknown.' They find themselves as strangers in a strange land, and that their host environment contains various cultural elements that are either alien to them or which challenge the cultural values and customs which they have been raised in. To comprehend and achieve familiarity with such cultural differences, foreign students often seek to engage in them via intercultural interaction. In the contemporary world there is an ever-increasing number of tertiary students who leave their home countries and study in other ones as foreign students. Many foreign students come from rapidly changing cultures

and have been able to learn to successfully handle cultural changes (Louie 2005:23). In the same way, they need to learn to manage the new culture of their host environment successfully, through what Louie (2005:24) calls ‘meta-cultural sensitivity.’ This is a process of personal growth, entailing a more sophisticated awareness, understanding and acceptance of cultural difference, representing a changed orientation by individuals towards other cultures (Louie 2005:24).

Problems

Some of my research participants often only engaged in intercultural interaction through association and exchanges with fellow internationals, but not with local students, who at times seemed to keep their distance from their overseas peers. My research suggests that domestic students both at Massey and in the wider New Zealand tertiary education scene should be encouraged to interact with their foreign peers more often than they usually do. This can be achieved via approaches such as the internationalization of university curriculum and the promotion of situations where foreign and local students can meet and learn from each other’s cultures, such as campus cultural events or functions.

Hana’s comment that local students seemed reluctant to get to know foreign students like herself reflect Bird and Holmes (2004:5) reporting foreign university students comments that their New Zealand peers stayed in groups and that it was difficult for internationals to join these groups or make friends. Turner and Robson (2008:66) note that student diversity in university environments provides opportunities for all students to obtain intercultural abilities and appreciation. However, local and foreign students may not readily interact. They may uphold a somewhat distant and superficial relationship. Nevertheless, most of my research

participants confidently participated in intercultural interaction with their domestic peers at Massey on a regular basis.

Cultural Change

Foreign students, especially ones from traditional cultures, may find the culture of the host campus offers them social freedoms that they did not experience in their home countries. This does not necessarily lead to their suffering from culture shock, but may necessitate or contribute towards a foreign student adjusting to and appreciating cultural differences present in the host campus, which offers significant beneficial potential for the individual. For example, Hana appreciated how Massey's academic culture was more laid back and less rigid and disciplinarian than the one she experienced in her home country of Japan. She found that this enabled her to study and socialize at her own pace. These freedoms extended into the participants experiences and perceptions of the academic culture at Massey, Liezel and Joseph being particularly surprised by the liberal environment of classes and study groups. They had to adapt to, but soon became at ease with, the lack of formal attire worn by both students and lecturers, and addressing lecturers by their first names - such habits would have been unacceptable in the academic cultures of their universities back home. It is important for foreign students exposed to these cultural freedoms to learn how to control and discipline themselves (Tuoc 1968:65). The participants managed to do this by balancing their study commitments with their intercultural interactions, often merging the two into 'socioacademic relations' and seeking assistance on how to adjust to the host campus culture via university groups like the ISO, and authority figures such as RAs in their campus environments.

Foreign students social and academic relations benefit from intercultural interactions with fellow students from other countries and diverse backgrounds. When fellow students are

thought to be interested in and encourage participants to talk about their own culture, this influences their approaches to study and research topic choices (Turner and Robson 2008:95). Indeed, sustained intercultural interaction of this nature made Liezel feel at home with her host campus environment at Massey, to the point that she felt confident researching local resource and environmental planning topics. It also helped the participants adjust to the living environments of their campus accommodation, especially during casual socialising in their hostels and flats. Yan Yan, for instance, became familiar with her culturally diverse flatmates through regular conversations with one another about their countries cultures that helped them appreciate and respect each other's differences and in the process live a cooperative existence in their flat. This also helped 'Papakwila' and 'Joseph' understand and get along with their local and overseas neighbours in their hostels.

