Who's not integrating? International women speak about New Zealand students

Vivienne Anderson
Faculty of Education, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand
vivienne.anderson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Concerns have been raised over some international students' 'lack of integration' in the New Zealand context. These have tended to focus on visible international students, particularly students from China. Explanations for students' so-called non-integration include 'cultural distance', 'cultural difference', and a sense of threat among New Zealand students. To date, little research has considered international students' experiences in relation to either dominant notions of 'New Zealand-ness'; or how discourses of difference construct members of visible minority groups as Other in the New Zealand context. Significantly, the voices of international students themselves are notably absent from discussions surrounding their integration or otherwise.

This paper draws on critical theoretical perspectives to foreground the voices of three international women university students as they speak about their interactions with New Zealanders. Barriers to friendship are identified, including New Zealanders' disinterest and racism at interpersonal and institutional levels. At the same time, the women offer explanations for these barriers, and acknowledge occasions when they have been overcome. The paper concludes that the apparent failure of some international students to integrate should be re-considered in the light of critical theoretical perspectives. These highlight the importance of viewing international education as located within broader social, political and historical contexts; and challenge the notion of 'integration' itself.

Introduction

Published research and public discussion in New Zealand reveals an ongoing concern with international students' integration or otherwise (for example see Ward & Masgoret 2004; Ward, Masgoret, Ho, Holmes, Cooper, Newton & Crabbe 2005). 'Integration' is seen as a desirable endpoint or resolution for students who have moved from one socio-geographical location to another (Burnapp 2006). While lip-service is paid to the notion of integration as involving both international and local students (see Evanoff 2006), the burden of integration tends to fall on visible international students (see Butcher 2004b).

Much literature concerned with international students' experiences draws on 'cultural difference' as a "primary analytical tool" (Bullen & Kenway 2003, p. 41). At a surface level, this results in a distortion or oversimplification of complex human realities. The diversity of both 'New Zealand' and 'international' students (for example) is effectively obscured, as is the significance of other factors such as gender, religion, course and level of study. At a deeper level, this perpetuates discourses of difference that position some people as Other in relation to an unspoken norm (Bullen & Kenway 2003; Diangelo 2006).

In this paper I interrogate both the notion of integration, and the discourses of difference surrounding it. To do this, I foreground the voices of three international women university students as they reflect on their interactions with New Zealanders. At the same time, by reading the women's comments through a theoretical lens informed by the "critical tradition" (Sikes 2006, p. 46), I am able to consider connections between these discourses of difference and students' lived realities (see Fine 1994); and to make recommendations in regard to international education research and practice (NZIER 2004). I acknowledge the generosity of the women appearing in this paper, and note that other readings of their experiences are possible.

A theoretical lens

My theoretical lens is multi-faceted, drawing on postcolonial theory, poststructuralism, critical feminist and transnationalism perspectives. A multidimensional perspective provides a suitably "complex, flexible, and adaptable" conceptual tool for considering complex experiences, and the interplay between these and broader structural issues (Sikes 2006, p. 46). To be more specific, postcolonial theory is useful for simultaneously

considering human heterogeneity, agency, historical and global relations of power (Kenway & Bullen 2003; see Rizvi 2004). It challenges Eurocentric analyses, "the assumption of 'the Western' as the primary referent in theory and practice" (Mohanty 1991a, p. 53). Postcolonial *feminist* theory reminds us that human beings are gendered, embodied subjects. It problematises the normalisation of male-ness, autonomy and independence (Bullen & Kenway 2003). Poststructuralist theory highlights how discourse reveals and reproduces unequal relations of power. At the same time, poststructuralism allows the possibility for change. It recognises that people as co-creators of discourse can work to disrupt dominant positions, opening up new ways of thinking and being (Gibson-Graham 2003). Transnationalism literatures add depth and complexity to postcolonial perspectives by interrogating straightforward notions of the nation-state, national identity, and domination/subordination. Both poststructuralism and transnationalism literatures consider human subjectivities as fluid and multiple (Ang 2001; Ichimoto 2004; Mohanty 2003; Ong 1999).

International education in New Zealand

Before discussing how integration is conceptualised in international education literature we need to first consider the New Zealand international education context. 'International education' in New Zealand involves offshore education provision, public and private training establishments, and education from primary to tertiary levels. For the purposes of this paper I focus largely on international education in a public tertiary institution. Public tertiary institutions in New Zealand enrol students either as 'international' or 'New Zealand' students. 'International students' are foreign students "studying in New Zealand on a student permit from the New Zealand Immigration Service" (Ministry of Education 2002), while 'New Zealand' students are those with New Zealand citizenship and Permanent Residency status. All New Zealand students pay a portion of their course costs, with the remainder subsidised by the New Zealand Government. International students on the other hand pay tuition fees on the basis of their enrolment status. For example, full-fee paying international students pay unsubsidised fees directly to their institution (over and above actual course costs); exchange students usually pay tuition fees to their home institution on the basis of reciprocal inter-institutional agreements; and international scholarship students' fees are funded by donor governments or agencies. Significant asymmetries exist within and across these categories, as I will demonstrate shortly.

Butcher (2003) explains the connections between how students are currently categorised for enrolment purposes and broader policy changes over the past two decades. Prior to the 1980s, students coming from overseas to study in New Zealand were few in number, and funded largely through foreign aid scholarships. For New Zealand students, tertiary education was funded by the State as a 'public good'. Following the 1984 election of New Zealand's fourth Labour Government, ideological changes led to significant shifts in public policy. State sector reforms were undertaken aimed at increasing economic gain through reduced State regulation and increased competition. Universities were corporatised, and competition was introduced to the tertiary education sector. Education was now seen as a "private commodity" and students as 'consumers' within an education 'marketplace' (p. 160). Government subsidies per equivalent full-time student were reduced so that New Zealand students were held increasingly responsible for funding their own education. As universities became more and more reliant on non-governmental funding, legislation was passed allowing them to enrol full-fee paying overseas students. This precipitated the birth of the 'export education industry' (also see Ministry of Education 2001). Full-fee paying international students are now "a crucial source of funding" for New Zealand's public tertiary education institutions, effectively subsidising domestic education in an era of reduced State expenditure (Butcher 2004b, p. 259).

