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**Strangers, sojourners, selves: The
intercultural communication experiences of
ethnic Chinese students in
western tertiary education**

by

Prue Holmes

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

This study describes the intercultural communication experiences of Confucian heritage culture students in a western tertiary setting. Exploring the intercultural communication encounters enabled an understanding of how these ethnic Chinese students socially constructed their everyday lives. In addition, the study focused on their reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity and the extent to which they built a third culture. Thus, it is a study of intercultural communication, culture, and cultural identity.

Principles of ethnography and inductive inquiry provided the exploratory means to uncover these intercultural communication experiences. The context of this study was a university in New Zealand, and the 14 participants were from China, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Some were newly arrived. Others were permanent residents. Prolonged investigation in the field enabled themes to emerge, providing a thick description of the participants' lifeworlds and the basis for theory building.

The contribution of this thesis is in the following key areas: the enactment of intercultural communication in the negotiation of a new learning environment; the process of adaptation and accommodation of the cultural other; cultural identity change as participants negotiate the host environment; and the initiation of third culture building. Participants from China, who had or sought permanent residence, showed adaptation and renegotiation of social worlds and the desire to acculturate. By contrast, the undergraduate students from Malaysia, who saw their future in their first cultures, demonstrated a *going back* mentality and less desire to accommodate and understand the host society. Thus, the study contributes towards an understanding of cultural difference as it created, maintained, and reconstructed and renegotiated in intercultural communication.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart. (Confucian saying)

1.1 Intercultural communication research concerning international students

Educational institutions in the western world are intensifying their efforts to attract international students. Such students are seen as a source of financial gain and, at times, financial survival for the majority of institutions. Unfortunately, in many cases, this drive towards internationalisation has not fully taken into account the processes of making sense of the new situations required by both international students and those in the host community as they seek to understand and know each other's world. There is a major knowledge gap regarding the ways in which international students make sense of this new world in their everyday living. In particular, there is very little known about the intercultural communication experiences such students may face in this sense making process. Nor is there an understanding of the consequences of the intercultural communication experience as to how they perceive themselves in relation to their own and to the host culture. This study aims to repair these omissions by investigating the ways in which a group of Confucian heritage culture students reconstructed and renegotiated their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences in a host environment. Data was collected in an educational institution and within the larger host culture. The study addresses issues of communication, culture, and cultural identity in intercultural communication.

The two questions raised by Fox (1994) in her study of the writing of international students are therefore pertinent to the focus of this study: What are the issues which

arise when people try to communicate across differences in language, education and learning styles, and in their basic assumptions about how to make sense of the world? And what difficulties arise when we try to step outside ourselves and see how the world might make sense from another perspective? To these two questions we may add the point that as individuals experience the intercultural communication encounter, the meanings they hold for their own culture become apparent as these meanings confront the host culture. This situation gives rise to a greater awareness and, in some cases, a questioning of one's own cultural identity, as well as an understanding of self in relation to both the first culture and the host culture.

For the purposes of this study the notion of a Confucian heritage culture refers to Chinese individuals from cultures such as China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan who identify themselves as Chinese (Ho, cited in Bond, 1986). A fuller discussion of being Chinese within this culture is undertaken in subsequent chapters. The viability of the term is acknowledged both by individuals from within that culture and by outsiders who have studied it (Biggs and Watkins, 1996). Singaporean Chinese have been excluded in the present study because of the strong multicultural and English language influence on the culture there.

This study is timely given the emergence of international education as a market force in New Zealand.¹ Houlker (1995) has recently provided a detailed grounding in the evolution of the internationalisation of education as a market force in New Zealand. She found that, as educational institutions became more focused in the marketing of their educational resources, other changes were taking place within New Zealand educational institutions, for example, increased fees for students, diminished financial resourcing from government, and greater emphasis on quality teaching and higher research outputs from academics.

In a difficult economic environment the recruitment of international students is seen as an effective way to compensate for government cutbacks in funding; however, this comes at a price. For example, in some instances, there is resistance from staff over internationalisation of the student population. A further, and largely

¹ New Zealand Education International LTD (NZEIL), which at the end of 1998 became Education New Zealand, was established in 1989 to facilitate the export of New Zealand education services (at both tertiary and secondary level) and to showcase the benefits of New Zealand as a study destination.

unaddressed, issue is the extent to which the recruiting host institution should take responsibility for its international student population, both on and off campus. It is in this context that there is a need for a better understanding of the intercultural communication experiences of such students, not only in our educational institutions, but also in our society, given that growing numbers of these students are obtaining permanent residence and staying on to live and work in New Zealand. This understanding has important implications for the students who share classes with these CHC students, for the academics who teach these students, for international student recruitment centres in education institutes, for the marketing of education in New Zealand, for policy makers in universities, in the community and in the government, and, finally, for those people in the society who interact with these students beyond the campus. The insights into the experience of being a CHC student provided by this study are therefore extremely important.

The study is also timely given recent trends in Asian immigration. Not only is New Zealand recruiting more CHC students from overseas, but there has also been an increase in the number of CHC students studying in New Zealand tertiary institutions who have permanent residence status.² Often these students have similar difficulties to those of international student status, but because they are not full fee paying students (as is the case with international students), in many universities they do not qualify for the support services offered to international students, even though their academic experiences and needs are similar. Furthermore, unlike their international student counterparts, traditionally they have not been required to achieve entry levels of English in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examinations.³ This has often resulted in such students entering a course of study with an inadequate level of English.

² For example, at the university where this study was conducted there is an increasing trend in the number of permanent resident students (of the total number of permanent resident students) who are coming from Asia. The figures are as follows: 1998 53%; 1997 56%; 1996 35%; 1995 19%; and 1994 14% (Source: Enrolment Office of the university where the research was conducted).

³This situation is changing, however, as universities are beginning to recognise that these students' lack the competence in English to undertake tertiary study. Some Schools are now requiring that permanent resident students attain the same levels as international students in IELTS and TOEFL tests.

Tertiary institutions at present do not receive funding to address the needs of permanent residence status students. In the case of full fee paying students, however, most institutions allot a part of their fees to some degree of academic and social support. The lack of support that permanent resident students receive has given rise to many problems (which may of course also pertain to international students): academics are having to spend much more time per student in providing academic assistance; institutions are becoming more and more concerned about the standard of English of these students upon graduation as the quality of their degrees begin to be questioned by the outside community;⁴ and, in the absence of academic support, some of these students (as well as some of international status) are seeking other sources of help, for example, the ghost writing of their assignments for a small fee. Institutions are still grappling with the issues surrounding the presence of these students on their campuses. In addressing the issues pertaining to students from CHCs with permanent residence status, this study may provide important guidelines for policy development in this area.

In summary, there is a pressing need for a study which provides a detailed analysis of how CHC students cope with everyday life in their host society and how these experiences impact on the way they construct their social world.

1.2 Theoretical and methodological frameworks in intercultural communication research

This study is not only about being a student from a CHC in New Zealand. I am also concerned with furthering understanding of the experience of communicating with those from other cultures. For example, what are the ways of being different, and how do perceptions of difference impact upon how we communicate with others and how we see ourselves? In short, it is about *intercultural communication* experiences.

⁴ In the case of international students who return to their own country to take up employment after graduating, I have heard some academics express less concern over the quality of students' English (rightly or wrongly) because since English is not usually a first language, but rather the language of business or administration, then near native speaker proficiency is not an issue.

It is therefore necessary to provide a brief overview of the field of intercultural communication research.

The field of intercultural communication draws extensively on research frameworks from communication, as well as disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Irwin (1996) described the state of the art in intercultural communication research:

The field of intercultural communication is one of the applied areas of communication studies. It applies, to the processes of communicating across cultural divides, a great deal from the theory of interpersonal and small group communication, areas which in turn draw extensively upon social psychology and social linguistics. As well, the study of intercultural communication draws upon social anthropology . . . and modern cultural studies, particularly that part of cultural studies which is coming to be known as intercommunal studies and which is concerned with the dynamics of personal and group identities. (Irwin, 1996, p. 19)

Intercultural communication researchers have called for diverse approaches to intercultural communication research, and claimed that there is no one correct method for conducting such research (Gudykunst, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1983; Kim, 1988b; and Wiseman and Koester, 1993). Gudykunst (1983) called for the need to develop theory in intercultural communication in order to 'understand the process of communication between people from different cultures and have guides for our future research efforts' (Gudykunst, 1983, p. 15).

Traditionally, positivist approaches (which have dominated North American and Western European research) have characterised much intercultural communication research (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988). In intercultural communication studies theory has been commonly viewed as a set of principles (axioms or laws) from which propositions or theorems can be derived, thus suggesting causality and enabling prediction. Such approaches have not been without their critics. For example, Blackman (1983) criticised linear/causal models which centred on fragments or parts of the world and thus failed to capture the complex, processual nature of communication. Much intercultural research has essentially been directed towards theory validation and has seldom described how people live and interact. Such approaches do not account for the production of alternative realities and multiple truths which further impact on the experiences of individuals and groups in an intercultural communication encounter. Kim and Gudykunst suggested the need for 'integrative pluralism' (1988, p. 20) which includes approaches which take into

account these alternative realities and multiple truths, and which uncover the experiences of research subjects. Over a decade later, this search still remains to be done, particularly where CHC students are concerned.

Any study of intercultural communication should be concerned with, first, the diversity among cultures and, secondly, the diversity of the individuals within them. Furthermore, there is a need to recognise the cultural diversity within any given racial, ethnic, and national category. Cronen, Chen and Barnett Pearce (1988) suggest that probably the most important contribution intercultural study can make is 'not reassurance of some underlying unity, but an idea of the range of possibilities for being human in different but productive ways' (p. 78). The method(s) adopted in intercultural research need to encourage and preserve this diversity. Much intercultural communication literature has treated cultures monolithically in both theoretical and methodological frameworks, reducing each category to one type, that is, Anglo-American or African-American communication (González, Houston, and Chen, 1994). There is a need for interpretive research and literature which explores the rich variety of communication practices within any one cultural context, thus refocusing attention on the concrete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987). In the process, the personal voices that contribute to shared cultural meanings are revealed.

More recently, humanist research (for example, based on social constructionism) has challenged traditional approaches in the field. Rather than attempting to control the host of variables involved, humanistic approaches stress the freedom of individuals and an understanding of the course of actions taken by individuals (Gergen and Gergen, 1982). Shuter (1990) argued that the challenge for intercultural communication in the 1990s is to develop a research direction that returns *culture* to pre-eminence. I would add *communication in context* to this agenda. Human communication research should be open to 'research methods that free communication scholars to emphasize the experiential rather than the experimental, the specific case as much as the general tendency' (Houston Stanback, 1989, p. 190, cited in Shuter, 1990). And Hall (1992) further iterated the need for research theories and methods which further our understanding of culture and communication from the perspectives of the research subjects. He indicated the direction intercultural communication research should be taking in order to further refine both theoretical perspectives and research methods to this end:

[Intercultural communication needs] rigorous research efforts that seek to exploit the potential of each perspective from within. . . . This would involve trying to find a “best fit” between theory and data as well as new points of cross-perspective comparison that enrich our understanding and theoretical alternatives for the study of culture and communication. (Hall, 1992, p. 68)

Given the state of the art in intercultural communication research, Cronen et al. (1988) identified three corollaries which they claimed would be helpful in approaching intercultural communication research and, in particular, in addressing culture and communication. The first corollary suggests that cultures are patterns of co-evolving structures and actions, that is, everyday practices and activities. Geertz (cited in Cronen et al., 1988) suggests that ‘culture provides the link between what [humans] are intrinsically capable of becoming and what they actually . . . in fact become’ (p. 78). It is these everyday practices and activities which are the focus of this study. Secondly, cultures are polyphonic, a musical metaphor which focuses on the diversity, and the different forms of selfhood within each culture. This study is concerned not so much with Confucian heritage cultures as a monolith, although, certainly, common themes in participants’ experiences are of interest. The study is more focused on the ways in which participants within these cultures manifest difference in their intra- and intercultural communication. In short, the study is concerned with subjective construction in understanding human experience within the life world as it applies to both individual and social levels.

The third corollary concerns the research activity itself as part of social practice, which includes the reflexivity of the researcher in the research process (see Chapter four). Thus, the cultural informants are much like co-authors. It is their interpretations of their experiences, in negotiation with the researcher’s interpretations of these experiences, which together constitute the research activity. Thus, the study seeks to include the cultural participants’ voices in the writing in order to move towards a truly intercultural perspective which includes the voices of both researcher and participants of the ‘non-Eurocentric domain’ (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994).

Together these three corollaries represent the processes by which episodes of communication are produced, and the ways these episodes (re)constitute social structure in an intercultural communication context.

By focusing on these three corollaries the researcher can attempt to capture the processual and dynamic nature of intercultural communication. Such a focus also attempts to explore the alternative realities and multiple truths of individuals in the intercultural communication encounter. An approach is required which provides dense and detailed accounts of the everyday interactions of cultural participants (Applegate and Sypher, 1983, 1988), and which also acknowledges the emergent nature of communication (Hecht, 1993). Applegate and Sypher (1988) noted that if we assume that people are active interpreters, then we must focus upon their interpretations. It is in their interpretations that culture is created and maintained. And Geertz (1983) argued that interpretations of culture appear as discursive texts that can be *read* or examined for normative patterning and symbolic structuring, and that themes may be derived from the observation of naturally occurring discourse as well as from solicited reflections about contexted interaction. Hall (1992) has claimed that most interpretivists still seem to be writing about doing intercultural research rather than doing it. More recently, forums for diverse disciplinary approaches have facilitated this development.⁵ The interpretive approach my research takes, and the ethnographic methodology required to answer the research questions (see Chapter four), are thus timely in the genre of intercultural communication research.

1.3 Defining terms

It is important to define some terms so that the parameters of the research are clear. In this section I define and discuss the following terms: communication, culture, intercultural communication, and cultural identity, as they pertain to this study. The definitions and discussions represent the ways in which I have chosen to conceptualise intercultural communication within the context of this study.

⁵For example, Collier's recent call for papers for *the International and Intercultural Communication Annual*, Volumes 23 to 25 (in *Spectra*, July, 1998) welcomed research that addressed diverse theoretical and methodological orientations. And Cushner's recently established International Academy of Intercultural Research invited session proposals that addressed any aspect of theory, research and practice on intercultural relations from any disciplinary perspective. Such papers were presented at its inaugural conference in April 1999 at Kent State University, Ohio.

1.3.1 Communication

The following two definitions offer a useful starting point for my conceptualization of communication:

[Communication is] the process of using signs and symbols that elicit meanings in another person or persons for whatever intent, or even without conscious intent, on the part of the person producing the symbols or signs. (Sarbaugh, 1988, p. 25)

Or as Kim (1988) put it: 'It involves communicators, the encoding and decoding of verbal and nonverbal messages, and the physical and social environment' (p. 12).

Thus, communication is a meaning-making process which is both interactive and dynamic. Communication does not consist of a disembodied set of meanings or texts. Hodge and Kress (1988) argued that an analysis of meaning comes from the social structures and processes, messages and meanings in our cultural and social reality. This points to the importance of contextualising the experiences of the participants within the study according to the social structures and processes embedded within the research context.