Introduction and Transition

Attempting to merge rapidly into a new society with little transition and introduction requires commitment (Tuoc 1968:64). The participants were all committed to engaging with their host environment at Massey, not just in order to succeed in their study, but also as a means of treating life in New Zealand as part of an overseas experience. Massey University support groups such as the ISO, and campus clubs and organizations such as OCF and 'Pasifika,' provided most of my research participants with useful introduction and transition towards the social and academic cultures of their host campus.

Cultural Clashes and Harmonizing

Foreign students come from diverse countries, and as a group they will exhibit vast differences between them. Each possesses their own culturally influenced perspectives and

comprehensions, that will shape their adjustment and learning (Meyer 2003:3). Often this will bring them into conflict with the values of the host campus environment – for example, Liezel described the Massey University student newspaper *Chaff* as ‘rubbish.’ She told me that Philippine university student newspapers focus solely on what she considers relevant issues in her home country’s student culture, such as the dangers of drink spiking among students and university affairs, rather than branching out towards what she considered irrelevant humour typical of *Chaff*, which she therefore believed to be a waste of students fees.

Metge and Kinloch (1978:8) point out that when people from different cultural groups meet in formal and informal situations, misunderstandings and tensions arise, even in cases where there is goodwill on both sides. They suggest that such miscommunication occurs because the people concerned interpret each other’s words and actions in terms of their own understandings, assuming that these are shared when they are not. Often, however, my research participants culturally influenced perspectives and comprehensions were expressed positively in terms of their intercultural interactions with their international and domestic peers. Examples of these included their adjustment to and learning about their host country, and their sharing of world perspectives with those willing to engage with them in social and academic situations on campus. In these harmonious intercultural interactions the participants exchanged their own culturally-influenced attitudes and comprehensions with those of their foreign and local peers, both sides broadening their knowledge in the process.

Social Activities

Significant to foreign students intercultural interactions is their participation in social activities on campus, although this may be constricted by academic priorities (Selby and Woods 1966:144). Nevertheless, most of my research participants living in campus

accommodation were able to actively participate in community events staged by the Massey accommodation services, where they engaged in intercultural interaction as a means of becoming acquainted with fellow international residents. Other university functions for international students that I observed also constituted social activities that provided foreign students with good opportunities for intercultural interaction. During these events, there were periods in which the foreign student attendees were encouraged by the organisers to become acquainted with their international and domestic peers, during which time intercultural interaction would take place through conversations about each other's cultures.

Foreign Students Intercultural Interactions with Domestic Students

Nathan (2005:70) notes how her international student research participants met local students who were interested in their lives, but this was more the exception than the rule, reminiscent of how Hana often struggled to achieve intercultural interaction with her 'Kiwi' peers, apart from some who were interested in her Japanese language and culture. Indeed, from my research I have concluded that a significant intercultural interaction issue for foreign students on a New Zealand university campus is their ability and means of cementing regular and purposeful intercultural interactions and friendships with local students.

Although some of my research participants regularly engaged in intercultural interaction with domestic students in both social and recreational scenarios on the Massey campus, others reported a lack of interaction from 'Kiwi' students, who they often thought were disinterested or too immature to interact with them. I observed at the Massey orientation dinner for international students how senior domestic students, particularly RAs, helped organize the function and participated in some of the cultural performances and as hosts engaging with the foreign student guests to make them feel at home with the host environment, and through

intercultural interaction, learning about the foreign students countries in conversations. The significance of orientation events in the programmes of Massey University assisting such intercultural interaction is reflective of Ward (2006) pointing out that institutional interventions are often required to cement international and domestic student relations.

‘Socioacademic Relations’

Environments facilitating ‘socioacademic relations’, and in the process intercultural interaction, for foreign students include what Leask (2007:87) calls ‘international classrooms,’ learning environments in which culture is a significant element of teaching and learning. The student-to-student and student-to-lecturer intercultural interaction within these ‘international classrooms’ is significant in promoting internationalization. It is significant that intercultural interactions in the participants ‘socioacademic relations’ consisted of the exchanges of ideas and information concerning the cultures of their countries with their peers and lecturers. This suggests that intercultural interaction within this context is a main means of foreign students introducing themselves to others.