Little academic attention has been paid to the significance of asymmetries evident in New Zealand international education statistics (although a notable exception is Butcher 2004b). According to the Ministry of Education (2005), 94% of full-year, full-time international students at public tertiary institutions in 2004[1] were full-fee paying. In contrast, only 1% of international students came on the basis of foreign aid and other scholarships; 1.6% as research based postgraduate students; and 3.5% on the basis of exchange programmes. Of the full-fee paying students, 85% came from Asian countries (mostly China, followed by South Korea, India, Japan and Malaysia). By comparison, 88% of exchange students were from Europe or North America. The number of men and women students in most categories was fairly equal.

Rizvi (2004) argues that asymmetries in international education provision reveal how it is implicated in the reproduction of global inequalities. For example, international education offers opportunities for students

---

[1] 2004 statistics were the latest aggregated statistics available at the time of writing.

from "middle-class Chinese families" rather than international students across-the-board (p. 40); relatively few sponsorship opportunities exist for students from non-industrialised countries; and the strongest exchange relationships are with institutions in other 'Western' English-speaking countries. To Rizvi, the lack of academic interest in these asymmetries is not surprising given that research in the area is often underpinned by "commercial rather than academic motivations" (p. 37, also see Butcher 2004a).

'Nationhood' and migration in New Zealand

Alongside shifts in international education policy and provision there have been significant shifts in migration policy in New Zealand. These should be considered in relation to changing notions of 'nationhood': who is 'in' and who is 'out' in the New Zealand context (Butcher 2004b).

Since the 1970s and 80s, nationhood in New Zealand has centered on the idea of biculturalism, or partnership between (indigenous) Māori people and 'Pākehā' (Bishop & Glynn 1998; Mohanram 1998). At the time of early British colonisation, 'Pākehā' was the name given by Māori to the white Anglo-Celt colonisers. Since then it has expanded to include firstly people of European ancestry, then white people more generally (Mohanram 1998). Despite the idea of partnership inferred by the term 'biculturalism', since the beginning of European colonisation, Pākehā rather than Māori have largely had control over national resources (Bishop & Glynn 1998; Mohanram 1998; Smith 1999).

Brooking & Rabel (1995) note that from the mid-1800s until the 1970s, migration policy reflected this Eurocentricity. Predominantly Pākehā governments followed "an unofficial 'white New Zealand policy'" where "Protestant Anglo-Celts" were considered the preferred migrant population (p. 23). Subsequent waves of immigration following World War Two did little to upset New Zealand's "overwhelming monocultural[ism]" (p. 36).

During the 1970s emerging notions of biculturalism and decolonisation began to trouble assumptions of "cultural superiority and 'British' identity" that had previously shaped immigration policy (Brooking & Rabel 1995, p. 42). But it was not until after the 1984 election that major shifts in immigration policy occurred. These culminated in the 1987 Immigration Act which emphasised for the first time the importance of selecting migrants on the basis of skills rather than country-of-origin. The 1987 Act allowed a significant change in both the number of migrants coming to New Zealand, and their source countries. In particular, the number of Asian immigrants grew dramatically, especially those identifying as ethnic Chinese (Brooking & Rabel 1995).

Despite these changes, public discussion in New Zealand continues to reveal a pervasive Eurocentricity (Ip 1995). White immigrants may be included as 'Pākehā' New Zealanders, but 'Māori' refers only to New Zealand's indigenous people (Mohanram 1998). Within biculturalism, non-indigenous, non-white migrants occupy an uneasy third position in what Mohanram describes as a race hierarchy. White New Zealanders are not named; but visible Others are identified (Palumbo-Liu 2002) according to 'race' or 'culture'. In New Zealand, "the origins of national traditions turn out to be as much acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation" (Bhabha 1990a, p. 5).

'Integration' in New Zealand research

Recent research reports highlight concerns over (some) international students' integration or otherwise in the New Zealand context (Ward 2001; Ward & Masgoret 2004; Ward et al. 2005). These reports have indicated a relatively low level of interaction between New Zealanders and international students, in spite of an evident desire on the part of international students for more New Zealand friends (Ward 2001; Ward & Masgoret 2004). In their recent study of New Zealanders' interactions with international students, Ward et al. (205) found that New Zealand students were 'moderately willing' to interact with international peers. However, this willingness was uneven. New Zealanders who were bilingual or who had lived overseas were more willing to interact with international students, and in centres with higher numbers of international students, New Zealanders seemed to view "visibly different" students less favourably than other international students (p. vi). It is interesting that while this study does acknowledge the heterogeneity of New Zealand students, 'visible difference' is clearly read from the standpoint of New Zealand's Pākehā majority.

In their survey of international students in New Zealand, Ward & Masgoret (2004) found that Chinese students expressed the most dissatisfaction with their time in New Zealand, and the highest perception of discrimination on the part of New Zealanders. Ward & Masgoret explain this in relation to "the relatively poor integration of Chinese students into New Zealand educational institutions and into New Zealand society more broadly" (p. 70), cautioning that "a cultural tendency to emphasise…negative, rather than positive, experiences" may have influenced Chinese students' survey feedback (p. 71). Ward & Masgoret also note that students from Asian countries in general also feel "less included" in classroom contexts than students from European and North American countries (p. 42). They argue that "this is not surprising" since "the acceptance and adjustment of international students is a function of cultural distance" (p. 42). In response to these findings, Ward & Masgoret propose that optimal numbers of international students should be determined in order to avoid "feelings of threat in members of the receiving community" (p. 72). In their 2004 report, Ward & Masgoret are not explicit about *which* students should be limited in number, nor *which* New Zealanders perceive particular students as a threat. At the 2005 ISANA conference however, Ward argued that since Chinese students appear not to be integrating, consideration should be given to limiting their numbers in future (Ward 2005).