Kramerae, Schulz, and O'Barr (1984) note that 'speech functions in different ways for different cultures as well as for different individuals and groups within a culture' (p. 13). For example, communication styles and practices of every individual in a group may not be accorded equal prestige. As individuals and groups negotiate their relationships with one another, ways of speaking are redefined or recoded according to culture-specific criteria (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994). Communication is also cultural in that if communicators have unshared cultural patterns, then problems of asynchrony, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and discrimination can arise (Carbaugh, 1990). Carbaugh argued that a better understanding of the nature of communication during intercultural contacts comes from an understanding of the norms, forms, and codes that pattern social lives, and of listening to culture speaking about itself and with others, but at the same time recognising that people can choose whether to reaffirm, develop with, live by, or against such patterns. This 'socially situated knowledge is necessary for interpreting the common meaningfulness of communication to its participants' (Carbaugh, 1990, p. 5).

These features of communication, that it is interactive, dynamic, contextual, and cultural, are significant in the theoretical and methodological conceptualisations upon which this study is founded.

1.3.2 Culture

The ways in which we communicate are closely tied to the notion of culture. Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) much cited definition of culture provides a broad understanding of culture:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (that is, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181)

Furthermore, Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition recognised that culture is grounded in our many different personal histories which have much to do with where and how we enter into (intercultural) communication (and, I would add, whether as intercultural communicator or as researcher). History is a process that has constructed where and how we enter into dialogue, conversation, and communication; it has strongly influenced what languages we speak, how we are perceived and how we perceive ourselves (Nakayama, 1994).

One shortcoming in Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition, which had been taken up by others, is the role of individuals in shaping and interpreting culture through communication. Understanding culture is a meaning making process, and linked to this meaning making process is the notion of symbol, also foregrounded in Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition. Culture is created and recreated symbolically (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994). Cultural meanings are constructed through people's use of symbols, both verbal and non-verbal; they are 'part of the meaning which we intuitively ascribe to more instrumental and pragmatic things in ordinary use -- such as words' (Cohen, 1985, p. 56). Symbols do not just express meaning but give us the capacity to make meaning. And Carbaugh stated that if one 'wants to understand the actions persons do, from their point of view, one should listen for the

terms [or symbols] they use to discuss it' (Carbaugh, 1988, p. 9). Communication, then, is an ongoing process of reconstructing the meanings of the symbols through social interaction (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994). It is through the interpretation of this communication among individuals, and through their actions and use of symbols, that we are able to understand culture.

On the other hand, sharing of symbol is not necessarily the same as the sharing of meaning: the meaning of a symbol lies in the meaning individuals attach to it (Cohen, 1985). Unshared meaning for a symbol results in the state of talking past each other. To expand: if communicators have unshared cultural patterns, then problems of asynchrony, misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and discrimination can arise in intercultural communication (Carbaugh, 1990).

Finally, values are an important component within the concept of culture. Values may be defined as 'internalized . . . standards for guiding action, . . . [that is,] an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence' (Rokeach, 1968, p. 160, cited in Clyne, 1994, p. 3).

Thus, for the purposes of this study, culture is assumed to embrace the following notions: it is historically situated; it consists of a shared body of (local) knowledge which renders social (inter)action possible; it is a meaning-making process constructed through people's shared use of symbols, that is, in the everyday ways in which social life is constructed; and it encompasses values which guide actions.

An understanding of the notion of culture is important because through culture we can recognise and understand how groups create communities and participate in social activities. As Geertz says, 'it is through the flow of behavior -- or more precisely, social action -- that cultural forms find articulation' (Geertz, 1973, p. 17). Culture can refer to a community of meaning and a shared body of local knowledge and not just a region or a nation. Culture renders coherent the values held and the actions performed in a community. And cultural participants engage in communication that constantly defines and redefines the community (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994). Thus, culture, like communication, is dynamic and constantly changing.

1.3.3 Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication embodies the core features of communication and culture as conceptualised in the previous two sections. Intercultural communication occurs when interlocutors from different cultures enter into communication. It is experienced 'when participants identify themselves and their interlocutors as representing different cultural groups' (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p. 102). Thus, interlocutors' notions of cultural identity are important in the intercultural communication encounter. Kim claims (and I would agree) that the degree of interculturalness of a communication encounter will therefore depend on 'the degree of heterogeneity between the experiential backgrounds of the individuals involved' (Kim, 1988, p. 13).

1.3.4 Cultural identity

Cultural identity is embedded within culture and communication and concerns a person's understanding of and identification with the culture system of a particular group. For example, a person defines his or her cultural identity, his or her membership in a particular culture, to the extent that he or she coherently articulates and understands the symbols and follows the norms of that culture (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p. 105). Such symbols and norms may find expression in the values, beliefs, and attitudes which characterise the behaviour of individuals within a culture; they may also be articulated in communication, in the rules for social interaction; or they may be expressed by identification with a particular group, sub-culture, or culture. In experiencing intercultural contact individuals become conscious of their culture, and so cultural identity is formed and managed through (intercultural) communication and through (intercultural) contact. Thus, cultural identity may be defined as 'identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct' (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p. 113).

The assumptions underpinning this study adhere to this definition and conceive of cultural identity as being fluid and negotiable within the intercultural communication encounter.

1.4 Assumptions and limitations of the study

This study is about how CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences in a host environment, both within the educational institution and within the larger community. I attempt to understand the role of communication, culture, and cultural identity in intercultural communication for these participants which will result in a deeper knowledge about the nature of intercultural communication and notions of difference.

Several assumptions framed this study at the outset. First, I assumed that these participants had limited knowledge of New Zealanders and New Zealand culture. Second, I assumed that some degree (albeit varying) of intercultural communication would take place between the CHC participants and their hosts, both in the learning environment and in the wider community. Third, as a result of their intercultural encounters participants would come to experience some degree of difference which would influence their ideas about appropriate ways to communicate in given cultural contexts, and their constructions of self.

There are many limitations to this research. Like studies by earlier researchers, including those from CHCs, (see, for example, Chen, 1991; Mirshafiei, 1994; Perrucci and Hu, 1995, and Solaiman, 1991; and New Zealand studies by Koh, 1980; Liang, 1990; and Zhao, 1995), the researcher is encased in the predispositions and parameters of western research. This is in part because, as a researcher, I am a product of the western education system and am thus party to the research traditions embodied therein; as a doctoral candidate I am also obligated to respect the institutional rules that guide academic scholarship. Reason's (1988) goal of co-operative inquiry, where 'the nature of the involvement of all participants should be openly negotiated, . . . [where] all should contribute to the creative thinking that is part of the research, and . . . [where] relationships should aim to be authentically collaborative' (p. 9) is beyond the scope of this study as the authorship must be in the domain of the inquirer rather than the inquirers. However, the voices of the participants, telling their own stories, comprise the data in this study and, to the extent possible, are reflected in the findings.

However, that I am a New Zealander interpreting the stories of these CHC students may also be a positive factor since, in the making of recommendations, I was not harnessed by Confucian values of preserving face, being unable to critique others, or showing reverence to those in positions of authority. For example, the theses of CHC students undertaking post graduate study in New Zealand (namely, Koh, 1980, Liang, 1990, and Zhao, 1995), retained a distinct understating and uncritical tone throughout. In marked contrast, Houlker (1995), a New Zealand post graduate student, was a much stronger advocate for the international undergraduate students in her study because she critically reflected upon the contentions faced by the students in her study.

No qualitative inquiry is value free (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986; and Lincoln, 1990). This study is no exception. Participants will bring their own values to the intercultural communication encounters in this research situation which may impact upon the relationship between them and the researcher as they tell their stories in the process of the inquiry. Second, I, the researcher, by virtue of my past and experiences and knowledge of intercultural communication of CHC students, bring my values to the research process. Having taught and worked among people from Confucian heritage cultures in China and Hong Kong, I have certain predispositions and assumptions which have both guided and influenced the inquiry. On the other hand, my knowledge of the culture of Confucian heritage societies and of standard Chinese is still limited. Given these previous experiences and dispositions, then, I have focused on the Chinese within Confucian heritage cultures, rather than including students from, say, Japan, Korea or Vietnam. A further bias concerning this relationship between participant and researcher which may have intruded upon the study is my prior knowledge of part of the research domain, namely, the learning environment: as a teacher, and as a masters and doctoral student. Such familiarity with the culture of this aspect of the research domain will inevitably influence both my relationships with the participants, as well as my interpretations of the research domain and their experiences within it.

A further concern in conducting intercultural communication research, and pertinent to this study, is the use of the English language in carrying out the inquiry. For example, bell hooks (1984) noted an over-reliance on the English language to carry

out research. This study is no exception.⁶ And many Western concepts, such as *communication* and *identity* have been added only recently to the Japanese language, but are seldom used in daily conversation.⁷ Similarly, Chinese conceptualise *family* in quite a different way to Westerners. In this study participants were required to communicate in English, a language which was in some cases their third or fourth language, and often about issues which they had never reflected upon before, even in their first language. Thus, the accuracy in their representations of their thoughts and, for that matter, the accuracy in my representation of these thoughts is to some degree problematic.

As indicated in the literature review (see Chapter three) the experiences of international students are well documented in the areas of academia, and in their adjustment to and accommodation within the host culture. Many of these studies are quantitative in their methodology. There is, however, a dearth of interpretive research which attempts to understand the intercultural communication encounters of CHC students. This study is one step towards rectifying that situation. A further shortcoming of the literature, and one which this study addresses, is in the use of negatively biased terminology. For example, much of the literature denotes the experiences of international (and CHC) students in negative terms, such as their difficulties in adjusting to learning and communicating in the learning environment.

Finally, in accordance with the principles of interpretive inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986; and Lincoln, 1990), this research is concerned with making sense of the participants' intercultural communication in their natural setting, through a process of description and interpretation by both researcher and participants. As such, it embodies all the limitations and assumptions of interpretive inquiry and is not intended for replication.

⁶ Yet Zhou (1995), a Chinese researcher at a New Zealand university, conducted his interpretive study with some of his Chinese participants in English as they preferred to talk about their experiences in the language within which the experiences were embodied.

⁷ One of the participants in this study had a similar difficulty when she enrolled in a communication course. She explained: 'I always [find it] hard to understand [the terms] the "value" and the "communication" because in Chinese dictionary the "communication" means "transportation"' (FX).

1.5 Conclusion

Intercultural communication is at the heart of solutions to the increasingly complex problems the world now faces. The research imperative in the field of intercultural communication, is to find better ways to understand and interact with people from other cultures and to understand the issues which arise when people try to communicate across differences in language and culture. The purpose of this study is to address these issues as they pertain to CHC students studying in a university in New Zealand by focusing on how CHC students come to experience and acquire not only the cultural knowledge, the 'living tradition', of the host culture, but also the interpersonal knowledge to negotiate and reconstruct their social realities within the host culture through everyday communication with its members. I hope that, in the course of this study the participants will have reflected upon their experiences in this learning environment and host culture, and be all the better informed for the reflection. At the same time, it is my hope that their experiences will enlighten others who were, are, or will be undertaking intercultural exchanges and/or international education.

However, in this research imperative, certain caveats have been identified. Research theories and methodologies need to acknowledge the voices of both the researcher and the cultural participants in the research process. There is a need to recognise the limitations of the Eurocentric domain within which we conduct our research and look for ways which transcend these limitations, for example, by emphasising the experiential rather than the experimental. There is also a need to embrace cultural diversity and, in doing so, describe and explain how people live and interact, thus recognising the existence of and accounting for alternative realities and multiple truths. In this interpretive study I have undertaken, which is presented in this report, I will attempt to illustrate this imperative.

1.6 Summary of the report

Chapter one provided a background to the issues surrounding the hosting of international students in western tertiary education institutions, alluding more specifically to intercultural encounters in an increasingly multicultural environment. Then the contemporary status of intercultural communication research was considered, followed by a definition of the terms used in this study.

In Chapter two a framework is presented which provides the theoretical foundations on which the study is conceptualised.

Chapter three presents a review of the literature concerning international students from a range of perspectives. Several important social and cultural issues are addressed, including written and spoken communication, intercultural interaction, adjustment, cultural stress, satisfaction, counselling; and cultural values. After having appraised these studies and having raised some methodological concerns, I then look more closely at New Zealand studies and, in light of their findings, develop a set of questions which provide a research agenda for this study.

Chapter four is divided into two parts. In the first part I offer a rationale for a qualitative approach in intercultural communication inquiry and discuss methodological issues of ethnographic research. In the second part I contextualise the study and outline the phases of the data collection process: the initial pilot study; setting up the project; selection of participants; a description of the data collection process itself; and an evaluation of Nud*ist software⁸ used as a tool for data compilation and analysis.

Chapters five to eight comprise the substantive findings of the study. These chapters describe and interpret the intercultural communication experiences of these CHC students in the host culture. Their stories are discussed, where possible, with reference to previous studies and literature cited in earlier chapters.

⁸ NUD*IST stands for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising. It is a computer package designed to aid researchers in qualitative analysis through processes of indexing, searching, and theorising.

Chapter five focuses on the intercultural communication experiences of the participants in their learning environment. First, I address the differences in teaching and learning between eastern and western cultures. Next, I look at the communication challenges they meet when they begin to interface with the learning environment. Third, the participants speak about communicating and learning in another language, English. They then discuss their learning networks, and their communication experiences with lecturers and other students.

The sixth chapter shifts the contextual focus of the participants' intercultural communication experiences from the learning environment of the School to the campus and host society beyond. The discussion begins by considering the differences in interpersonal communication between CHCs and western cultures, and issues of language competence. Then, participants discuss their communication with those from the same culture, with international students, with other New Zealand students, and with other New Zealanders beyond the university environment.

In Chapter seven, the discussion focuses on values and attitudes and how these impact upon participants' feelings of difference and belonging. The chapter begins with an introduction to the cultural foundations of Confucian societies. Participants then explain situations where their first culture values and attitudes were put into question. Next, they discuss feelings of belonging (or not) to this culture within the emergent themes of loneliness, racism, religion, the influence of the media on their lives, and managing humour in intercultural communication. Finally, some participants voice their feelings about changing their status from an international student to a permanent resident, and its consequence for their future lives.

In the last of these findings chapters, Chapter eight, I focus on issues of cultural identity, in particular, the extent to which cultural identity is (re)constructed and/or (re)negotiated in the light of the participants' intercultural communication experiences within the host culture. Participants discuss the place of their first culture and the community of international students in relation to their cultural identity. The following section deals with participants' understanding of their changing cultural identity as they make choices about returning to their first culture or acculturating to the host culture. This discussion is developed as participants express the emergent

changes to their cultural identity as they confront their Confucian values, cultural practices, and beliefs as a result of their experiences in New Zealand society.