Another potentially plentiful domain of ‘socioacademic relations’ for foreign students are group projects in their classes, which some of my research participants regularly participated in. Group projects are capable of providing opportunities for foreign and domestic students to enrich each other’s understanding, via intercultural interaction (Skyrme 2008:40). Bird and Holmes (2004:16) observed that in postgraduate classes, international students were willing to contribute examples from their own countries to develop understanding. Many of my research participants, who were postgraduates, often did this to cement relations with foreign and domestic student peers and be at one with their class environment. However, the mediation of foreign students intercultural learning needs conscious reflection on separate and organized

opportunities for social learning experiences with people from other cultures, instead of merely co-locating foreign and domestic students in classes (Turner and Robson 2008:73).

In terms of ‘socioacademic relations,’ class-based contact through teaching that involves students in cooperation, collaboration and small group interaction can increase cognitive skills and strengthen their learning (Skyrme 2008:26). I observed, and recorded participants accounts of, how ‘socioacademic relations’ within a study group can also benefit foreign students in a similar manner, promoting intercultural interaction between students and lecturers. Such approaches can enable foreign students to experience authentic intercultural interaction through fostering social inclusion, genuine internationalism and intercultural learning (De Vita 2007:164).

The participants ability to develop and maintain intercultural friendships reflects the importance of this intercultural interaction medium for foreign students, as emphasised by Ward (2006:14). Interestingly, the ability and habits of some of the participants being able to engage in regular, sustained intercultural interaction with their domestic peers in both social and ‘socioacademic’ situations on campus contradicts the research by Ward (2006), which implies that international students often struggle to achieve frequent and meaningful cross-cultural engagements with local students.

Lecturers and Foreign Students Intercultural Interactions

My observations and research suggest that lecturers have considerable potential to provide foreign students with the ability to make a smooth transition from their home culture to their domestic culture via intercultural interaction in the context of ‘socioacademic relations.’ The presence of foreign students provides a significant learning opportunity in which they and their lecturers can accept and participate in each other’s cultures (Louie 2005:24). Lecturers

should provide foreign students with the means to assess different cultures, particularly the host culture, with understanding and acceptance (Louie 2005:23). There is evidence from my research that is very much the case at Massey, some participants reporting that lecturers promoted and were interested in their cultural backgrounds, while the Master's Group meetings I attended with some participants often emphasised their cultural diversity in order to facilitate familiarity, acceptance and coherence between the foreign students and lecturers. Such intercultural interactions, with their emphasis on individuals becoming acquainted with and appreciating one another's cultural diversity, are an example of Louie's (2005) 'meta-cultural sensitivity' between foreign students and their lecturers.

Overview of the Participants On-Campus Intercultural Interactions

My research participants themselves were illustrative of the extent of intercultural interactions at the Massey University campus:

Hana used intercultural interaction as a medium to express her Japanese identity to her international and local student peers at Massey, especially those interested in her culture. She often found clubs and functions for foreign students an easy way to experience intercultural interaction, along with 'socioacademic relations.'

Yan Yan actively sought engagement with intercultural interaction as a means of becoming adjusted to the Massey campus environment, particularly in the contexts of relating to fellow students and experiencing her host campus environment as part of an overseas experience. Intercultural interaction was also useful as a communication tool for Yan Yan when relating to and conversing with her campus flatmates. It is interesting to note that both Hana and Yan Yan also sought intercultural interaction, particularly with locals, to become exposed to the English language, on account of the widespread use of the language in the global arena.

Patric's intercultural interactions often consisted of him expressing his Swedish identity to his local and foreign students peers, often as a focal point for conversation. He also used intercultural interaction as a means of promoting coherence amongst culturally diverse members of his handball team during practice and play. Patric often used intercultural interaction to also learn about the cultures of his fellow foreign students in order to enrich his cross-cultural perspectives and assist his overseas ambitions.