To use 'cultural difference' or 'distance' as an explanation both for some international students' apparent lack of integration and their negative perceptions, is to simultaneously homogenise New Zealanders and the international students in question (Collins 2006; Diangelo 2006). From a critical theory perspective, assumptions of 'difference' conveniently position the international students as deficient, and dismiss their perspectives (Diangelo 2006). It is telling to note the convergence between racialised debates surrounding both international education and migration in New Zealand, in particular, the parallel calls to limit numbers of 'Asian' international students and 'Asian' migrants (Collins 2006; Butcher 2004b). As Butcher (2004b, p. 274) puts it, "the controversy over whom we educate, where we educate and how we educate may have less to do with our notions of education, and more to do with our notions of New Zealand and New Zealanders".

'Integration' in wider academic literature

Before hearing the views of three international women students, it is helpful to consider how integration is conceptualised in wider academic literature. Berry (2005, p. 697) describes integration as the preferred way for people to engage across 'cultural differences'. It involves minority groups maintaining their "cultural integrity" while also becoming "an integral part of the larger social network" (p. 705). At the same time, Berry notes that integration is only possible when the "dominant society" is accepting of diversity (p. 705). In other words, integration depends on dominant and non-dominant group members all accepting the right to maintain diverse identities. To Berry, non-dominant groups must be willing to adopt dominant society's values, while dominant groups must ensure that State institutions adequately serve the needs of *all* people.

Evanoff (2006) on the other hand describes integration as the development of "common ground between people with different ethical norms" (p. 421). Integration is reciprocal, involving change for non-dominant and dominant groups alike. Evanoff argues that *what* should be changed should be determined on the basis of dialogue, where cultures are "asked to justify why they do the things they do" (p. 430). Dialogue involves negotiation over which norms should underpin relationships, and criticism to determine the strong and weak aspects of alternative positions. New ways of thinking emerge based on norms constructed through the process of dialogue, and on the strengths of different ethical standpoints.

Through a postcolonial and post-structuralist lens, neither Berry (2005) nor Evanoff (2006) adequately recognise the complexity and ongoing 'messiness' surrounding human interactions, or the interplay between these and uneven relations of power. While paying lip-service to integration as reciprocal, Berry (2005) uses the term 'adaptation' exclusively in relation to minority group members. Evanoff (2006) discusses adaptation as involving both groups, but refers to "intercultural dialogue" as if neutral grounds exist for such a discussion, and as if a democratically decided consensus is possible. In contrast with this, Palumbo-Liu (2002) argues that intercultural dialogue is rarely democratic. Bhabha (1990b) describes it in terms of 'jarring' and 'grappling' within contexts of uneven power. In the New Zealand context, to borrow Evanoff's phrase (2006, p. 430), it is (white) Pākehā[2] who get to ask why others "do things the way they do" (see

---

[2] I use the term 'Pākehā' to refer to white New Zealanders (Mohanram 1998). While noting its contested-ness, I acknowledge the right of New Zealand's indigenous people to name those who came after them (Nairn 2005).

Butcher 2004b). Public and academic discussions concerning integration have to date revealed little dialogue.

Listening to women students

The remainder of the paper responds to this lack of dialogue by foregrounding the voices of three 'Asian'[3] women students as they talk about their interactions with New Zealanders. Frances, Yukiko, and Violet[4] were interviewed during 2005 and 2006 as part of a broader, ongoing PhD project exploring the study and living experiences of 20 diverse international and New Zealand women from a university community in New Zealand. The project as a whole seeks to interrupt the representation of both international and New Zealand students as homogenous categories (see Rhee 2006), while recognising the political and historical realities governing New Zealand (international) education policy and practice (Rizvi 2004). As such it is concerned with both commonalities *and* particularities across interviewees' experiences (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong 2000).

I have chosen to include Frances, Yukiko and Violet in this paper for three reasons: firstly, as a conscious response to the othering of 'Asian' students in the New Zealand context; secondly, because each of these women spoke reflectively and at length in their interviews about their interactions with New Zealanders; and thirdly, because they articulated in depth themes that emerged across my interviews with 'visible' international students. It is worth noting that these themes were also paralleled in interviews with 'visible' New Zealand women, a point I will discuss in a later paper. For the purposes of this paper I include just three women, in order to allow them room to 'speak' within the constraints of an academic text (see Diangelo 2006; Ladson-Billings 1998). By doing so, I hope to develop "a dimension of oppositionality" in relation to the notion of integration (Flores 2000, p. 691), and to adequately re-present the nuances in what they had to say.

Frances, Yukiko and Violet each expressed a sense of Other-ness in the New Zealand context, while working to position themselves differently. At the same time, Yukiko and Violet in particular, problematised simplistic notions of Other-ness, highlighting the way in which othering is both complex and reciprocal. My intention in this paper is not to posit generaliseable conclusions, but rather: to draw connections between the situated lived experiences of these particular students and broader relations of power in the New Zealand context; to call into question the 'commonsense' surrounding (some) international students' integration or otherwise; and to provoke discussion as to how integration itself might be considered re-considered (see Fine et al 2000).

Frances

I begin with Frances, a student from the People's Republic of China. At the time of her interview, Frances was completing a year as an exchange student in New Zealand. In her interview, Frances identified occasions when she found New Zealanders extremely friendly and helpful, and others when she found them ambivalent or overtly racist.

Frances' initial impressions of New Zealanders were positive. Reflecting on the level of assistance she received after losing a bag and missing a connecting flight at Auckland International Airport, Frances declared, "At that time I really like this country because I met **so** many friendly people".[5] When Frances reached her final destination, it was dark, the bank was closed, and the taxi that she had arranged to meet her was gone. Frances became "**so** stressed" when she called the university number and received no reply. Once again, New Zealanders proved helpful. Frances was astounded by an unsolicited offer of money from a New Zealand woman at the airport, and by a local taxi driver's willingness to make phone calls on her behalf.