The final chapter, Chapter nine, addresses the major conclusions that emerged from the findings in the study and their implications. Practical, social, methodological, and theoretical implications are addressed, as well as directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework which underpins this study. In undertaking any research it is important first to identify a particular perspective which will determine the rules for action, for process, for discourse, and for what is considered knowledge (Lincoln, 1990). The need for commitment is essential in order to retain congruence, coherence, order and logic, both within the research process and in determining the outcomes: that which Guba (1990) defined as 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action' (p. 17). Furthermore, since intercultural communication is central to this study, the choice of theory should accommodate representation of the human experience (Penman, 1992). These constructs are fundamental in developing a framework to underpin this study.

In the first section, focused on philosophical foundations, I address Schutz's (1971, 1973) conception of phenomenology that provided the foundations for Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social constructionism. Subsumed within this framework is community as a social construction (Cohen, 1985) and its relationship to communication and identity. Next, I present a theoretical conceptualisation of cultural identity as it pertains to intercultural communication. In particular, I address the relationship between communication, culture, and cultural identity as identified by Collier and Thomas (1988). Finally, I develop a framework for addressing cultural identity in intercultural communication, employing Casimir's (1993) conceptualisation of third culture building. The model provides a framework for theorising the reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity in intercultural communication and third culture formation.

2.1 The philosophical foundations of this study

The philosophical foundations informing this research are grounded in social constructionism, a theoretical approach concerned with the interpretation and understanding of the everyday life of the individuals who comprise a social group (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). They derive from Husserl's phenomenological perspective as further refined by Schutz (1971; 1973). Schutz was concerned with 'the world of everyday life [that] is the scene and also the object of our actions and interactions' (Schutz, 1973, p.209). Schutz posited an intersubjective world, experienced and interpreted by others previously, and now open to our experience and interpretation. Thus, meaning is particular and peculiar to individuals both within and among social groups. Schutz's ideas focus the observer (in this case, the researcher) on the individual meanings that different people bring to a communication encounter. However, individuals' meanings depend in part on what they learn from others in a sociocultural group, and reality is socially constructed within this group through communication. Thus, it is appropriate to focus this study on the communication which occurs between CHC students and people in the host culture, and on the meanings and practices shared by CHC students as well as on those that are unique to individuals or subgroups. This theoretical framework guides our focus towards individual and shared realities, that is, the subjective and the intersubjective.

Furthermore, Schutz argued that the world is made up of *multiple realities*, social worlds recognised through an individual's consciousness. Individuals are able to make sense of these multiple realities through a process of categorisation. The formation of these categories, which he called *typifications*, enable individuals to understand and deal with people and things within a social group and thus place them within a generalised category which *typifies* them. As these typifications may differ among groups, cultures and time periods, Schutz recognised that general truths about human experience cannot be found, although specific truths of individual historical groups can be. He used the term *social recipes* to capture such specific truths; social recipes are typical, well-understood ways of doing things in particular situations that enable people to communicate, and to establish proper behaviour (Schutz, 1973). These situations are temporal and, like social recipes, can change over time. Communicative action and what we consider knowledge is a

function of the historical context in which the communication process takes place among people (Penman, 1992). These historical realities, constructed in communication, and from the typifications and social recipes formed therein, are what Shotter (1992) called *living traditions*. Thus, our understanding of the social world is historically embedded. Further, as the context changes, so too does our understanding. Therefore, it is necessary to account for the context in the intercultural communication encounter, at the same time acknowledging the temporality of this context.

Undergirding social constructionist inquiry is Weber's phenomenological doctrine of *verstehen*, that is, the understanding of social phenomena from the actor's own perspective: the important reality is what individuals perceive it to be. Thus, the assumptions underlying this inquiry of understanding and interpretation require the active involvement of the researcher in the research process. Our understanding of the communication process arises out of a meaning generation process through interaction with others, an intersubjective world shared by the researcher and researched, resulting in the creation of a story to make sense of the world (Penman, 1992).

The theory also has implications for interpersonal communication in that it assumes that knowledge is the result of each individual's unique experience, attained through interpersonal communication with others, and not only from what already exists.

These conceptualisations are important in considering how the CHC student must somehow acquire not only the cultural knowledge, the living tradition of the host culture, but also the interpersonal knowledge to communicate in that culture. In order to proceed CHC students are faced with having to *reconstruct* (or rebuild) and *renegotiate* (or question and therefore make changes to) their social reality. Not only must they try to socially construct the reality of the host culture, but also their own reality within the host culture. It is a meaning-making process that manifests itself in social interaction. Native speakers of a language (and the culture within which the language is embedded) know implicitly and unconsciously their language and culture whereas, for non-native speakers, both must be learned.

A final component which underpins this study is community as a social construction (Cohen, 1985). Cohen, like Schutz, acknowledged the subjective and

intersubjective realities which individuals construct, and suggested the product of this construction is *community*. Cohen argued that a community exists when ‘the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups’ (p. 12). This definition invokes the dichotomy of similarity and difference: the similarity of members to each other, and the difference, or opposition, of the community to others, and to other social entities. This oppositional relationship is delineated in the *boundary* between social groups or cultures, where boundary marks the ‘beginning and end of a community’, and where ‘boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). For Cohen community is where one learns and continues to practice how to be social: where one acquires culture, that is, a knowledge and experience of the *symbols* which will equip an individual to be social. Symbols, like language, do not tell us what to mean, but give us the capacity to make meaning. That people are able to give a similar sense to a common body of symbols means that they can share in the same community. Similarly, it is in community that individuals learn the typifications, the social recipes, the living traditions of their culture which enable them to socially construct their reality. Thus, there is a parallel here between Schutz’s social construction of reality and Cohen’s social construction of community – the context in which individuals share their culture, their realities.

Thus, the boundary which delineates communities and the way in which individuals interpret symbols within these communities may provide ways of looking at how communication experiences might differ interculturally. In this sense, boundary and symbol, like typifications and social recipes, are central to understanding how meaning is socially constructed.

Cohen claimed that symbol unites people in their opposition, both to each other, and to those *outside* and, in doing so, ‘it thereby constitutes, and gives reality to, the community’s boundaries’ (p. 21). For example, a shared understanding and interpretation of symbol among individuals within a community enables them to identify perceived differences with others and, thus, the boundary where culture, and community, are no longer shared. Furthermore, Cohen argued that boundaries provide people with a referent for their cultural identities which they can then express in social life. Thus, CHC students, in seeking membership in the community of the

host social group, must be able to interpret and negotiate the meaning and use of the symbols of the host community. The extent to which CHC students are able to recognise and use symbolic forms within the host community, and the boundaries that these symbolic forms render, largely determines the success of their intercultural communication experiences within the host culture; it may also impact upon how they construct and negotiate their own cultural identity within the community (or communities) of the host culture. This final point has two important implications, first, for how they see themselves, not just in their own community or communities, but in relation to those from the host culture and, second, for how this cultural identity is enacted through communication.

To conclude, social constructionism fits with the focus of this study since it is concerned with the interpretation and understanding of the everyday life of the individuals who comprise a social group or community. Analysis must focus on the conversational context of everyday life. Meaning and understandings emerge as individuals communicate with one another. And it is this communication that is constitutive of social reality. Thus, it is appropriate to investigate communication and the situated influences of people's words as they are spoken (Shotter and Gergen, 1992), that is, the influence of culture and context in intercultural and interpersonal communication. Social constructionism provides a framework for investigating the ways in which social groups create, sustain, and share meaning, and how individuals construct their everyday lives to communicate within defined social groups or communities. Individuals are able to communicate and make meaning through language and cultural knowledge, that is, the living traditions of the social group, that are shared by the social group in interpersonal communication and that hold it together. Individuals perceive and experience life through categories (typifications) and well understood ways of doing things (social recipes), and from which our social knowledge is formed (our living traditions), and around which our social reality is framed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). By exploring these typifications and social recipes as they emerge in communication it is possible to better understand and interpret the social reality these CHC students construct as they perceive and experience the social world.

2.2 Cultural identity in intercultural communication research

Cultural identity is constructed and negotiated in intercultural communication. The process of *construction* of cultural identity occurs as individuals identify with and perceive acceptance into a shared culture; and the process of *negotiation* of cultural identity occurs as individuals accommodate the symbols and meanings and the rules for conduct of this cultural group (Collier and Thomas, 1988).

However, for communication to be intercultural, there is the underlying assumption that the interlocutors must belong to separate cultural groups or communities (Cohen, 1985), groups whose cultural knowledge is different. Interlocutors from these different groups must reconstruct and renegotiate their cultural identity and the knowledge this identity presupposes -- their beliefs, values, and attitudes, and their rules for social interaction -- to accommodate the culture of the interlocuter in the other social group. In doing so they begin to question and adapt their typifications, social recipes, and their living traditions, based on their limited understanding of the cultural other. The sharing of cultural knowledge with others from the same cultural group presupposes a cultural identity with that group. In the case of CHC students their cultural identity is firmly embedded within Confucian heritage traditions which influence their communication. In the intercultural communication encounter this cultural identity may be reconstructed and renegotiated in light of communication experiences with those in the host culture. Therefore, it is appropriate to explore this process through the intercultural communication experiences of those who enter a culturally different society.

To consider an individual's cultural identity in the intercultural communication process requires a theoretical perspective which enables identity to be defined and described from a range of cultural perspectives. Geertz' (1979) and Sampson's (1989) challenge to the commonly assumed Western notion of the individual as a firmly bounded, highly individuated conception of personhood immediately puts into question our assumptions about identity and personhood. Such assumptions may be inappropriate when considering people from diverse cultures.

For example, in the West, the individual is thought to possess his or her uniqueness as a set of ideas, processes, categories, and so on, for which the individual is a container (Rorty, 1979). These features are part of what Hofstede (1982) classified as individualist culture. Contrastingly, those from CHCs fall into Hofstede's (1980) collectivist divide which characterises Eastern cultures; harmony among and between people and nature is emphasised (Hoffman, 1990). In terms of power differences individualist cultures value independence and equality whereas collectivist cultures, in particular, CHCs, maintain hierarchical role relationships. For example, CHC students are expected to be modest and nonverbally deferent in the presence of their teachers. Thus, a theory which addresses cultural identity in intercultural communication between those from CHCs and those in the host culture needs to account for social interaction in communication, and the emergent relationships, groups and networks resulting from this communication. It also needs to acknowledge how the features of collectivist cultures, such as hierarchical structure and balance and harmony in interpersonal relations, are managed in the intercultural communication process.

Models of cultural identity in intercultural communication need to account for the fact that individuals can have multiple identities which they (re)construct and (re)negotiate through intercultural communication over time and in relation to context. Irwin's (1993, 1996) anthropological approach to identity comes close to this conceptualisation. Irwin assumes that identities are problematic and unstable and are therefore undergoing continual change and development. Because of these qualities, he recommends an ethnographic approach that has the capacity to 'respond to rapidly altering identities and to fluctuations in the process of identification' (p. 6). Such an approach requires thick description that involves an understanding of cultural identity, not only according to customs, ways, and etiquette, but also by contrasting cultural identities in order to understand cultural diversity through social interaction. All of these aspects are important in the conceptualisation of cultural identity as it is embraced in this study. However, an element which is under-emphasised in Irwin's model is what Shotter (1989) called *language in use*, that is, language use and non-verbal communication within the context of an intercultural communication encounter. The appeal of the anthropology of identity approach is in the way it broadly advances towards a deeper and richer understanding of cultural identity, especially in contrast with other cultural identities and their contextual influences. However, in its conceptualisation it does not sufficiently focus on the

contextual, processual and dynamic nature of *communication*, how communication is played out in intercultural communication between and among individuals and groups, and how communication impacts on the (re)construction and (re)negotiation of cultural identity.

2.2.1 Conceptualising cultural identity

A fundamental assumption concerning the nature of cultural identity is that it is inscribed within dimensions such as nationality, personality, and the contextual setting. However, in a study of intercultural communication this conceptualisation is limited as it excludes the roles of communication and culture. This study draws upon the framework developed by Collier and Thomas (1988) which focuses on the role of culture and communication in explaining cultural identity. Their basic ontological assumption (derived from Brown and Levinson, 1987) is that persons negotiate identity everywhere, that is, personhood varies contextually and identities emerge in a given context.

A second assumption concerns the role of (intercultural) communication in cultural identity. Identity is experienced through discourse at a variety of levels and in different situations. Further, it is in the domain of (intercultural) communication that people ‘manage general cultural identities and from it that they negotiate more particular ones’ (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p. 106). (Intercultural) communication influences cultural identity in three ways. First, identities are formed, negotiated, modified, confirmed, and challenged through communication and contact with others (Goffman, 1967; McCall, 1976; Scotton, 1983; cited in Collier and Thomas, 1988). For example, McCall and Simmons (1979) argued that in interaction individuals perform particular identities and have them supported, questioned, or rejected, and that such responses influence subsequent performances, even within a single conversation. Second, Carbaugh (1990) noted the important role that communication serves as a way or means of affirming shared identity. For example, Carbaugh noted how *manly* speech denoted membership among males in the community of *Teamsterville* (Philipsen, 1990). And third, Collier and Thomas observed how in discourse, an individual’s cultural and other group identities are complex, multivariate, and dynamic. Communication thus provides a common basis for meanings and actions -- a *how to act* when with those who share the identity.

A third assumption is that identities are negotiated through a process of contrast of self to others and one's group to other groups (DeVos and Ross, 1975; Cohen, 1985). In intercultural communication the negotiation process becomes quite complex because individuals, in identifying a communication partner as culturally different, compare, and thus make judgments and attributions. Through this negotiation process of comparison and contrast they negotiate the identities of both themselves and the cultural other(s) (Collier and Thomas, 1988). For example, preconceived stereotypes, opinions and meanings, and norms about other groups are likely to be considered, questioned and revised. Thus, cultural identity is dynamic and fluid because it is continually reconstructed and renegotiated in interaction.

The final assumption acknowledges the links between context, (intercultural) communication, culture, and cultural identity. Individuals create, recreate, affirm, and reaffirm their cultural identity through the (intercultural) communication process. Furthermore, the knowledge they require for this interaction is socially constructed through the meaning-making process of communication, and through shared patterns of meaning manifest in the symbols which make up cultures. Our identities are inscribed initially within our own culture and the cultures we come into contact with. However, as we move among cultures parts of us remain stable, and parts of us change as a result of acculturation to the host culture. The cultural identity we assume in any particular intercultural communication encounter is defined in part by the cultural context and the intercultural communication exchanges taking place. Thus, it is conceivable that we may have multiple cultural identities depending on the contexts and communication events in which we find ourselves. As a result of our everyday actions we demonstrate what Belay (1993) called a *multiplicity of identities* as we negotiate meanings and priorities within the parameters of our own cultural identity, for example, parameters such as nationhood, gender, ethnicity, organisation belonging, and religious beliefs. Thus, as Collier and Thomas (1988) pointed out, cultural identities emerge in a given context and are created and affirmed through (intercultural) communication.

The assumptions and conceptualisations embodied within Collier and Thomas' (1988) framework of cultural identity lead us to the proposition that CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities and, more specifically, their cultural identities, through their intercultural communication experiences in a host environment. I develop this proposition further in the next section.