'Phil' tended not to seek intercultural interaction at Massey, believing the phenomenon to be an everyday experience in his routines as a foreign student when meeting and sharing activities with culturally diverse students, especially at his Surf Club.

'Papakwila' found intercultural interaction at Massey to be an effective means of communication and getting to know local and foreign students, especially when living in campus accommodation, where he and his fellow residents effectively shared each other's cultures and learned from them. Intercultural interaction was also significant in 'Papakwila's involvement in the Pacific students organization 'Pasifika,' the expression of Pacific culture playing a regular role in its meetings.

Liezel and 'Joseph's campus intercultural interactions were often centred in 'socioacademic relations,' on account of their study commitments rarely allowing them to socialize casually with other students, especially local ones, on the Massey concourse. Intercultural interaction via 'socioacademic relations' permitted both these students to engage with and express their cultures to their foreign and domestic student peers and lecturers while involved in academic situations such as our Master's Group meetings.

Overall, my research participants intercultural interactions reflected the findings of Lewthwaite (1996) that foreign students on a New Zealand campus saw crossing cultures as a learning process, a means of learning new skills to help their adjustment, often using

university support figures such as RAs not to seek comfort from culture shock, trauma and homesickness, but as mediums for advice and support for intercultural interaction with their 'Kiwi' campus environment. Significantly, although some research participants expressed discomfort and annoyance towards local students attitudes to foreign students, none reported what could be considered ethnic prejudice, which to me implies that the Massey campus and the people who work, study and live within its environs have accepted and encourage cultural diversity and internationalization on the campus as a norm.

The lack of ethnic prejudice, combined with a lack of cultural stereotyping by locals being reported by my research participants also implies that Massey University presents and promotes an environment that promotes student diversity. However, the fact that some participants, especially Hana, reported being ignored, unable to engage with, or being avoided and looked down upon by domestic students on a regular basis suggests that some local students may need to develop a greater appreciation towards the presence and cultural diversity of foreign students, and the benefits of intercultural interaction with them. Obviously the international student presence, and benefits of cross-cultural engagement with it, need to be promoted better at Massey, in order to strengthen its multicultural, internationalized environment.

My research participants expressed a strong interest in New Zealand culture, which is indicative of how foreign students treat intercultural interaction with the host campus as part of their overseas experience. Indeed some participants enjoyed and were interested in how well Maori culture was promoted at Massey. The participants did not, or only rarely, display or give accounts of what may be considered culture shock. To them, cultural change was an expected part of adjustment to their host campus, and a key part of their

intercultural interactions within it, along with the overall experience of staying in a foreign country.

How New Zealand University Campuses can Facilitate Foreign Students Intercultural Interactions

Universities have to deal with a considerable number of foreign students from diverse foreign cultural backgrounds (Jochems *et al* 1996:325). Without intervention on the part of university institutions to promote intercultural interactions between foreign and domestic students, the two groups of students would spend their university time in parallel rather than making the most of opportunities to interact. Unless universities promote interaction between foreign and domestic students in classroom activities, the potential for the development of a new generation of people for the global workforce will go to waste (Bird & Holmes 2004:7). In recent times, universities worldwide have acknowledged the importance of having a dedicated international focus. New Zealand universities, including Massey, have welcomed the opportunity to enrol foreign students, not only for the revenue they generate, but because of their enriching of the institutions cultural environments, which in the process reinforces international understanding and goodwill (Graham 1999:52). Cultural sensitivity on the part of Massey University was in some respects central to the participants intercultural interactions. Central to successful cultural sensitivity on a host university campus is the use of warm, tolerant and friendly individuals to administer orientation programs, respecting foreign students sensitivity over pride in their cultures and expressing interest in the foreign students countries (Meyer 2003:12-13). Simultaneously, on the part of a university like Massey, the establishment of culturally sensitive institutional responses which respect foreign students cultural capital and learning expectations is pivotal in their abilities to learn well in a host environment (Turner and Robson 2008:74). This was evident in my research participants

confidence towards their studies, intercultural interaction helping them understand and cooperate with their lecturers and fellow students and succeed in their coursework.