---

[3] I acknowledge the homogenisation implicit in the word 'Asian' (Mohanty 1991b), but I use the term here deliberately. This paper aims to simultaneously highlight and problematise the racialised tone of discussion surrounding students' integration or otherwise in the New Zealand context.

[4] All names used are pseudonyms.

[5] Short quotes from interview transcripts are indicated by quotation marks. Longer quotes are indented, with bold type indicating interviewees' emphasis of words or phrases. Repeated full stops indicate a pause in the conversation, or a place where I have removed a phrase to avoid participants becoming identifiable. More dots indicate a longer pause or deletion. Square brackets show where I have added or altered a word to make the meaning or the context clear. Where two speakers are quoted, 'V' indicates my voice and the other letter refers to the interviewee. All interview data was checked with participants prior to publication.

Despite the stress of a long journey, a lost bag and missed connections, Frances was warmed by these initial encounters.

At university however, Frances' impressions were very different. She found it difficult to find a "kiwi friend" that she could "talk to". Frances suggested that when she first arrived, this might have been because of the difficulty she had understanding New Zealanders' spoken English. However, she acknowledged that despite now being highly competent understanding and communicating in the New Zealand context, she had still not made a 'kiwi' friend. Here Frances reflects on possible reasons for New Zealand students' apparent (and to her, surprising) disinterest in her.

> F   If some foreigner's in my class we'll be really curious and we'll be really interested in their culture, and in their life, and in how they find the class or…all those different aspects of their life, whereas I think maybe there are too many international students here. So the Kiwi students don't pay much attention to them, or they are not curious about them…and also …I find it's hard because I try to like start conversation with them during the class or before the class. And just…some respond and some there's...
>
> V   It just stops, the conversation just stops?
>
> F   Yeah…and also I think that's like universal problem, not just for me because I have some friend who's living in the hall, and...she's also exchange student and she said that in the hall it's kind of like Kiwi students sit together and international students sit together...Yeah so it's really hard to find a Kiwi student. Kiwi friend.

Having initially described difficulty making New Zealand friends as a personal problem, Frances now acknowledges that this seems to be an issue for (visible) international students generally. She appears to echo Ward's (Ward 2005) suggestion that New Zealanders' apparent disinterest may be due to there being 'too many' (visible) international students in New Zealand. But unlike Ward, Frances interprets this in terms of international students' loss of 'novelty value', contrasting their reception here with how international students are received in her Chinese university.

Later in the interview, Frances described occasions when New Zealanders' ambivalence was expressed as overt racism. Significantly, she seemed reluctant to name it as such (see Palumbo-Liu 2002). Here she describes her encounters with groups of Pākehā students on her way home after working late in the university library.

> [On the way] home I bump into a lot of drunk students and they kind of like, swear to you. Like..I feel really uncomfortable about that. They swear to you or just like, I don't know, I don't think it's like a discrimination but it kind of makes me think in that way.

I questioned Frances a little further as to why the students' comments made her think they were discriminating against her in particular.

> V   And have they made comments that were like you said it makes you think discrimination, like they may be discriminating against you because you're Chinese?
>
> F   Asians.
>
> V   Asians, so do they make comments about Asian students as they as they go past?
>
> F   Yeah.
>
> V   Can you tell me any of those comments or would you prefer not to?
>
> F   [pauses] like 'go back to China'.
>
> V   Is that right?
>
> F   Go back to yeah China….And with some dirty swear words.

Having admitted the racialised tone of these students' comments, Frances then downplayed her admission by adding that her American flatmates had also experienced New Zealand students' ambivalence. But when asked if 'Kiwi' students had told her American friends to return to America, Frances admitted that they had not. As a visible international student Frances was told to return home. Her American friends were simply sworn at.

At the same time, Frances described how her own sense of self had developed during her time in New Zealand. Here she discusses this in terms of a new 'openness' to others.

> F   Maybe for me I'm more open…Yeah just.. say hello to someone sit beside you, and if they respond,..that's ok just go on conversation, yeah if they don't respond..that's fine.
>
> V   It doesn't worry you so much?
>
> F   Yeah..so I think maybe for me I'm more open to them?

While 'openness' in this context refers in part to a new confidence and willingness to initiate conversation with New Zealand students, it also indicates a kind of resignation to New Zealand students' ambivalence and

racism. Frances stated later in the interview that this new 'openness' would shape her aims and expectations should she ever study in New Zealand again saying, "I think if I come back again I won't bother too much about making friends with Kiwis or improving English". In saying this, Frances highlights the way in which a lack of friendliness on the part of the 'homogenous majority' can become reciprocated. Having originally come to New Zealand with high expectations of making New Zealand friends, Frances was now resigned to the apparent impossibility of doing so.

Yukiko

Like Frances, Yukiko expressed a sense of resignation when her desire to make friends with New Zealanders was not met. At the time of her interview, Yukiko had lived in New Zealand for approximately six years, having come from Japan during her last two years of secondary school. When interviewed, Yukiko was in her final year of study for a Bachelor of Arts degree.

At the beginning of the interview, Yukiko spent some time reflecting on her initial years in New Zealand. She had visited with her father and sister the year prior to entering school here, and been given a brochure advertising international education opportunities at an urban high school. Yukiko decided to attend the school on the basis of the brochure. Here she discusses the mismatch between her expectations based on the marketing brochure, and what the school was like for her as an international student.

> I really **clearly** remember the brochure said..'international students and..New Zealanders, the local students, are really mixed'. And then it even said that the principal..actually...does organise the lunch time. So that, you know..local students and international students can get along,..or..the principal being very friendly, and a really..traditional school, and really good school,…and good girls, and high academic..outcome. Yeah that's all **true** probably but..[laughing],..these girls I saw they really misbehaved [laughs]...I was just **so shocked** you know like, of course there was discriminations….so I felt the difference between what the..brochure, and the local students mentioned in brochure and the reality is quite different.