2.2.2 Cultural identity change in intercultural communication

Casmir (1993) argued that as people from different cultures interact, as they make important responses to the experiences they encounter during the interaction process, and as they seek to fulfil their needs, that yet another culture emerges: a third culture. A third culture is the fusion of ‘mutually developed values, communication, and organizational systems’, resulting in the construction of ‘new, effective, and mutually acceptable ways of benefiting from human relationships’ (Casmir, 1993, p. 407). This way of conceptualising the culture which emerges in an intercultural communication encounter is illustrated more clearly in a model developed by Starosta (1991). Starosta provided a chronological description of the process of third culture building where A and B are from two different cultures.

Figure 1

**Starosta’s chronological model of the
process of third culture building**

- T1: A notices B.
- T2: A makes self known to B.
- T3: A seeks information about B.
- T4: A engages B in the same processes already described.
- T5: A and B start to question their attitudes, mores, and values and modify others to more resemble each other.
- T6: A and B replace some attitudes, mores, and values and modify others to more resemble each other.
- T7: A and B integrate new or revised attitudes, mores, and values into existing constellations.
- T8: A and B renegotiate their relationship in light of changing circumstances and contexts.
- T9: Some of these renegotiated aspects of the relationship become permanent and self-perpetuating.

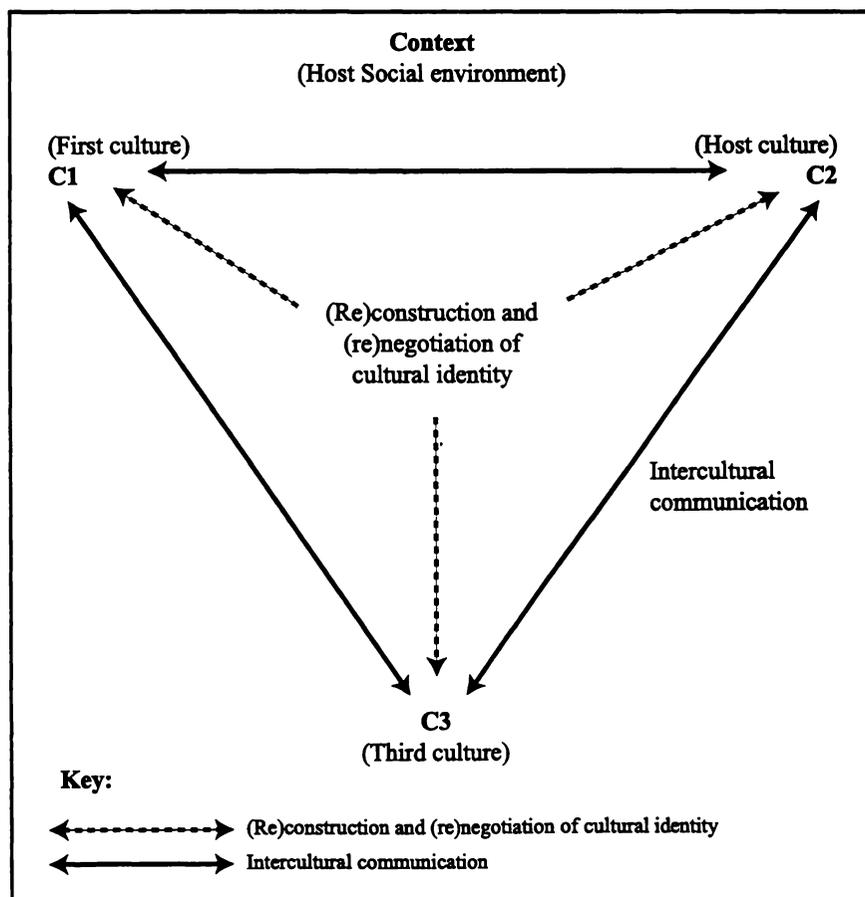
In this nine phase model, the steps T1 (where T is time) through to T6 are necessary for the achievement of a third *realm* (as Starosta labelled it). Steps T6 to T8 represent the building of a third culture proper. Starosta’s concept of a third realm

represents a temporary or even fleeting moment, whereas a third culture (achieved around T9 and beyond) would be relatively enduring. A closer look at these nine steps suggests that at the heart of third culture building is the intercultural communication exchange and, concomitantly, the (re)construction and (re)negotiation of cultural identity to accommodate differences in cultural knowledge encountered in the intercultural communication exchange.

In light of third culture building, and in recognition of the interrelationship among communication, culture, and cultural identity in intercultural communication encounters, I propose a model that recognises this interrelationship and incorporates third culture building.

Figure 2

**Towards a model of cultural identity change
in intercultural communication**



The model acknowledges the context of each intercultural communication encounter (in the case of CHC students, the academic and/or social environment). Individuals in the communication encounter bring elements of their own (first) culture, and/or the host culture, and/or elements which have evolved in the third culture, to the encounter. Each of the three cultures provides its cultural assumptions, rules, cues, or symbols around which communication takes place and is contextualised, and within which cultural identity is (re)constructed and (re)negotiated. The three domains may interplay and intertwine, influencing the way in which individuals (re)negotiate and (re)construct their cultural identity within and across social groups or communities.

The model also acknowledges the existence of a multiplicity of cultural identities which arise from different communication contexts and within individuals in their intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. For example, where communication is enacted within the first culture, or in a context which closely approximates the first culture, there may be little or no reconstruction of cultural identity, whereas in a communication encounter in the host culture individuals may need to reconstruct their identity in order to share membership with the cultural other. The broken lines in this model acknowledge this process, and the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural identity as individuals (re)construct and (re)negotiate their cultural identities to accommodate those from their first culture as well as the cultural other in a range of contexts. Hence, the existence of multiple identities. Furthermore, the degree of interculturalness in the communication encounter will influence the degree of (re)construction and (re)negotiation of cultural identity. Where identities are changing there may be some degree of, or complete acculturation, or possibly third culture building (as Starosta's model suggests), indicating that reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity have occurred. Where identities remain unchanged, possibly resulting in some degree of discord, there may be little or no reconstruction or renegotiation.

Casmir (1994) favoured the contribution of ethnographic insights to assist us in our search for models of co-operation among individuals of diverse cultures. This model lends itself well to theories and methodologies of interpretation and understanding, approaches which will enable us to better describe, interpret, and understand the interactive and experiential, processual and contextual nature of the

intercultural communication process. Thus, an ethnographic approach is an appropriate methodology to explore this model.

In conclusion, by drawing on theoretical perspectives that address cultural identity and third culture building this model attempts to focus on the changing nature of cultural identity within the intercultural communication process. As stated earlier, a model of cultural identity in intercultural communication needs to account for the reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity in and through the process of intercultural communication, and acknowledge that cultural identities are dynamic, and influenced by context and culture. Such a model will better enable us to understand the ways in which CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through intercultural communication and, hence, the impact that such constructions and negotiations have on their cultural identity and, possibly, on third culture formation.

Summary

This chapter set out the theoretical framework that underpins this study and provides a means to understanding the intercultural communication experiences of CHC students in their host environment. The social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), derived from Schutz's (1971; 1973) conceptualisation of phenomenology, and community as a social construction (Cohen, 1985), provided the constructs for exploring the individual and shared realities, the subjective and intersubjective worlds, of the participants in this study as they communicate with those in the host culture. The social worlds, or *multiple realities*, experienced by these participants in (intercultural) communication are formed through *typifications* and *social recipes*, a sense-making process which enables participants to categorise, or typify, people's well-understood ways of doing things in particular situations (social recipes) from our social knowledge (living traditions). A further aspect of the participants' socially constructed worlds is *community* where individuals make meaning through shared symbols and, hence, the *boundaries* that these symbolic forms render. It is within these boundaries of shared meaning that cultural identities

emerge. Understanding these social phenomena from the actor's own perspective (*verstehen*) requires the researcher's participation in the research process.

The second part focused on the foundations for and development of a theory of cultural identity change in intercultural communication. Cultural identity is assumed to be inscribed within the dimensions of nationality, personality and the contextual setting, and to be experienced through discursive acts in intercultural communication (Collier and Thomas, 1988), to be negotiated through a process of contrast of self to others (DeVos and Ross, 1975; Cohen, 1985), and to include the notion of multiple cultural identities (Belay, 1993). From these assumptions and conceptualisations emerged the proposition that CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities and cultural identities through their intercultural communication experiences in a host environment. And further, this reconstruction and renegotiation of identity may result in the formation of a third culture (Starosta, 1991; Casmir, 1993).

Finally, I proposed a model that accommodates this cultural identity change, the existence of a multiplicity of identities, and the concept of third culture building. The model seeks to illustrate the interrelationship among communication, culture, and cultural identity for individuals in the intercultural communication process.

The next chapter presents a review of the literature concerning the intercultural communication experiences of international students.

Chapter 3

International students and their intercultural communication experiences: A literature review

The research comprising international students covers a diverse range of disciplines, and theoretical and methodological perspectives. This chapter reviews the studies carried out within these disciplines in order to establish what is known about the intercultural communication experiences of international students and, more particularly, of CHC students. This exploration is important in refining the focus of attention within this study.

The first part of this review (3.1) introduces CHC students and their first culture learning environment. The second part (3.2) focuses on studies of international students in intercultural contexts, examining issues of language and communication, and intercultural interaction. It also explores the social and psychological well-being of international students through the notion of adjustment and, last, the role of support services.

The third part (3.3) addresses the emergent methodological concerns in these studies, especially within the context of intercultural communication research. This section is followed by conclusions and implications drawn from the review of literature (3.4), and, finally, the research questions that provide the focus for this study (3.5).

3.1 The CHC student: learning and teaching

In order to understand the complexities of the intercultural communication process that CHC students confront in the host environment, it is necessary to examine their

experiences in their first culture learning context. Two key questions emerge: What is the nature of the CHC student's learning environment? And what is the preferred learning style of the CHC student? First, I will review the literature that addresses these two questions, and then follow with a discussion regarding the implications for theory development.

3.1.1 The nature of the CHC learning environment

An understanding of the CHC learning environment is important in developing an awareness of the factors which impact upon the learning of CHC students. One important factor concerns attitudes to learning. Lee (1996) noted that in Confucian societies education is seen as being attainable by all. There is a strong belief that success will come from effort and willpower, and that success is not dependent on ability (as is the belief in the West). Lee summarised the characteristics of education for those in CHCs which result in successful learning for these students:

1. A high degree of parental involvement in and commitment to the education of children;
2. A basic eagerness to learn and positive attitude toward school on the part of children;
3. High status for teachers and a strong commitment on their part to teaching and to involvement in their students' overall development;
4. The premise of egalitarian access to the rewards of successful learning;
5. The assumption that it is effort rather than innate ability which yields rewards in schooling;
6. The occupational system values education as appropriate preparation for work. (p. 39)

Linked to this strong familial value placed on gaining education is the responsibility of the eldest member of the family who then supports the next, and so on.

Further, attitudes to knowledge and power impact upon students' learning. Chinese tend to adopt conserving attitudes to knowledge, while Westerners adopt extending attitudes (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991). For example, Zhao (1995) found that Chinese students at the University of Auckland obtained an attitudinal change towards knowledge and learning and teacher's authority that was more consistent with western patterns. However, their behavioural changes were not so dramatic,

leading him to conclude that respondents may still be under the influence of Chinese socialisation patterns of harmony, moderation and face saving.

A second factor concerns the structure of the educational environment itself which, in turn, impacts upon teaching and learning. A description of teacher-student relationships found in modern Chinese universities conveys the complexity of social relations characteristic of collectivist cultures: students live on campus in dormitories, an environment which facilitates collectivist activities, especially academic discussions and study groups; teachers also live on campus, sometimes in the same building, facilitating much teacher-student interaction outside the classroom, even beyond the context of academic study; although teacher-student relations are strongly hierarchical, they are also marked by warmth and a sense of responsibility on both sides. Thus, the teaching mode is 'not one of simple transmission but one based on much interaction, in a complex and not atypically warm social context' (Biggs, 1996, p. 56).

And yet, other descriptions of classroom interaction suggest that traditional cultural values pervade the CHC classroom; for example:

Students learn by listening, reading, observing, and imitating, rather than by discovery learning or engaging in critical thinking. Students are not encouraged to ask questions during class or to seek answers. Professors lecture during the entire class and students take and memorize copious notes. Examinations usually require the recall of factual information. . . . [Students] read word by word, page by page, often failing to integrate, organize, and synthesize information, particularly when it is counterfactual and hypothetical in nature. (Cheng and Clark, 1993, p. 126)

Cheng and Clark (1993) noted that children are taught to respect and obey those in authority, resulting in a social and psychological distance between students and teachers: teachers are not to be challenged. Because of these cultural practices, western classroom practices of volunteering answers, commenting, interrupting, criticising, asking questions, or seeking clarification, may be seen as bold and immodest by CHC students. And university teachers' requests for student involvement in the decision making process regarding course content will be confusing for these students (Cheng and Clark, 1993).

Cheng and Clark's (1993) description of CHC students' behaviour in classroom interaction in their first cultures helps us to understand the resultant conflict in learning styles when they arrive in western learning environments. However, other

research (Biggs, 1996; Biggs and Watkins, 1996; and Lee 1996) suggests that that the social-cultural environment, that is, the social world beyond the classroom, acts as an extension of the CHC student's classroom interaction and learning environment, and it is here that researchers should also focus their attention in order to explore the processes that influence CHC students' learning.

A further influential facet of teaching and learning is the system of education. Beeby (1996) noted that Chinese education is characterised by a formal system of education, with a rigid syllabus, *one best way*, and formal exams: the affect domain, which involves critical response, is ignored. By contrast, in New Zealand meaning and understanding are stressed, critical response is encouraged, and the curriculum draws from a wider variety of content and method. Ballard (1991) concluded that these differences result in a mismatch in expectations when CHC students study in New Zealand, leading to feelings of confusion and frustration from both CHC students (in having to work so much out for themselves), and local lecturers. Ballard commented that CHC students are left to conclude that lecturers must be lazy, poorly qualified, or racists, since students expect lecturers to lead them to the correct answer, and viewing alternative interpretations is seen as unnecessary. And Zhao (1995) found that Chinese students had the expectation that teachers should provide the appropriate direction and answers for examinations and encourage them to work hard. Such an expectation corresponds with their first culture belief that success lies in the hands of the teacher, and not in the student's hands.

3.1.2 CHC students' preferred learning styles

Studies of the learning styles of CHC learners have been characterised by the distinction between deep and surface learning (Biggs, 1990; 1996). McLean, Surtie, Elphinstone, and Devlin (1995), drawing on Bigg's work, describe approaches to learning as follows:

- ‘deep’ approaches . . . emphasise meaning and an intention to understand;
- ‘surface’ approaches . . . emphasise memorisation, rote recall and an intention to reproduce information in response to external task demands;
- ‘achieving’ or ‘strategic’ approaches . . . [where] students seek to maximise their grades by organising their time and resources. (McLean et al., 1995, p. 75)

Most research supports the view that all students, including CHC students, may adopt a surface learning approach for one task and a deep approach for another, but not both approaches at the same time, and students appear to move between approaches as appropriate (Biggs, 1990; Bilbow, 1989; Houlker, 1995; and McLean et al., 1995).