Comprehensive foreign student orientation should have programs meeting adjustment problems. This can be achieved by orientation helping foreign students establish a good starting base during their arrival, such as a welcoming event like the dinner for international students that I attended. Consequent orientation should strengthen the starting base, assist foreign students with cultural conflicts in order to achieve a balance between participation in the host culture and preserving their own cultural identities, and assist foreign students with advanced and long-term needs such as integration into the host campus life (Meyer 2003:17). Examples can include foreign student events held on the concourse, such as cultural club and organization functions and displays during 'Clubs Day', an annual club exhibition staged in the first week of the first semester at Massey. These can enable foreign students to feel immersed in both their home and host cultures. Thus orientation helps foreign students achieve cross-cultural adaptation to their host campus environment.

Significant problems experienced in my research participants intercultural interactions at Massey included a reluctance on the part of some New Zealanders to cross-culturally engage with them, differences in opinions between participants and locals cultural values, and some instances of offence by campus religious organizations. The lack of cultural understanding by New Zealand students reported by some of my research participants reflects the observation of Metge and Kinloch (1978:7) that just because it is fashionable to refer to New Zealand society as multicultural does not mean that all New Zealanders are knowledgeable about or interested in other cultures than their own. Segregation between foreign and domestic students in campus accommodation appeared to create a significant intercultural interaction gulf between them. This matter should be addressed by the Massey accommodation services, for it

poses a serious risk in terms of causing and upholding a lack of productive communication between foreign and local students. A simple solution to this issue would be to promote intercultural interaction between foreign and domestic students in accommodation by two approaches, the first of which would simply consist of mixing local and foreign students in campus accommodation areas. The second approach would be the staging of events by the Massey campus accommodation services within campus hostel and flat communities in which foreign and domestic student residents are encouraged to interact with each other, such as sports days, BBQs, 'pot-luck' dinners or even cultural exhibitions.

Foreign Students Intercultural Interactions on a New Zealand University Campus: In Summary

The intercultural interactions of my research participants on the Massey University Turitea campus and my research generally indicate that overall, New Zealand university campuses are becoming increasingly internationalized through intakes of foreign students from diverse nationalities and cultures. New Zealand universities should therefore acknowledge that the needs and expectations of foreign students towards their host campuses vary between individuals. Therefore, all New Zealand universities should make initiatives towards making their campuses multicultural environments where, to put things simply, foreign students can 'get along' with their fellow international and local students. This can be done by encouraging multicultural intercultural interaction – where foreign students from all nationalities interact with each other and with locals through organized events where they appreciate and learn from each other's culture in order to both adjust to their host environments while simultaneously gaining new international cultural insights.

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Appendix One

Data provided by Bruce Graham, International Director of the Massey University International Office, consulting HEMI.

International students at Massey University by Programme & Campus - 2009

Student Campus	Program Level	Total
Albany	Undergraduate	1044
	Postgraduate	408
	Pre-Degree	144
Albany Total		1596
Palmerston North	Undergraduate	835
	Postgraduate	503
	Pre-Degree	405
Palmerston North Total		1743
Wellington	Undergraduate	198
	Postgraduate	43
	Pre-Degree	172
Wellington Total		413
Grand Total		3752

Appendix Two



The crowded Turitea campus during orientation in the first semester provides good opportunities for foreign students, especially those new to Massey, to make new friends and participate in intercultural interactions.



Club promotions on campus during orientation allow foreign students opportunities to participate in organizations that facilitate intercultural interactions between fellow internationals and domestic students.



The concourse is a common area for foreign students intercultural interactions, especially when they are heading to study or taking a break.



The campus dining hall also provides opportunities for casual intercultural interactions for foreign students during meal breaks over culturally diverse cuisine.