According to Yukiko's memory, the advertising brochure indicated that New Zealand and international students socialised together and that this was encouraged at an institutional level. Instead, she experienced discrimination at an institutional and interpersonal level. Here Yukiko describes this in terms of neglect, or a lack of care.

> No one really you know..cared me..actually,..and no one told me where to go, what to do. I just had to find out everything by myself...It was just, yeah and I cried actually [laughs]….I thought, I was expecting that it would be..cared more, at least, you know, where to go and stuff, but I just I was..given the timetable, and then..the..room.. number and stuff but I've **no** idea what…it indicated even [laughing], so I was like 'Oh my God!'

In the light of this neglect, when Yukiko discovered the discrepancy between the fees charged to her parents and the parents of New Zealand students, she was deeply upset. She stresses that it was not so much the fees themselves that upset her, but the disjuncture between her school fees and how she was treated within the school.

> When I found out I'm paying 9000 [dollars] per year,…for the only tuition fees at…high school, and when I found out..that these local students pays only $75...It's nothing for free of **course** yeah, that's **fine**, but..I just felt so **shocked,** and actually that day I **really** cried in front of people…and,….of course people around I mean students around they were surprised because suddenly I started crying and they don't know why I'm crying. I was crying…. I just felt **so** sorry for my parents,..actually...and, **why** is this different? I just……no I cannot, I could not describe why it was… and...the **fees** and also the **treatment** I get, we get here,….it's just so.. doesn't match.

The brochure on which Yukiko had based her decision to attend the school had fuelled her expectations of a caring, interactive environment where she would make friends with New Zealand students and receive a quality education. Instead, there was a significant "gap between [Yukiko's] broad social and educational aspirations on the one hand and [her] narrowly designated status as a fee-paying ['alien'] on the other"(Habu 2000, p. 44). Bhabha (1990b, p. 312) describes this in terms of a painful "jarring of meanings and values".

The New Zealand students at Yukiko's school reinforced her position as 'alien' (Habu 2000) at an interpersonal level. Along with the other visible international students, Yukiko was subjected to subtle, yet clearly targeted harassment. This involved being ignored, and kicked or tripped during school assembly. At university, Yukiko continued to experience such harassment on occasions. Here she describes two such instances involving her and a friend.

> We were still talking, and, these two cars, you know, very noisy cars, local students..Kiwis were there, and they throw, a..not really bottle but..something...water...They purposely made just to throw that..to people, and then they throw at me. It was quite..mentally hard-hitting [laughing]…yeah of course you know, they don't aim at,..they didn't aim at Asians or international students I think I hope…but it came to me twice. And I was just…I was panicked actually. Then the first shot and I got argh hurt [demonstrating where she was hit] ouch! And I got all wet. And my back was really wet and, oh my

> God,...I just..didn't know what happened. And..second..came..and then I realised somebody threw..water….And they say something to me, and I mean to us and then they just gone…Then..one of my friends d id she, it was still six..o'clock,…and it was..still summertime so it was quite bright,…and then she was just across the road and these two kiwi girls..walked toward her and then she was spit..on her face….It's just **really** just terrible, terrible experience.

Like Frances, Yukiko seems reluctant to connect New Zealand students' behaviour towards her with her 'Asian-ness', or visibility as Other. She endeavours to rationalise their violent behaviour. In this Yukiko downplays "the pervasive significance of racism…and other violent manifestations of prejudice against those who are particularly *identified*" (Palumbo-Liu 2002, p. 766, emphasis in the original). While acknowledging the pain caused by racist behaviour, Yukiko indicated a desire to believe that she and her friend had witnessed New Zealand students' immaturity rather than racism.

At the same time, Yukiko (like Frances) acknowledges that Othering behaviour is to some degree reciprocal. For example, she rationalises New Zealand students' discriminatory behaviour toward Japanese students at her secondary school, saying "I do understand though because we they talk..in Japanese,..so obviously they created, you know, the invisible..wall?". In this Yukiko problematises a simple domination/subordination model of interactions between New Zealand and international students. Barriers to interaction are not created by one group in the exchange, but by both.

For Yukiko, the reciprocity of Othering produced a personal dilemma. As a Japanese secondary school student, she did not wish to become isolated from her Japanese friends. But in staying with them and speaking Japanese, her Other-ness in a New Zealand school context was reinforced. Here Yukiko expresses this in terms of a choice between distancing herself from other Japanese students in the hope of making New Zealand friends, or maintaining solidarity with fellow Japanese students.

> And so I tried to..be away actually, from…the other Japanese students, so that was my choice..either..being hated, or ignored by international students or b y..Kiwis. Yeah if I go with Kiwis the international students they just ignored me, **seriously**, in a really **clear** way. They don't even greet me back...Yeah, or if I go to Japanese, just all the time speak Japanese and be with them, then the Kiwis they they see us..like that. So even though I talked to Kiwis they..you know recognise me as Asians, or international students..Japanese. They already..set a label.

Yukiko's use of both 'us' and 'them' expresses the "perplexity of living, in the disjunctive, liminal space of national society" (Bhabha 1990b, p. 312). While demonstrating personal agency in her consciousness of a 'choice', Yukiko's choices were clearly constrained. Whatever her choice, Yukiko risked being read according to 'type' (Palumbo-Liu 2002) by New Zealand students, or resented by fellow Japanese students for associating with those who position them as Other.

Yukiko goes on to discuss how this changed during her final year at secondary school. During this year, she found that to some extent she was able to be both 'us' and 'them'.