However, some researchers have contended that students from CHCs who study in western educational institutions demonstrate a surface approach only to learning. For example, there is a belief among academic staff at the University of Queensland that ‘many overseas students tend to adopt a “reproducing orientation” (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) to studying, [or a] surface approach’ (Samuelowicz, 1987, p. 123). Reasons given for students adopting a surface approach to learning include: assessment and teaching techniques which are anxiety inducing; traditional methods rather than innovative methods; and curriculum content, if it is considered irrelevant by students (Biggs, 1990; Kember and Gow, 1991; and Houlker, 1996). In the case of international students a further reason could be their inability to process academic language correctly and at the rate demanded, and differences in cultural background (Bilbow, 1989).

Biggs (1991) refuted the surface-only argument, contending that Confucian education relies largely on a deep approach where methods are individual and socratic, not expository. He drew on the Analects of Confucius to explain: ‘Seeking knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous’ [Analects II.15]’ (p. 30). Thus, reducing CHC learning to a surface-only approach fails to appreciate the bigger picture (Lee, 1996). Instead, memorising (becoming familiar with the text) is a first step, but understanding, reflecting, and questioning are also basic components of learning in Confucian education (components found in the western notion of a deep approach). With the emphasis on reflective thinking and inquiry in the process of learning, an ideal teacher in this context is one who ‘guides students but does not pull them along,

urges students to go forward and does not suppress them, opens the way for students, but does not take them to the place' (Lee, 1996, p. 36).

The literature thus far indicates disagreement about and perhaps misunderstanding of CHC learners. Nonetheless, the debate concerning CHC students as deep and surface learners, and their culturally embedded attitudes to learning and education have implications for both teaching (on the part of university teachers) and learners (CHC students) in the host tertiary environment, and for the delivery of learning support.

3.1.3 Implications for theory development

What theoretical approaches have emerged, then, that enable us to explain, understand, or interpret these differences in human behaviour as diverse cultures interact and communicate within a particular teaching/learning context? Differences in teacher/learner interactions which emerge across a range of cultures have been theorised according to the four dimensions of individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 1980; 1983; 1986). The appeal of this model lies in its 'anthropological approach to teaching based on insight into cultural variety across the world' (Hofstede, 1989, p. 316). Unfortunately, Hofstede presented these differences in terms of extreme positions. For example, he noted that in collectivist societies teachers and students have a positive association in society with whatever is rooted in tradition, whereas in individualist societies there is a positive association in society with whatever is new. Later, he conceded the limitations of this approach:

Not all differences in teacher/student interaction can be associated with one of the four dimensions. Certain interaction patterns are particular to a given country or even to a given school; often differences may relate to other dimensions, not identified in my study. (Hofstede, 1986, p. 313)

However, criticism has been levelled at grand theoretical explanations of human behaviour which derive from a very limited set of cultural dimensions such as Hofstede's (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones, and Callan, 1991; and Putnis, 1992). And Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988) argued that global

characterisations regarding collectivism may be inaccurate, especially when addressing tertiary students.

Models which seek to understand teaching and learning behaviour in terms of a dichotomy of difference between two cultures are also seen as problematic in that they are prone to stereotyping. For example, Zhao (1995) is critical of Ballard and Clanchy's (1984; and 1991) model of differences between Asian and Australian learning and teaching environments, a model which is grounded in a stereotypical view of Asian students: 'All Asian students [viewed] as a homogenous group . . . can be misleading in understanding and analysing the learning problems they encounter' (Zhao, 1995, p. 26). Biggs (1996) confirmed that this kind of stereotyping about differences between Asian and western learners is erroneous, and that CHC students and teachers often demonstrate the characteristics attributed to western learners and teachers.

3.1.4 Conclusion

To conclude, the literature concerning the teaching and learning styles of CHC students has traditionally focused on classroom interaction. This approach has not acknowledged the complexities of social interaction within the sociocultural learning environment which also impacts on the teaching and learning of CHC students. There also appears to be some uncertainty over whether or not, and the extent to which, CHC students demonstrate surface and deep learning and in what contexts. Further, grand theoretical explanations of differences in human behaviour that have been applied to such research suffer limitations in that they do not seek to understand difference at the level of the individual, instead tending to treat cultures monolithically. And dimensions of difference are prone to stereotyping. What appears to be lacking, then, is an approach that appreciates simultaneously differences between *and within* cultures, that enables us to interpret and understand the complexity of individuals in an intercultural learning environment, and that captures the processual and dynamic nature of this experience.

Given the differences in teaching and learning that have emerged in this review, then how do these CHC students manage to succeed so well in western universities, returning to be successful in their own countries, or staying on and eventually

gaining professional employment in the country of study? The reality of that success is embedded within their experiences -- both learning and social -- within the host culture. Next, I examine the studies which reflect these experiences.

3.2 Studies addressing international students in intercultural contexts

A number of studies focus on the experiences of international students in a host environment. The studies fall into three areas: language and communication, intercultural interaction, and adjustment to the host culture. The first area describes the challenges confronting international students in their communication in the learning environment, focusing on issues of teaching and learning in spoken and written communication contexts. The second area concerns intercultural interaction in the host environment. The third area focuses on studies concerned with the social and psychological well-being of international students through the concept of adjustment. This discussion is located around the related themes of adjustment to the tertiary education context, sojourner adjustment, culture learning, socio- and psychocultural adjustment, and cultural stress. The implications emerging from these areas are addressed in studies of support services for international students.

3.2.1 Language and communication

Many of the studies that address language and communication suggest that language, cited as a problem, masks other problems. First, I will discuss this general area and then two specific contexts subsumed within it: spoken and written communication.

Difficulty with English, while no doubt an important problem in itself, is a common attribution for problems stemming from other causes, such as lack of familiarity with a new educational and social environment, and with a new culture and its associated cultural norms and behaviour (Ballard, 1987; Barker et al., 1991; Houliker, 1996; Samuelowicz, 1987; and Zhao, 1995). Burns (1991), in a self-report study of overseas Asian students, found that these students' second greatest perceived

report study of overseas Asian students, found that these students' second greatest perceived problem was inadequate English, resulting in slow study and difficulty in class participation. Barker et al. (1991) noted that Asian students cited inadequate English to explain their behaviour in four different communication contexts in the learning environment. And yet, Barker et al. were surprised to find that, although Asian students doubted their English ability, they were prepared to ask lecturers why they received a lower mark than expected in graded assignments. The authors attributed this behaviour to a willingness to adopt the behavioural norms of Australian students in order to achieve their goals. Barker et al. (1991) and Samuelowicz (1987) found that participation in tutorials and seminars was one of the most difficult adjustments required of international students. This was due to their lack of confidence with self expression in English, in spite of the expectation of having to express opinions.

Barker (1990) observed that the language experience of many overseas students is largely restricted to the input registers of listening and reading. Yet, in Australian (and also New Zealand) universities, these students are expected to operate in speaking and writing modes, modes where Biggs (1990) noted they may have limited experience in both formal and informal contexts. At undergraduate level there is the immediate and constant pressure to achieve competence in speaking and listening. Once courses are under way, problems can emerge with reading (in terms of both quantity and comprehension) and with writing. For example, Barker noted that overseas students had a major problem in constructing and presenting an assignment or thesis.

The conclusions drawn from these studies suggest that many of the concerns regarding academic achievement and mastery are attributed to language problems. However, they can also result from differences in academic learning styles, and from different expectations about academic performance and behaviour (Houlker, 1996; and Zhao, 1995). For example, Zhao (1995) remarked that the reticence in communication in the classroom (in a New Zealand context) could be attributed to the education the CHC students in his study had received from their parents: that of showing moderation and face towards teachers. And Ginsburg (1992) noted how their interpersonal communication styles disadvantaged them in a culture that rewards the assertive and highly verbal. As a result, foreign students tend to join

together to offer mutual support and thus remain what Ginsburg called a small alien subculture.

Thus, while language is a problem for CHC students, it would appear that there may be other problems or differences, equally or more important, that are obscured when language becomes the sole focus of study.

Spoken communication

Studies of international students' spoken communication show the emergence of two contexts of inquiry: the use of formal language such as cognitive or academic language proficiency required in academic contexts, and the use of natural language, that is, basic conversational skills or interpersonal competence (Kao and Gansneder, 1995). Furthermore, the studies also indicate an over-lapping of these two areas in their effect on academic achievement and adjustment to the-host culture. For example, communicative participation in and out of class was important in developing language proficiency (Ellis, 1993; Nishida, 1985), and academic achievement was found to be related to social adjustment and well-being of the student (Klineberg and Hull, 1979; and Rosenberg, 1979).

In considering international students' spoken language in the academic context, Becker (1986), in an examination of the oral traditions of China and Japan, concluded that their social, linguistic, and philosophical perspectives explained the absence of debate in these two cultures. Thus, it is not surprising that Portin (1993) concluded that Chinese students felt more comfortable following the traditional Chinese way of seeking alternative routes to unknown questions rather than raising a question in class. And similarly, Zhao (1995) concluded that within the classroom first culture influences prevailed, such as a reluctance to participate for fear of losing face. This resulted in a gulf between New Zealand and Chinese students and created a vicious circle which, in turn, further undermined their self-confidence in language use and, concomitantly, their ability to adjust to the classroom culture.

Several studies have found that language and communication skills correlate positively with success in cross-cultural adjustment (Nishida, 1985). For example, students with better language competence experienced less discomfort in the host culture than did students with poor language competence (Brislin, 1981; Church,

1982; and Parr, Bradley and Bingi, 1992). And social adjustment was facilitated through increased contact with the host culture (Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Berry and Kostovcik, 1983; and Westwood and Barker, 1990). For example, when international students were matched with their Australian hosts in a peer-pairing programme, they performed better and had a lower failure rate than those who were not paired. And international students were able to gain more critical information from their hosts about how to function in the new society, that is, learning the unwritten codes of the local culture (Westward and Barker, 1990). Similarly, Zhao (1995) found that Chinese students showed a general reluctance to immerse themselves in the host culture, and they used English to a limited extent beyond the classroom resulting in a reduced rate of adjustment. Ellis (1993), in a study of Japanese students abroad, found that low language contact and low participation in class also correlated with low academic achievement. Thus, he concluded that there was a positive association between participation in the community and classroom, and participation correlates with achievement.

The relationship between participation in the community and achievement was suggested in a small inductive survey of 10 international students by Cooke (1995). Cooke found that these students expressed concern about their own communication, for example, over the adequacy of their English, whether people would make fun of their attempts at communication, and whether they would be able to understand teachers and classmates. From the study Cooke hypothesised that student sojourners' eventual positive communication outcomes in a classroom context might depend upon their feeling secure in home and social communicative contexts, but that these hypotheses needed to be explored in future research.

Another approach to spoken communication explored the questioning patterns of Chinese students in university classes in the United States (Portin, 1993). Portin noted that the Chinese students tended to take a position of distance, claiming that their purposes of study were instrumental and entry into American society was not necessary. Portin concluded that while distancing provided relief from the pressure of oral performance, it fostered isolation and prevented growth of interactive skills for overall satisfactory educational (and I would add *social*) progress. Such students needed to overcome what she regarded as hindrances to becoming part of the linguistic group: linguistic prejudice (evaluative judgements made by listeners about the speaker); linguistic insecurity (many Chinese think they are among the

worst speakers of English as a foreign language); and cognitive uncertainty (where a basic need for information about the listener(s) is required in order for the speaker to proceed comfortably).

However, contrary to these studies which showed the relationship between academic and social communicative competence, achievement, and adjustment, Garner (1989) refuted the value of conversational language in facilitating communicative competence in the classroom. She found that, in general, students employed formal language in classroom participation and, therefore, mastery of conversational English was not sufficient to succeed in an academic setting. As a result, Kao and Gansneder (1995) concluded that Asian students' passivity and reticence in classroom participation, due to English language problems, suggests the need for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes that focus on academic rather than conversational discourse, a necessary skill, especially in graduate classes.

In summary, the findings from the studies suggest the important relationship between spoken communicative competence in academic and social contexts which, in turn, may have some bearing on achievement and adjustment. That is, where international students display better communication skills, they may be more likely to experience successful adjustment to the host culture and greater academic achievement. However, at present the findings are inconclusive and need further exploration.

Written communication

Studies addressing the written communication of international students point to the relationship between culture and writing styles. Within the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages much has been written about culture-specific writing styles. Cultural influences and language interference are identified as key factors in international students' ability to write in English (Beamer, 1994, Halio, 1989, Mirshafiei, 1994). Specifically, Garner (1989) noted how rhetorical styles differ across languages and cultures, thus providing difficulty for international students writing in English. Crosling (1993) cautioned against the 'blanket application of cultural differences to all members of a particular culture' (p. 11). In citing Kaplan (1987), she noted that each language has certain clear preferences for rhetorical

forms. The Chinese system of writing is a process of unfolding to arrive at a conclusion:

[The Chinese system of writing] apparently seeks to build a case that gradually unfolds, taking the reader or the listener through the speaker or the writer's steps so that the reasoning behind the conclusion reached is transparent. In this way, the speaker/writer and the listener/reader arrive at the same conclusion together (Brick, 1991, cited in Crosling, 1993, p. 11).

Becker (1986) noted that the Chinese mindset was more oriented towards imagery and sympathetic understanding than to definition and distinction:

The Chinese language remains an efficient but highly ambiguous medium which makes few distinctions necessary for in-depth debates or discussions. (Becker, 1986, p. 80).

In an ethnographic study of the writing of international students in academic settings in the United States, Fox (1994) found that students from non-western cultures tended to value indirectness or more roundabout communication strategies, expected the reader to infer a great deal, valued tradition and authority more than originality, and found it inappropriate or unfruitful to critique authorities in a field, especially while a student. She concluded that the factors of culture, education, gender, status, personality, and willingness to be obedient to the system affected the writing and oral communication of international students.

In conclusion, cultural influences and language interference are important factors in international students' writing (and speaking) abilities. These studies have highlighted the need to acknowledge both the intra- and intercultural diversity of the rhetorical styles of CHC students in communication contexts. There is room for equal acknowledgement on both sides of the cultural divide in recognising cultural diversity in speaking and writing.

3.2.2 Intercultural interaction in the community

This section addresses the intercultural interaction that takes place among international students and people in the host community beyond the classroom. Intercultural interaction within the host community is important as it enables the

development of new perspectives on the cultural other's society, learning about other nations and cultures, acquiring intercultural communication skills, and gaining a global understanding of intercultural communication (Paige, 1990). Further, in a study of intercultural communication, the nature of this interaction has an important bearing on processes of adjustment, which I explore in the following section.

After reviewing the literature on international student friendship networks, Furnham and Bochner (1982) concluded that visiting students developed three distinct kinds of social networks:

1. a primary monocultural network of close friendships with other co-nationals, to provide a setting where ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed;
2. a secondary bicultural network bonding the international students and significant host nationals, to instrumentally facilitate the academic and professional needs of the student;
3. a third multicultural network of friends and acquaintances, to provide companionship for recreational and nontask-oriented activities.

While these three areas provide a locus for investigation, the extent to which individuals develop any or all of these networks would provide areas for more in-depth investigation. For example, to what extent and how are these social networks enacted in intercultural communication? And what are the complexities of and processes within this intercultural interaction?

International students face complications in intercultural interaction. For example, social rules and social situations which vary across cultures may result in international students, and CHC students specifically, encountering difficulties through lack of understanding of the host culture (Argyle, 1980; Barker et al., 1991; Hofstede, 1986). For example, Barker et al. (1991) found that Asian students had more difficulty in dealing with situations related to close interpersonal relationships, in dealing with people of different status, and in establishing friendships than did their Australian counterparts.

In investigating the nature of intercultural relationships a range of student experiences emerged which offer insights into areas for future research. For example, Nesdale and Todd (1993) found that international students sought more in their relationships with Australian students, whereas Australian students preferred the current low level of mixing with international students. Nesdale and Todd noted

that these findings were similar to those reported on American campuses. An implication of this study is that if each group is going to benefit from the presence of the other on campus, then 'strategies need to be devised to promote meaningful contact which will result in the development of meaningful awareness, understanding and acceptance between the two groups' (p. 200). However, Oliver (1992) in her study of CHC students in a New Zealand secondary school, found that intercultural contact was limited to the classroom and, thus, the potential benefits from intercultural contact beyond this context did not transpire.

Research suggests that there are ways of improving intercultural interaction. Cheng and Clark (1993) observed that a better understanding of a cultural group and their likely interactive styles could be attained by exploring features of their culture, for example: the linguistic features of the first language spoken, cultural and religious beliefs and practices, preferred learning styles and educational traditions, communication styles and, finally, an understanding of the host people's identity. And Hofstede (1980; 1986) noted that cultural difference in intercultural interaction could be interpreted within his four dimensional model of cultural differences (individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and the masculinity/femininity divisions). The implication here is that in better understanding cultural differences in intercultural interaction, the more we can improve intercultural interaction.

In part, these findings present a challenge to academics and administrators, as well as to student bodies, to capitalise on the advantages obtained from the internationalisation of campuses. However, the findings also suggest the need for a much greater awareness of the extent of, and issues associated with, international students' intercultural interactions with people in the host community. Further inquiry that addresses the experiences of these international students in intercultural communication contexts and, more importantly, that includes their voices, may provide deeper insights into the nature of this intercultural contact.

To what extent, then, is level of intercultural interaction indicative of adjustment? Church (1982) warned that linking intercultural interaction with adjustment is tenuous: interaction in the host environment is no guarantee that adjustment to that environment will follow. This tenuous link is exemplified in research by Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, and Fujihara (1994). In testing exchange students' affiliation

motive and attitude towards Japanese manners of behaviour they found that, as international students' language fluency increased, so did their expectations for relationships with Japanese hosts. While these international students show a willingness to have closer relations with their Japanese hosts, such findings are not indicative that adjustment has occurred. So what factors influence adjustment then? Research addressing factors influencing adjustment follows next.

3.2.3 Adjustment

Many of the studies about international students fall within the body of literature concerned with adjustment. In this section of the literature review I address adjustment in the tertiary education context, sojourner adjustment, and then culture learning and socio- and psychocultural issues. Last is the notion of cultural stress as it pertains to adjustment.

Adjustment to the tertiary education context

Adjustment to tertiary education contexts for CHC students becomes difficult due to the excessive pressure placed on them by their families to succeed and, by implication, to raise the social and economic standing of the family (Yee, 1989). Such expectations result in stress caused by pressure to achieve academically, volume of work, problems with English, and lack of social contacts (Liang, 1990; Mickle and Chan, 1986). Once at the institution they face academic difficulties. Continued assistance, that extends throughout the student's course, is needed so that help is available when new problems arise (Samuelowicz, 1987), for example, in such areas as learning to be an independent thinker, to be critical of others' ideas, to reach one's own conclusions, to argue one's point, to participate in group discussion, etc.

And yet, in the eyes of some international students, adjustment is a process that they themselves work through. For example Zhao (1995) found that the CHC students who came to New Zealand to study as sojourners viewed their learning issues as something to be overcome and were undergoing a process of personal adjustment with increased exposure to the teaching-learning environment:

Their conceptions and attitudes concerning knowledge and learning have been greatly influenced by the Western intellectual tradition embodied in the University of Auckland. . . . They have adopted a New Zealand view of the purpose of higher education and are being personally transformed and empowered. (Zhao, 1995, p, 128)

One approach to adjustment to tertiary education suggests the development of *cultural literacy* (Robinson, 1992). Robinson proposed that for international students to become culturally literate, they need to have a basic shared context with which to discuss salient issues of the day with others. They also require a knowledge of the values of the host country's universities and their students. For example, in the case of universities in the United States, students need to be aware of values such as individualism and competition, equality and informality, pragmatism and reasoning style, and philosophy and knowledge. The international student's problem, in gaining cultural literacy, is in realising these values and adjusting to them.

The requirement for cultural literacy is supported in studies that conclude that differences in background and characteristics of international students influence their adjustment, and that acculturative stress increases when the gap between the students' traditional culture and the university or higher education culture is greatest (Parr, Bradley, and Bingi, 1992). For example, in a study derived from the self-reports from 163 international students in the United States, Parr et al. (1992) found that international students' anxieties centred around extended family, cultural differences, finances, and university study. Their concerns regarding cultural differences focused on American values such as competitiveness, individualism, and assertiveness. They worried about finding adequate time with an adviser and understanding lectures. However, on a more positive note, they showed little concern about housing or food, finding a place of worship, or American phones or cars. And generally, positive feelings outweighed negative feelings.

The preceding studies have focused attention on causes of, and solutions for, international student adjustment. An alternative approach to adjustment within the context of tertiary education applies *a paradigm shift* (Cheng, 1990) in how adjustment is viewed. Instead of the overseas student being the locus of adjustment, the onus is placed on teaching and learning approaches which acknowledge a respect for and recognition of difference (Beasley, 1990; Ginsburg, 1992; Hofstede, 1986; Nesdale and Todd, 1993; and Samuelowicz, 1987). For example Lunnenborg and

Lunneborg (1985) advocated changing the universities rather than attempting to change the students in order to make the university more culturally diverse and flexible to meet the differing needs of students. Cheng (1990), based on a review of research of others, concluded that ‘it is important for us [teachers in western educational institutions] to infuse multicultural and pluralistic perspectives into our course content, design, instruction, and evaluation processes’ (p. 265). Within New Zealand, Keating (1998) has recently issued a challenge for tertiary educators to infuse aspects of Asia in the teaching curriculum in line with current trends in government policy concerning intercultural contact, international education, trade, tourism, and migration.

Sojourner adjustment

Understanding the experiences of international students in the host culture has been examined through the notion of *sojourner adjustment*. The literature on sojourner adjustment reveals that the term has been defined in different ways and that other terms are sometimes used synonymously, for example, acculturation, cross-cultural adjustment, cultural or ethnic assimilation, or cultural adaptation, or accommodation (Ward and Searle, 1991; Ady, 1994), even though some of them may suggest a more permanent assimilation to the host culture (Church, 1982). An appropriate definition of sojourner adjustment, where international students are concerned, is the psychological [and social] adjustment of relatively short-term visitors to new cultures where permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn (Ady, 1994).¹ Thus, shifts in language, beliefs, attitudes, and values which occur during acculturation, and how the individual responds to such acculturative influences (Berry, 1984) become important in sojourner adjustment research. As a result, two important questions emerge for the international student: ‘Is my cultural identity of value and to be retained? And second, are positive relations with the larger dominant society to be sought?’ (Pedersen, 1991, p. 16). These questions appear to resonate with the experiences that CHC students might encounter as a result of their sojourn in a western university.

¹ It is important to note here that while this definition is directed at those who do not intend to stay, in this study, the participants came with the intention of returning, but a large proportion of them found reasons for staying as their sojourn progressed. Thus, initially, the participants who were international students fitted the definition of “sojourner”.

A prominent view of sojourner adjustment, and one that has generated debate, is Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis, a three-stage acculturation process that involves initial elation, followed by dissatisfaction, then final recovery and optimum adjustment.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended the U-curve to a W-curve to account for the process of readjustment to the home culture. And Barker (1990) likened the adjustment process to a roller coaster pattern of valleys and peaks, where excitement and interest are followed by disorientation, depression, or frustration' (p. 9). Westwood and Barker (1990) noted that the intensity of the highs and lows depended upon the nature of the individual, as did the length of time an individual experienced each stage in the adjustment process. Church (1992) concluded that research which supported this hypothesis was weak and over-generalised. The stages themselves, their sequence, and the differing adjustment rates by international students facing different problems in differing situations failed to conform to the U-curve of adjustment. And Perrucci and Hu (1995) noted the shortcoming of the U-curve approach is that it focuses on 'the outlook of the international students rather than the social context in which they are found' (p. 493). Thus, these phases of adjustment appear to represent general patterns of sojourner adjustment, but are imprecise in that they fail to contextualise individual differences and experiences as sojourners shape and reshape their adjustment to a community and culture over time. A study addressing intercultural communication would need to explore the contextual, social, and communicative processes of adjustment.

Culture learning

Hoffman (1990) noted that the dominant research orientation in the study of intercultural contact was characterised by a concern with culture difference and culture conflict, which has often obscured the need to consider the *cultural learning* transcending the experience of culture conflict. In Hoffman's ethnographic research, focused on the cultural adjustment of a group of Iranians into Californian culture rather than on international students, she noted that cultural adjustment was not experienced as a source of cultural shock, conflict, or confusion, but as a learning experience. It is this *experience* which needs exploration. Thus, there is scope for further and deeper examination of the influences of culture and context beyond a focus on conflict and difference using conceptual and methodological

frameworks which will highlight the learning and subtle changes that are experienced.

One such example of the culture learning approach is Bochner's culture learning model (Bochner, 1972; and Furnham and Bochner, 1986). The model focuses not on adjusting to the new culture, but the salient characteristics of the culture that enable the international student to acquire the learned social skills to learn and work more effectively in the new culture. Communication is seen as central in facilitating culture learning (Hammer, 1992). For example, Bochner, McLeod, and Lin (1977) found that international students relied on communicating with networks of co-nationals, a bicultural person from the host culture, and other international students to facilitate culture learning. In the culture learning approach the failure to adjust is not a consequence of some underlying pathology, but rather a lack of learned skills (Pedersen, 1991). Pedersen argued that the solution to adjustment is in *training* rather than *solving problems*, of learning new skills, which is less ethnocentric and less chauvinistic than abandoning one's own culture in the adjustment process. Therefore, adaptation is seen as a learning process, of acquiring the skills that native born persons have acquired over a lifetime.

Thus, culture learning models may be fruitful in intercultural communication research as they focus on the experience of the individual in learning about and acquiring the culture of the host society. And further, it is suggested that individuals can be trained in this process.

Sociocultural adjustment

Closely associated with culture learning is sociocultural adjustment which considers the ability to negotiate aspects of the host culture (Searle and Ward, 1990). Sociocultural adjustment is influenced by a number of factors that are closely related to culture learning. An importance influence is cultural distance. Just as cultural distance influenced adjustment to the tertiary education context, so, too, is it an important influence on sociocultural adjustment: the greater the dissimilarity between cultures, the more social difficulty experienced during intercultural transitions (Argyle, 1980; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Searle and Ward, 1990; and Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

A second influence is host-guest relations. Ward and Kennedy (1993) cited a pioneer study by Selltiz, Christ, Havel, and Cook (1963) that indicated that close social interaction with Americans was linked to favourable attitudes to American culture and to better adaptation. Chen (1992) found a positive relationship among communication adaptability, interaction involvement, and the sojourner's ability to cope with social difficulties in the host culture. Chen concluded: 'People with the abilities of communication adaptability and interaction involvement are more likely to better adjust to a new cultural environment' (p.38).

A third influence on sociocultural adjustment is sojourners' acculturation strategies, that is, the ability to learn the culture, for example, through host-national contact (Klineberg and Hull, 1979), through a changing cultural identity (Pruitt, 1978), and through cultural knowledge (Cushner and Brislin, 1996). Ward and Searle (1991) argued that stronger cultural identity is associated with sociocultural adjustment problems in that 'individuals who have a stronger cultural identity are less willing to adapt to the local customs and traditions and, therefore, encounter more social difficulty' (p. 218). And Cushner and Brislin (1996) claimed that cultural knowledge predicts ability to successfully negotiate or to fit into the host culture.

Thus, the three factors of cultural distance, host-guest relations, and cultural knowledge of the host culture are important in facilitating culture learning and, concomitantly, sociocultural adjustment.

Psychocultural adjustment

The psychocultural adjustment approach is concerned with the individual's psychological adjustment to the host society. Whereas culture learning is concerned with learning about and acquiring the culture of the host society, and sociocultural adjustment reflects the negotiation of aspects of social relations with the host culture, psychocultural adjustment refers to the psychological well-being or satisfaction of the individual, and is interwoven with ability to deal with stress and coping processes (Searle and Ward, 1990). For example, Searle and Ward found that extroversion, life events, and satisfaction with host-national relations predicted psychocultural adjustment in Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand. In reviewing the literature they found that locus of control, life changes, and relationship satisfaction accounted for variance in psychological well-being in student sojourners. Further, they reported that these findings were consistent with

research on cross-cultural transition and psychological well being (for example, Chataway and Berry, 1989; and Kuo, Gray and Lin, 1976. Cited in Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

An important part of psychocultural adjustment is satisfaction, or the state at which international students arrive having overcome the stress associated with the new demands of being a student and sojourner (Perrucci and Hu, 1995). From a study Perrucci and Hu conducted of Asian international students in a university in the United States, three key outcomes emerged: students' satisfaction with their experiences was shaped by their language skills, self-esteem and a feeling of positive involvement with their social environment; second, language proficiency, feelings of self-worth, and competence facilitated contact with United States graduate students; and third, satisfaction resulted from a combination of students' individual and social resources, and a positive perception of the host environment as being accepting of them. The study clearly indicated that contact with host nationals made an important contribution to satisfaction. Perrucci and Hu predicted that such contact would strengthen language skills and improve mutual understanding and acceptance.

Therefore, like sociocultural adjustment, psychocultural adjustment or the psychological well-being of international students, is predicated upon positive associations and experiences with those in the host community. Thus, it is these associations that are worth exploring further in order to understand the experience of being an international student in an intercultural communication context.

Cultural stress

Cultural stress is also closely related to adjustment. The term *cultural stress* has superseded the general term *culture shock* (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; and Oberg, 1960), which is the state in which sojourners find themselves as a result of experiencing difficulties in unfamiliar cultural and social settings. Cultural stress has been defined as the tension and uneasiness that accompanies encounters with a new environmental culture (Adler, 1975; and Kim, 1988, cited in Olaniran, 1993). Ward and Searle (1991) suggested that the study of the adjustment process during cross-cultural transition is a more valuable approach, leading to a focus on cultural stress.