> Y At seventh form finally I could create a little bit of..bond..with [the Kiwi students]. Yeah so they..we really talked.
> V So what sort of things,..like what was different? Can you be…specific about what things..made you feel a part of the seventh form?
> Y Oh just,...of course the language actually, yeah I could communicate..yeah and what made me? Yeah it's a good point, I never.. really thought, but I was, I guess immersed in..that particular culture..that Kiwi girls create,..so..I can laugh with them.... I feel like I'm one, I'm **them** you know,…but at the same time I was happy that I also could be friendly with all other international students.

Improved confidence in English was important in enabling Yukiko to interact with New Zealand students, but at the same time she was also able to remain friends with other international students. As both 'us' and 'them', Yukiko had achieved a form of 'hybridity' (Burnapp 2006) where she could move across differences and communicate successfully with both New Zealand and international students. To Burnapp, this confidence in 'moving across' is a more useful and realistic objective for international students than integration. 'Hybridity' expresses how liminality or Other-ness may become a resource. Significantly, Burnapp sees hybridity as a worthwhile objective for *all* students, a point I will return to in the final section of this paper.

Like Burnapp (2006), Yukiko indicates that hybridity does not involve a resolution of differences. In contrast with her earlier downplaying of racism, Yukiko's confidence now means that she wishes to respond to racism with assertiveness and anger.

> A few years ago I would just..go panic and cry,…but now I..can be more calm and..you know,…I really want to chase them and then grab them out and you know just…"Give me just punch if you want to!"…Yeah…You know, "Don't be so

silly just, you know, face-to-face, you say something or you just..do it to me!" And then of course I can report to the police! [Laughter].

Yukiko here expresses a desire to voice and name the silences surrounding racist behaviour at an interpersonal level (Flores 2000; Palumbo-Liu 2002). She expresses similar sentiments toward institutional practices that perpetuate racism through simultaneous exploitation and neglect. While acknowledging a confidence in interacting or not interacting with both New Zealand and international students, Yukiko nowhere speaks as if she has reached a kind of endpoint. Rather, she continues to grapple with and contest the 'jarring meanings' (Bhabha 1990b) that shape her experiences as an international student in New Zealand.

On the other hand, Yukiko describes one-to-one friendships formed while at university as highly significant in making this 'grappling' worthwhile.

> But after of course coming to university I really meet with **great** great people, you know including..many, yeah students and teachers…It's just, you know, priceless…So I can pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars [laughing], **millions**.

Yukiko's appreciation of friendships formed while in New Zealand (with other internationals *and* New Zealanders) stands in stark contrast to her anger concerning the conditions under which she has to study here. For Yukiko, one-to-one friendships have significant redemptive power.

Violet

Unlike Yukiko, Violet had found such friendships frustratingly difficult to attain. When interviewed, Violet had been in New Zealand for six months and was part-way through the second year of a Psychology degree. Like Frances and Yukiko, Violet had come to New Zealand hoping to make New Zealand friends. Here she discusses her initial desire to get to know 'Kiwis' and the mismatch between her desire and reality as it unfolded.

> I mean coming **all** the way from Malaysia, you can get educated somewhere else, but coming all the way one of the thing is like, you really want to meet Kiwi people, get into their culture or something. And.. you find here.. it's not that easy to get into really other..these people's group.

Violet describes New Zealanders as a distinct category whose "culture" she wants to "get into". Despite finding this difficult, she had made an ongoing and conscious effort to seek out contexts where she might be able to engage with New Zealanders. But even in a local church she found that people failed to 'mix'.

> They have a number of Kiwi there but… I'm not that outgoing people so that's my problem but I still realise it's like.. they don't really mix?...They try to be there but.. I can still see that they don't really mix that much...After Church you can see like,...all those young people are like, I mean..they are obviously like..Chinese or Fijian or these sort of people you can see from their colour. They will just go their way out, you know, mix in their own group, when those, they might be Kiwi or like a bit of Korean and other which look maybe like a bit of, light. They'll be like another group. So we don't really, I feel like the integration is still not there. Even though...they did try to make the effort to be there together.

Violet identifies visible difference as a barrier between people at the church. But like Yukiko, her use of the words 'we' and 'they' highlights her own conscious negotiation of this barrier. Violet recognises that Othering is reciprocal (Bullen & Kenway 2003), and that to some extent she is complicit in this. At the same time she expresses a desire to somehow overcome the barriers between herself and others.

But because this has been difficult, Violet has become much closer to her fellow Malaysian students. Her Other-ness has resulted in solidarity with those who are similarly positioned. Like Yukiko though, while valuing her relationships with other Malaysian students, Violet simultaneously distances herself from them.

> I know a lot of young people when they come here, they want to be with their own people it's like Malaysian, I heard there's this Methodist church which have most Malaysian over there. I think the sort of thing that attract them is like…they **are** my people, you know. A lot of people would think that way, but I mean, what's the point, I have all these people in Malaysia, and I come over here to meet Malaysians [laughing]!

Violet stresses once again that a primary goal of her time in New Zealand is to form friendships with New Zealanders.

It is revealing to note Violet's thoughts on who constitutes a 'New Zealander'. Here she describes her dismay when the 'New Zealanders' she was matched with in a local hospitality programme did not fit her notion of New Zealand-ness.

> They advertise it as,…we'll get you into like a Kiwi friend or family,…but what happened was that I was actually there with…this Kiwi is **not** the kind of Kiwi that we are thinking. What we are thinking is like, they are born here, you know,

yeah. They are like, maybe a few generations here. But..the Kiwi that they [matched us with], is those that have a PR[6] …all the Kiwi that there is is like Chinese Thai, Singapore Thai, no Singapore Chinese, then Indonesian Chinese. It was like…**all** the Chinese!

Violet echoes dominant race discourses in New Zealand in which non-white, non-indigenous New Zealanders are 'raced' in relation to an unspoken white norm (Mohanram 1998). Implicit in her remarks is the idea that New Zealanders of Chinese descent do not count as genuine New Zealanders, especially when they are recent (as opposed to 'old') migrants. Violet demonstrates how homogenisation works both ways. As an international student who describes herself specifically as Malaysian Chinese, Violet sees 'New Zealand-ness' in terms of whiteness.