The literature identifies five causes of cultural stress for international students: culture shock, change in social status, change in economic status, expectations about academic performance, and family-related pressures (Clark Oropeza, Fitzgibbon, and Baron, 1991). The inability to deal with stress caused by new social settings can have debilitating outcomes, such as physical and emotional upheaval which may be manifested in particular diseases (Perrucci and Hu, 1995).

These five causes are underpinned in studies that show how international students suffered cultural stress as they moved to the host educational environment. For example, Barker (1990) described the high expectations of overseas students who believed that the skills they had learned at home would ensure success in the new learning environment. However, this was not always the case, given differences in academic backgrounds. Furthermore, the shift for graduates from a senior position in their first culture back to the rank of "student" in the host culture can cause stress. She therefore concluded that most overseas students suffer cultural stress to some degree. Second, Berry (1984), Church (1982), and Klineberg and Hull (1979) found that cultural stress was caused by information overload and lack of familiarity with the host's educational system, faulty decision making which resulted in re-enrolling or course re-takes, and negative evaluations of international students by host society during the early period of stay. And third, international students' negative experiences with their academic study may become huge life events and result in students feeling like failures, thus diminishing their self-worth and disrupting their identity (Burke 1991, cited in Perrucci and Hu, 1995).

Other research has shown that communication through intercultural interaction diminished feelings of cultural stress. While cultural stress could result from situations where interactions with members of the host culture present contradictions between personal beliefs, on the other hand, Olaniran found that close communication and casual acquaintanceship interactions with host nationals showed significant strength toward reduction of cultural stress. Olaniran was able to conclude from his own, and previous research, that 'direct contact with members of the host culture holds the key to reducing cultural stress experienced by international students' (Olaniran, 1993, p. 70).

Thus, cultural stress, or uneasiness in encounters with those from the host culture, appears to be an inevitable part of the adjustment process as international students

move from their own to the host culture. And it is the study of how individuals manage this adjustment process that is revealing.

To conclude this section, the conclusions that have emerged in the literature concerning adjustment of international students thus far appear to resonate with studies carried out in New Zealand. In a summary of research addressing the adjustment of international students in New Zealand, James and Watts (1992) concluded:

Overseas students are concerned socially with their understanding of the life and manners of the country, with their lack of acceptance by New Zealanders beyond a superficial level, and with not being able to cross social barriers because of lack of fluency in spoken English.

. . . Many have tended to associate in groups with others of their own linguistic or ethnic origin, and have not had the contact they desired with their New Zealand contemporaries. This has occasionally led to misunderstanding and tension within the academic community. (p. 8)

An important emergent theme resonating throughout these studies was the significance of contact with the host society. Therefore, studying the intercultural communication experiences of international students during cross-cultural transition may be useful in understanding how individuals manage this adjustment process.

3.2.4 Support services for international students

An important issue arising from the studies of international students is the provision of support services to facilitate learning in the host tertiary institution and intercultural communication and contact in the host culture. The following questions emerge: Who should provide the support needed, given the collectivist orientation of CHC students? What is an appropriate level of support? And, what form should the appropriate support take? Subsumed within these key questions are issues concerning the nature of learning support, a curriculum that is flexible to the needs of international students, the discrepancy between language competence and language requirements, the preferred learning styles of international students and the intercultural communication issues that arise in teaching and learning and, finally, counselling services and methods.

The first area of concern is the learning support given to international students. The changing nature of learning support for international students has been haphazard and often duplicated within the one institution. Further, development of these units has been hampered by lack of predictable funding for the support units and competition among units for this funding (McLean et al., 1995).

Recent research in learning support has shifted the onus for change from the international students themselves to faculty, challenging them to question their own teaching philosophies, pedagogies and beliefs in order to accommodate differences in approaches to teaching and learning (Crosling, 1993; Felix, 1993; Houlker, 1996; Liang, 1993; and Oliver, 1992). If it is the responsibility of universities and not students to change, then there is a need to recognise that cultural diversity requires flexibility from teaching staff and student support staff to meet the differing needs of students and a respect for difference (D'Amato and Tharp, 1990; Houlker, 1996; Oliver, 1992). This approach renders questionable the suggestions of academic staff in Samuelowicz's (1987) study. They believed that the solutions lay in developing an awareness in overseas students, by means of a training programme, of the distinctive characteristics of the Australian education system and the different approaches to learning that were encouraged. Kennedy (1995) critiqued this approach on the grounds that it promoted a deficit model of overseas students and implied cultural imperialism, even though the intention of the programme was 'to provide real assistance to students' (p. 44). Furthermore, Houlker (1996) in her study of overseas students at the University of Auckland, found that the eagerness and high motivation displayed in her participants, indicative of high achievement in learning, was not reciprocated in staff in terms of learning about these students. Houlker posited that a two-way effort would lead to increased understanding, address cultural stereotyping, and lead to more adaptive teaching and learning strategies appropriate to these students.

A second area concerns the curriculum content of programmes of study. Diversity among the student population also suggests the need to develop appropriate curricula which 'provide [CHC students] with opportunities that recognise their special needs and . . . ensure that these needs are addressed' (Kennedy, 1995, p. 39). These ends become even more important as education takes on the status of an export commodity, as students return to their countries and make good use of the knowledge they have learned, and as they transmit the benefits they have

experienced to others, thus enhancing the reputation of the host institution. Because learning is deeply embedded in values and cultural contexts (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991), an issue which I address further in Chapter five, the question arises as to whether the curriculum content needs to be culturally located to address the students it is educating.

A third area of controversy concerns language competence. As a result of the discrepancy between students' language competence and institutions' language requirements, the development of learning assistance programmes has been common in tertiary institutions (Beasley, 1990; and Felix, 1993). Criticisms of such programmes, however, reside in the fact that they are voluntary and non-credit bearing which international students may then perceive as low in status and peripheral and, therefore, time wasting. An admission of the need for such assistance may result in the loss of face to some students who feel that they already possess the study skills and knowledge required to succeed. Ginsburg (1992) opined that (Australian) educators need to acknowledge and respond to these differences. And Crosling (1993) concluded that special programmes were required to make explicit the discourse requirements of English and of particular discipline areas, or that modelling by lecturers and tutors could actively help students make a transition to the required style. Thus, where speaking and writing are concerned, where should the onus for change lie? Solely on the students themselves, on the need for better or more adjunct programmes in academic writing, or on lecturers to do more to help international students? These areas of responsibility are, after much research and debate, still unclear and controversial.

A fourth area concerns the preferred learning styles of international students and the communication issues that emerge in intercultural learning and teaching. Fox (1994) stated that the difficulties of international students do not merely reside in difficulties with language which can be alleviated with basic remedial work in English or through the development of study skills. Contrary to the studies presented earlier, Fox suggested that we should not assume that students from other cultures have distinctive, culturally based writing styles which we can either encourage or ask them to change. Like their personalities and life styles, their writing styles are complex and varied. In taking the middle ground, I argue that while there are patterns and styles of writing that characterise cultures, these patterns and styles do not explain every aspect of human communication, nor do they

accommodate intracultural differences. In other words, (and as Fox suggests) individuals are *more* than the product of their culture. Thus, Fox argued that improved communication, written or otherwise, comes when we step outside ourselves and view the world from another perspective, that of the cultural *other*. Further, she argued that the dominant communication style of faculty in universities in the United States (and shared by faculty in the institution where is study was located), variously labelled as *academic argument*, or *critical thinking*, is a mode privileged by a tiny fraction of the world's people. We need to acknowledge that CHC students, whose education has taught them to think and express themselves differently from us, is also worthy of our attention and understanding.

Houlker (1996) added a caveat: it is not resolved whether the issues identified in the literature addressing academic adjustment to teaching and learning are applicable to *all* international students. She noted that 'some students cope well with some aspects of the academic/learning demands, but have difficulty with others' (Houlker, 1996, p. 63). In other words, we need studies which acknowledge differences in teaching and learning styles, and not just commonalities among international or, for that matter, CHC students. Thus, there needs to be a reappraisal of the form, content, and value of programmes of assistance in western tertiary institutions which have been assumed to address language, communication, and academic performance.

A final area of concern is in the provision of counselling services. Where concern over adjustment to the host culture exists, international students have the option of counselling services within universities. However, international students tend to be reluctant to seek out professional counselling (Pedersen, 1991; Smith and Smith, 1989). Reasons for the need for counselling may be attributed to the following problems: language difficulties, financial problems, adjustment to a new educational system, homesickness, and adjustment to social customs or norms (Church, 1982; Leong, 1984, cited in Pedersen, 1991). Pedersen concluded that the most appropriate counselling methods are those that occur in informal settings and those that use informal methods 'which might not be perceived as counseling according to standardized models' (p. 29). In such an approach the complexity of clients' indigenous support systems are acknowledge, and the right method and context are matched so that culturally skilled counselling can occur.

Pedersen concluded that Asian students need better information and preparation about the nature and purpose of counselling. As is the case with learning support, counsellors too must show more awareness and flexibility, especially since the assumptions of counselling are based on white, middleclass, western cultural values which may be antagonistic to the values held by Asian cultures. Furthermore, counselling might be a useful means of helping international students define their own identity and differentiate between the roles being thrust on them.

3.3 Methodological concerns in intercultural communication research

The review of literature addressing international students suggests that it has been approached from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. Many studies have used international students in their research in order to develop generalisable theories regarding, for example, socio-cultural and psychological adjustment. Research frameworks have ranged from description and categorisation based on substantive observations, to quantitative approaches using statistical packages which have attempted to generalise and show uniformity both across and within cultures. Few studies have used qualitative approaches. Notable exceptions are Ali's (1991) work, which included two case studies, and Fox (1992) and Yook (1995), who, respectively, used ethnography to explore the writing patterns of international students and speaking patterns of Malaysian students.

Cause and effect relationships, which have dominated much of the research in intercultural communication, downplay the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the interactional, processual and contextual aspects of (intercultural) communication, elements which emerge over time (Casmir, 1993). Cross-sectional studies and studies which focus on statistical relationships between variables are unable to capture these elements. Casmir has this to say of such approaches:

Bochner (1973) writes of the "mediating man," but neglects to pay sufficient attention to process and development over time. The same is true of lists purporting to identify desirable cross-cultural attitudes provided by scholars such as Gudykunst, Wiseman, and Hammer (1977), Ruben (1985), and Abe and Wiseman (1983). All of them are fundamentally descriptive attempts to identify desirable attitudinal components applicable to those wishing to adapt or adjust to a different culture. (Casmir, 1993)

Specifically, the use of surveys and self-reports do not examine actual behaviours, but perceptions of them (Ady, 1994). For example, Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) criticised the use of surveys on the grounds that they rely on 'what people say, rather than what they do', and treat 'social phenomena as more clearly defined and static than they are, and as mechanical products of social and psychological factors' (p. 252), that is, the dynamic, processual, and contextual aspects of social interaction tend not to be accounted for. In addition, surveys are problematic because they require international students to express themselves in a written format in another language, thus allowing misinterpretations of questions. Finally, they do not permit the cultural participants' voices to enter into a dialogue with the researcher as part of this descriptive and interpretive process.

Pedersen (1991), in a comprehensive review of the research literature concerning counselling of international students, concluded that there was a lack of grounded theory in the field, that there was 'an over-emphasis on identifying adjustment problems or successful outcomes, without exploring the *dynamics or process* of adjustment itself' (Pedersen, 1991, p. 14, emphasis added). And furthermore, the emphasis on specialised variables has resulted in 'isolated, uncoordinated, and fragmentary studies . . . with no clear application of results to comprehensive theory building' (p. 51). Furthermore, international students themselves are a diverse population and, thus, even when the same issues are researched, often the findings are contradictory.

Similarly, where research on sojourner adjustment is concerned, Ady (1994) concluded that it was largely atheoretical. Future research needs to be longitudinal in order to profile and examine degrees of adjustment over time and in order to elucidate the temporal relationships among predictor variables, rather than cross-sectional which has been the approach taken by much extant research (Ady, 1994, and Ward and Searle, 1991).

A further controversy in intercultural communication research has been in the way in which culture has been conceptualised according to variables and dimensions (for example, Gudykunst, 1989; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980, Triandis, 1988). Yet another approach is to define culture according to lists of shared background characteristics, such as histories, institutions, core values, beliefs and attitudes or world views, heritage and traditions, technologies, and shared behavioural characteristics, such as verbal and nonverbal message styles (Dodd, 1987; Samovar, Porter, and Jain, 1981; and Sarbaugh, 1988). Culture thus conceptualised does not enable researchers or research participants to account for the reasons why culture constrains or accommodates the way individuals or groups act. The study of culture based on an analysis of variables denies the many complex processes encountered when learning a culture, or experiencing an intercultural encounter: for example, processes of reaction, resistance, subversion, acquiescence and acceptance.

Finally, Pedersen (1991) concluded that there is no grand theory to direct research on multicultural interactions, such as those between international students and host nationals. Instead, he opined:

There is rather a confusion of perspectives in search of an integrative theory. This has resulted from inconsistent definitions of basic concepts, the lack of coordination between group- and individual-level research, the lack of distinction between research on long-term (immigrant) and short term (sojourner) populations and a tendency to polarize the effect of adaptation as either positive and desirable or negative and undesirable. (Pedersen, 1991, pp. 27-28)

Casmir emphasised a need to break with past models of dominance/submission, of Aristotelian logic, approaches which are non-interactional, because they fail to acknowledge the very interculturalness and communicativeness of the intercultural encounter.

An alternative approach, often called interpretive or ethnographic, seeks to address some of these shortcomings identified in the analysis of literature by allowing for *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) which attempts to uncover complex and layered meaning in the constructions of social and cultural life. It also includes the notion of *reflexivity* where participants create with the researcher the unfolding of the *story*, both situated and emergent. Such a research approach allows for alternative language games, alternative practices, and 'alternative constructions, as opposed to normative conceptions which use a priori concepts and methods, constitute the

world as observed' and, thus, do not allow for possible alternative constructions of the world (Deetz, 1994, p. 590). The research questions arising from this literature review, which are presented at the end of this chapter, suggest the need for a qualitative approach. This methodology is set out in Chapter four.

3.4 Conclusions and implications for further research

This literature review does not claim to be exhaustive of the studies addressing international students. Nonetheless, these studies have furthered our knowledge of the intercultural experiences of this group. Many of the studies concerning international students do not directly address intercultural communication, although they discuss issues centred around culture and communication. There is a notable lack of research on international students which theorises their intercultural communication experiences. This literature review indicates the need for studies that embrace the notions of communication, culture and cultural identity within the context of intercultural communication, studies which focus on the individual in relation to the group, on the self in relation to others in inter- and intercultural encounters.

What are some of the key features emerging from this review which will impact upon the focus of this study?