Elsewhere in the interview though, Violet contests a tutor's assumption of New Zealanders' homogeneity in terms of academic ability. Here she describes her anger when a course tutor positions Malaysian students oppositionally to 'Kiwi students' in relation to written English prowess.

> On the first assignment…we just found that **all four** Malaysian in the lab,…all got returned assignment...'ask the Kiwi students to.. proof-read your work before you hand in'. And it was like.. that's discrimination. Kiwi doesn't equal good English. I don't mind her saying like, 'try and get someone with good English, or PhD' you know, they'd really have the standard, and have them proof-read, that's all right! But…why is she stressing the Kiwi?

Violet resists the Eurocentricity implicit in the assumption that New Zealand students' writing is necessarily superior to that of Malaysian students. She finds her tutor's homogenisation of both international and New Zealand students irritating and offensive.

Finally, Violet makes a generous suggestion as to why New Zealanders may be ambivalent towards (visible) international students. Rather than naming their behaviour as 'racist' or discriminatory, she argues that perhaps they simply do not see the need to form friendships with Others.

> It's hard to really get the Kiwi who have no experience to do this sort of work, because they don't see the need, whereas after I go through all this thing I see the need, and maybe.. there's someone when I go back to Malaysia and someone need some help I'll be really glad to help you know, but before I experienced I was like 'you choose to come **here**,.. you should be all right!'

Violet recognises that like some New Zealand students, she has also demonstrated ambivalence towards international students in Malaysia. Violet indicates that as a result of her experiences in New Zealand, her attitudes and behaviour toward international students at her university in Malaysia will be quite different in future. This resonates with Burnapp's (2006) suggestion that hybridity should be a focus for both international and local students in education contexts. By experiencing liminality in the New Zealand context, Violet is more conscious of those in a similar position in Malaysia. She implies that the ambivalence of (some) New Zealanders might change if their dominant majority status was challenged.

Integration re-considered

Discourses of difference that underpin international education in New Zealand position students via homogenous, oppositional categories. In New Zealand, 'international' students are positioned as Other to 'New Zealand' students, and people belonging to visible minorities are 'raced' in contrast to the implicit (white) norm (Collins 2006; Mohanram 1998). For Frances, Yukiko and Violet, this had significant material effects. New Zealand students treated all three with ambivalence, and overt racism was directed at Frances and Yukiko. Friendship with New Zealanders was clearly the exception rather than the norm. And beyond disinterest and racism at an interpersonal level, both Yukiko and Violet also experienced this in their educational institutions. Yukiko was given little orientation support or meaningful care during her time in secondary school. Violet encountered assumptions of her incompetence in comparison to the supposed capabilities of New Zealand university students. Although all three women came to New Zealand with a desire for New Zealand friends, in reality, each woman came up against significant institutional and interpersonal barriers to friendship. None of the women found that their expectations of studying in New Zealand were met.

Frances, Yukiko and Violet highlight a number of implications for international education research and practice. Foremost among these is the need to problematise current concerns around international students' integration or otherwise. From the perspectives of the three women in this paper, international education

---

[6] Permanent Residency visa status

research concerned with integration must look beyond the international/New Zealand student binary. As an example, research considering the attitudes and behaviours of New Zealand's dominant majority might serve to interrupt the 'discourses of difference' that perpetually position (visible) international students as deficient in some way, or "*only* as somebody's other" (Rhee 2006, p. 597, emphasis in the original; Bullen & Kenway 2003)[7].

Secondly, critical theories would suggest that it is imperative that we take international students' positive *and* negative reporting seriously, rather than dismissing negative perspectives as simply an outcome of 'cultural difference' (Flores 2000; Ladson-Billings 1998). Frances, Yukiko and Violet exhibited a general reluctance to name racist or discriminatory behaviour as such. Frances and Yukiko emphasised occasions when New Zealanders' warmth was helpful and significant. Violet offered explanations for New Zealand students' apparent disinterest. Rather than simply emphasising "negative rather than positive experiences" (Ward & Masgoret 2004, p. 71), all three women showed remarkable generosity as they spoke about their interactions with New Zealanders.

Thirdly, Frances, Yukiko and Violet suggest a need for research that attends to the ways in which New Zealand communities and institutions may constrain some international students' interpersonal interactions, or (as in Yukiko's case) set up unrealistic expectations of New Zealanders' warmth and friendliness through marketing material. Targeting visible international students for their apparent lack of integration, obscures deeper issues surrounding race relations in New Zealand (see Collins 2006; Mohanram 1998), and absolves New Zealand as an 'education provider' country from ethical responsibilities in relation to marketing, pedagogy and student care (see Diangelo 2006). Interactions between 'New Zealand' and 'international' students must be seen as situated within broader historical, social and political contexts (Kenway & Bullen 2003; Rizvi 2004).

Fourthly, these interviews suggest that the notion of integration itself may be problematic. Frances, Yukiko and Violet highlight ongoing movement, complexity and tension rather than endpoints and neat resolutions (see Bhabha 1990b). Burnapp's (2006) 'hybridity' expresses this well. Hybridity acknowledges differences, but (unlike integration) resists Othering at a discursive level. Within hybridity, Other-ness is a potential resource, and open-ness to others is an important objective for all students. Hybridity is not so much 'achieved' as always in process. How community, institutional, and pedagogical practices could foster such open-ness among New Zealand's dominant majority would be a worthwhile focus for future research.

And finally, it would be a gross oversight not to emphasise the "creativity and resistance" of Frances, Yukiko and Violet as active agents within international education (Clegg 2005, p.149; also see Rhee 2006). These three women were fully aware of discrimination targeted at them, but worked hard to build friendships with New Zealanders in spite of it. Yukiko in particular succeeded in making some close New Zealand friends, and declared that for her, these friendships made the opportunity to study in New Zealand "priceless". There is a need for more research that counters the deficit representation of (some) international students, highlighting instead their success and agency (Rhee 2006).

---

[7] As an example see Brebner (2005).

References

Ang, I 2001, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*, Routledge, London and New York.

Berry, JW 2005, 'Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* vol. 29, pp. 697-712.

Bhabha, H 1990a, 'Introduction: narrating the nation', in H Bhabha (ed.), *Narration and Nation*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-7.

Bhabha, H 1990b, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation.' in H Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 291-322.

Bishop, R & Glynn, T 1998, 'Achieving cultural integrity in Aotearoa/ New Zealand', in K Cushner (ed.), *International Perspectives on Intercultural Education*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahweh, New Jersey, pp. 38-69.

Brebner, L-H 2005, *Intercultural interactions in a New Zealand university: Pakeha and Asian perspectives*, unpublished Masters thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Brooking, T & Rabel, R 1995, 'Neither British nor Polynesian: A Brief History of New Zealand's Other Immigrants', in SW Greif (ed.), *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand: One People - Two Peoples - Many Peoples?* The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, pp. 23-49.

Bullen, E & Kenway, J 2003, 'Real or Imagined Women? Staff representations of international women postgraduate students', *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 35-50.

Burnapp, D 2006, 'Trajectories of adjustment of international students: U-curve, learning curve, or Third Space', *Intercultural Education,* vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 81-93.

Butcher, A 2003, 'Whither International Students? The Absence of International Student Policy During New Zealand's University Reforms from 1984 to 1999', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies,* vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 151-64.

Butcher, A 2004a, 'Quality Care? Export Education Policies in New Zealand from 1999 to 2002.' *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies,* vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 21-31.

Butcher, A 2004b, 'Educate, consolidate, immigrate: Educational immigration in Auckland, New Zealand', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint,* vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 255-78.

Clegg, S 2005, 'Theorising the Mundane: the significance of agency', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 149-163.

Diangelo, R 2006, 'The Production of Whiteness in Education: Asian International Students in a College Classroom', *Teachers College Record*, vol. 108, no. 10, pp. 1983-2000.

Evanoff, R 2006, 'Integration in intercultural ethics', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* vol. 30, pp. 421-35.

Fine, M 1994, 'Working the Hyphens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research', in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 70-82.

Fine, M, Weis, L, Weseen, S, & Wong, L, 2000, 'For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities', in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd Edition*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 107-131.

Flores, LA 2000, 'Reclaiming the "Other": toward a Chicana feminist critical perspective', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* vol. 24, pp. 687-705.

Gibson-Graham, JK 2003, 'An Ethics of the Local', *Rethinking Marxism,* vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 49-74.

Habu, T 2000, 'The irony of globalization: The experience of Japanese women in British higher education', *Higher Education,* vol. 39, pp. 43-66.

Ichimoto, T 2004, 'Ambivalent 'selves' in Transition: a case study of Japanese women studying in Australian universities', *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 247-69.

Ip, M 1995, 'Chinese New Zealanders: Old Settlers and New Immigrants', in SW Greif (ed.), *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand: One People - Two Peoples - Many Peoples?* The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, pp. 161-99.

Kenway, J & Bullen, E 2003, 'Self-representations of International Women Postgraduate Students in the Global University 'Contact Zone'', *Gender and Education,* vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 5-20.

Ladson-Billings, G 1998, 'Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a *nice* field like education?' *Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 7-24.

Ministry of Education 2001, *Export Education in New Zealand: A Strategic Approach to Developing the Sector*, Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Ministry of Education 2002, *Summary Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students*, Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Ministry of Education 2005, *Full-Year Tertiary Statistics 2004*, Ministry of Education, Wellington, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=10508&indexid=7552&indexparentid=6142 (retrieved June 6, 2006)

Mohanram, R 1998, '(In) visible bodies? Immigrant bodies and constructions of nationhood in Aotearoa/ New Zealand', in R Du Plessis & L Alice (eds), *Feminist Thought in Aotearoa/ New Zealand: Connections and Differences*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, pp. 21-8.

Mohanty, C 1991a, 'Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism', in C Mohanty, A Russo & L Torres (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, pp. 1-47.

Mohanty, C 1991b, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', in CT Mohanty, A Russo & L Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, pp. 51-80.

Mohanty, C 2003, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonising Theory, Practising Solidarity*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Nairn, K 2005, 'The problems of utilizing 'direct experience' in geography education', *Journal Of Geography In Higher Education,* vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 293-309.

NZIER 2004, *Stocktake of New Zealand literature on export education*, Wellington.

Ong, A 1999, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Palumbo-Liu, D 2002, 'Assumed Identities', *New Literary History,* vol. 31, pp. 765-80.

Rhee, J 2006, 'Re/membering (to) shifting alignments: Korean women's transnational narratives in US higher education', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 595-615.

Rizvi, F 2004, 'Globalisation and the Dilemmas of Australian Higher Education', *ACCESS,* vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 33-42.

Sikes, P 2006, 'Towards Useful and Dangerous Theories', *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* vol. 27, no. 1.

Smith, LT 1999, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People,* University of Otago Press, Dunedin.

Ward, C 2001, *The Impact of International Students on Students and Host Institutions: A Literature Review*, Ministry of Education, Wellington. Retrieved 14 June 2006, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5643&indexid=6671&indexparentid=6663

Ward, C 2005, 'Comments made during Plenary Session - Internationalisation III ', in *ISANA 16th International Conference 'Internationalisation - Practical Solutions: A Trans Tasman Workout'*, December 2.

Ward, C & Masgoret, A-M 2004, *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand*, Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Ward, C, Masgoret, A-M, Ho, E, Holmes, P, Cooper, J, Newton, J & Crabbe, D 2005, *Interactions with International Students: Report Prepared for Education New Zealand*, Education New Zealand, Wellington. Retrieved 19 May 2006, from www.educationnz.org.nz/eeidf/reports/A6.pdf