First, many of the general studies in the first part tended to treat other cultures monolithically, grouping them together into the category of *overseas* or *international* students. By contrast, the New Zealand studies have tended to focus on students from East and South East Asia: the locus of intercultural contact in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Furthermore, of the relatively few significant studies conducted in New Zealand of tertiary overseas students, many of them are predicated on what has been observed in Australian universities. It is difficult to know the extent to which studies done in Australia and beyond have relevance, or the extent to which those students' experiences are different from those who come to study in New Zealand. Thus, there is a need for studies that focus on specific cultural groupings which share cultural knowledge, such as those who belong to Confucian heritage cultures.

While there may be some commonalities to our education systems, there are also caveats: attitudes to multiculturalism and biculturalism are considerably different within the two countries given their disparate government policies over immigration and *Asianisation*, and given the differences in historical developments concerning the two indigenous races. Such differences among host nationals may give rise to very different experiences for overseas students in the respective host countries. Furthermore, the ethnic composition of the overseas student body may be quite different in Australia and New Zealand.

As stated in Chapter one, New Zealand has experienced an upward trend in immigrants from Asia, many of whom are categorised as permanent resident students in our tertiary institutions. For example, Houlker (1995) suggested that future research should focus on Asians, given that recent research (summarised in Watkins and Biggs, 1996) has challenged the stereotypical notions of differences in teaching and learning styles among eastern and western cultures. And, more recently, Keating (1998) has called for the broad development of Asian knowledge among as many New Zealanders as possible through a comprehensive national strategy for the study of Asia. However, the general term *Asian* denotes stereotypical similarities among these people which could be misleading, inaccurate, and insulting. Thus, a closer examination of this cultural grouping is required.

Second, many of the studies are couched in negative terminology: overseas students are seen as having *difficulties* in learning and in intercultural communication; they suffer from *cultural stress* and *culture shock*; they have problems of *adjustment*. All these conditions give rise to the need for *counselling* and support services. Furthermore, to some extent the students themselves are seen as being a temporary phenomenon in that they are sometimes referred to as *sojourners*, that is, temporarily residing in the host country and, by implication, delimiting the extent of their integration into the host culture. As Houlker (1995) and McLaren (1998) suggested, there needs to be a focus on adjustment within the host culture. However, such change pre-empts the need to understand how the students themselves perceive their experiences. It is time to subjugate the voices of those in the dominant society to the voices of those who are central to the experience in question (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994), to address the intercultural learning and communication experiences of the students themselves, and to consider how these students respond to the intercultural challenges they face in this environment.

Third, there is a dearth of in-depth qualitative, longitudinal studies which build theory from the emergent substantive data grounded in the context of the study. Many of the studies were atheoretical and descriptive. Some were derived from the observations by counsellors, administrators, or teachers of international or non-English speaking background students. The studies were written as conference papers or reports, thus containing little substantive data or theory building, and they often sampled only a small group. In addition, although international students are frequently cited as the research participants, they are often not the object of inquiry. Instead they provide the data from which to theorise within a particular discipline about outsiders coming to western cultures.

Longitudinal studies which explore intercultural differences between, say, CHCs and specific western cultures, may also help to break down stereotypical notions across the East/West cultural divide. A further limitation of the New Zealand studies is that, because they are often students' reports or short theses, often by international students, their research duration period is often short, resulting in a fragmented and incomprehensive account. There is a need for larger scale studies that investigate CHC students' experiences in greater depth, by exploring the intercultural encounters of these students and by identifying ways in which they could be assisted to derive a greater satisfaction from their study experiences (Findsen, 1991; James and Watt, 1992; and Zhao, 1995).

Finally, the studies in the review point to the need for a better understanding, through the application of appropriate theories and methodologies, of the communication issues which arise for CHC students in New Zealand. The need for this focus is encapsulated in the following scenario as those from CHCs attempt to communicate with their New Zealand hosts:

The reticence [to communicate between CHC and New Zealand students] can create a gulf between the two parties in terms of shared knowledge. Local students may know little about their Chinese peers despite the fact that both parties have worked together on the same paper for most of the year. When the two parties do start talking with each other, local students may soon find that between them there is a lack of shared background knowledge to serve and sustain the continuation of their conversation. . . . Eventually local students may give up the trial by concluding that it is too tiring talking with the Chinese. (Zhao, 1995, p. 120)

Thus, the focus of this study is in the ways CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences within a New Zealand educational institution and its host culture. Since the focus of this study is on their intercultural communication experiences, these experiences may not be homogeneous with and typical of other generic groups of international students in western tertiary institutions as described in this review.

3.5 Research questions

In light of this discussion of extant literature, the following general research question has emerged:

1. How do CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences?

Subsumed within this research question are three further questions addressed in this study:

2. What is the communication and learning experience of a CHC student in a New Zealand tertiary institution and in the community beyond?
3. How is cultural difference created/maintained by intercultural communication in the learning environment and in the community?
4. How, and to what extent, do CHC students personally (re)construct and (re)negotiate their cultural identity in the host environment as a result of their intercultural communication experiences? To what extent does this (re)construction and (re)negotiation result in the formation of a third culture?

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature addressing international students in the learning environment. It also explored areas pertaining to intercultural communication, for example, language and communication, intercultural interaction, and notions of adjustment as international students face the challenge of living and studying in a host culture. Methodological concerns arising from these studies were addressed and, finally, a research agenda was presented.

The literature concerning the teaching and learning of CHC students has traditionally focused on classroom interaction. A more recent approach (Biggs and Watkins, 1996) has included the complexities of social interaction within the sociocultural learning environment. There also appears to be some uncertainty over the extent to which CHC students demonstrate deep and surface learning approaches and in what contexts. However, looking beyond the teaching and learning context to observe the impact of CHC students' socialisation patterns and how they influence their learning and intercultural communication processes might also be fruitful. It was established that grand theoretical explanations and approaches that focus on dimensions of difference appear to be inadequate in exploring the teaching and learning of CHC students because they fail to appreciate difference *within* cultures; nor do they enable us to interpret and understand the complexity of *individuals* in an intercultural learning environment. An approach which captures the *processual* and *dynamic* nature of this experience is required.

Where language and communication are concerned, the studies undeniably acknowledge the problems associated with communication in another language. However, there may be other problems equally or more important, that are obscured when language becomes the sole focus of study, for example, differences in learning styles and different expectations about performance and behaviour. It was suggested that the relationship between spoken communication competence in academic and social contexts may have a bearing achievement and adjustment, but this would require further investigation. Furthermore, the importance of cultural influences and language interference in international students' ability to write and speak in English was recognised. Thus, there is a need to acknowledge both the intra- and intercultural diversity of the rhetorical styles of CHC students in written and spoken communication contexts.

Intercultural interaction within the host community was found to be problematic for international students which, in turn, raises questions about the value that can be obtained from the internationalisation of campuses. However, studies pointed to the importance of intercultural interaction in providing a better understanding across cultures through the acquisition of intercultural communication skills (Paige, 1990). Furnham and Bochner's (1982) model of international student social networks was helpful in explaining the range of contact with the host community. Further exploration of the nature and extent of these contacts would assist our understanding of the complexities of intercultural interaction, for example, through studies addressing the social rules and social situations which vary across cultures (Argyle, 1980; Barker et al., 1991; and Hofstede, 1986), and the nature of intercultural relationships and the experiences which emerge from them (Nesdale and Todd, 1993). Finally, it was established that increased intercultural interaction does not necessarily indicate greater adjustment to the host community (Church, 1982).

International student adjustment to the host culture has received much attention. The studies highlighted the existing confusion over the term and the synonymous use of related terms such as acculturation, cross-cultural adjustment, cultural or ethnic assimilation, cultural adaptation, or accommodation. Within the studies addressed, themes of adjustment emerged in the following contexts: the tertiary education context, sojourner adjustment, the significance of culture learning, socio- and psychocultural adjustment, and cultural stress. Adjustment to the tertiary education setting was described as being problematic for reasons pertaining to the first culture, namely, family pressure to succeed, and academic and social difficulties. The acquisition of *cultural literacy* (Robinson, 1992) was proposed as a way to better understand the host culture, and diminish the gap between the first and host culture. By contrast, Cheng (1990) proposed a *paradigm shift* where, instead of the overseas student being the locus of adjustment, the onus is placed on teaching and learning approaches which show a respect for and recognition of difference. And within New Zealand, this call was paralleled by Keating (1998) in her request to infuse aspects of Asia into the teaching curriculum, in line with current trends in government policy.

The notion of sojourner adjustment raised questions about the retention of cultural identity, and the extent to which contact with the dominant society should be sought. The prominent view of sojourner adjustment, Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve

hypothesis, has been critiqued more recently for its imprecision and inability to contextualise individual differences and experiences as sojourners shape and reshape their adjustment to a community and culture over time.

Culture learning models (Bochner, 1972; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Hoffman, 1990) have potential in intercultural communication research as they focus on the experience of the individual in learning about and acquiring the culture of the host society. Further, it was suggested that individuals can be trained in this process (Pedersen, 1991). Closely associated with culture learning is sociocultural adjustment. Studies of sociocultural adjustment indicated that it was influenced by the three factors of cultural distance, host-guest relations, and cultural knowledge of the host culture.

Like sociocultural adjustment, psychocultural adjustment or the psychological well-being and satisfaction of international students, is predicated upon positive associations and experiences with those in the host community. Cultural stress, or uneasiness in encounters with those from the host culture, appears to be an inevitable part of the adjustment process as international students move from their own to the host culture. Thus studying the intercultural communication experiences of international students may be useful in understanding how individuals manage this adjustment process.

Finally, the studies indicated that learning support for international students appeared to be haphazard. Support services need to recognise diversity and respect learning differences.

The methodological issues emerging from these studies suggest that the research pertaining to international students is deficient in at least two key areas: first, in the absence of longitudinal studies that capture the dynamic and processual nature of intercultural communication and, second, in the absence of research that permits participants' voices to enter into a dialogue with the researcher in the description and interpretation process. Furthermore, there is a need for research that addresses notions of communication, culture and cultural identity within the context of intercultural communication, and that focuses on individuals within and among groupings that are culture and context specific.

The chapter finished with a set of questions for a research agenda.

Chapter four, the next chapter, outlines the methodology and method of this study.

Chapter 4

Methodology and method

[We must] descend into detail, past misleading tags, past the metaphysical types, past the empty similarities to grasp firmly the essential character of not only the various cultures but the various sorts of individuals within each culture. (Geertz, 1973, p. 53)

Culture is a very complicated thing . . . but I think the understanding of . . . culture is quite important in your research, so I think if I know what you are thinking and you are doing, maybe something I know, maybe you are not right, so I can tell you. (A participant in this study)

In the preceding chapters I introduced the study (Chapter one), provided the theoretical foundations which underpin this study (Chapter two), and developed a focus for this study as addressed in the research questions that emerged from the literature review. In this chapter I outline the methodology and method of the study. In the first part a rationale for an interpretive methodology is provided by drawing on the contributions of naturalistic inquiry and the grounded theory. The second part explains the ethnographic framework pursued in this study, focusing on issues confronted by researchers in the field, writing an ethnography, and reflexivity for the researcher. The third and fourth parts address the method or steps taken in the research process itself. In the third part I describe and evaluate the pilot study which was undertaken to test procedures which could be applied in the main study. The fourth part of this chapter describes the main study: the research domain, participant selection and profiles, issues confronting the researcher, and a detailed description the research process. This fourth part concludes with a comment on the application and an evaluation of the Nud*ist computer software used to manage the data in this study.

4.1 A rationale for an interpretive methodology

The choice of methodology must converge with the research questions (stated at the end of Chapter three) and the theoretical framework (Chapter two). Once these research questions have been developed, then consideration must be given to the methods adopted to investigate these questions. Obviously, the research questions established demand exploration of the dynamics of the everyday life of the participants. Qualitative methods are required which, first, investigate the ways in which social groups and individuals create, sustain and share meaning in intercultural communication; and, second, explore the contextual, processual, and dynamic aspects of the intercultural communication encounters of the participants in their natural setting. In this section I provide a rationale for the methodological choices which guided this study.

Broadly speaking, this study is grounded in interpretive inquiry. More specifically, the principles of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986; and Lincoln, 1990), grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; and Glaser, 1992), and ethnographic inquiry (Spradley, 1979, Van Maanen, 1988) provided the methodological framework. Thus, researching participants in their natural setting is important. This involves observations based on the social context in which the communication is happening (Sarbaugh and Asuncion-Lande, 1983), exploring the sense-making process of participants' experiences (on the part of both researcher and participants), thus enabling theory building which includes both theory and practice, creating what Geertz (1973; 1983) described as a dense web of knowing or *thick description*.

Interpretive theories display the reflexive nature of theory and reality, that is an exploration and uncovering of the relationship between researcher and research subjects. They encourage researchers to expose their ethnocentrism and bias, assuming a value-free science is impossible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Approaches which allow for interpretation, which see reality as being socially constructed by the researcher and participants in the research process, which allow the voices of the participants to enter into the story-telling process, and which acknowledge the reflexivity of the researcher, offer an appropriate fit with the nature of this research as suggested by the research questions (emerging from the literature review and

explicated at the end of Chapter three). The naturalistic and inductive nature of an interpretive study means that the design unfolds as the fieldwork unfolds; the design is partially emergent as the study occurs (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Furthermore, such approaches at least attempt to acknowledge notions of difference within and among researcher and participants.

By using interpretive methods the researcher can stay grounded in the empirical world and generate a theory from this base. Glaser and Strauss emphasised inductive strategies of theory development:

[O]ne canon for judging the usefulness of a theory is how it was generated - and we suggest that it is likely to be a better theory to the degree that it has been inductively developed from social research. . . . Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. Generating a theory involves a process of research. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 5-6)

This process requires that the researcher induce hypotheses from the data themselves by drawing on emergent themes, a process which is likely to identify the multiple realities to be found in the data. The world is viewed as a process where people take an active role in creating knowledge. Thus, knowledge arises from interaction between knower and known, and a description of the rich context in which individuals operate (Littlejohn, 1990). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that in this type of interpretive inquiry, which they label *naturalistic*, the naturalist prefers to have the substantive theory emerge from the data in order to encompass the multiple realities likely to be encountered. Grounded theory is likely to be responsive to the context, the mutual shapings found there, and the situated values of both researcher and participants. Notwithstanding this approach, the key question of this study remains central to its locus of inquiry, that is: How do CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences?

It is important to point out at this stage, however, that I do not rigorously follow prescriptions for grounded theory, especially those of Strauss and Corbin (1990), later critiqued by Glaser (1992), which are underpinned by positivist notions of validity, prediction and control, that is, a process of *forcing* the emergence of the data through a rigorous categorisation process (Glaser, 1992). Rather than employ Strauss and Corbin's procedures for coding, I allow the themes to emerge through

the participants' stories and investigate these further as the study unfolds. (This process is further explained in the method section, in Chapter 4.4.5).

Interpretive inquiry assumes that intercultural interactants structure and interpret their symbolic worlds with unique sets of cultural premises, values, and rules, and therefore, meanings (Ting-Toomey, 1984). The primary aim of interpretive inquiry is to elicit the insider's meanings of a social situation from the stance of a participant-observer. It also enables participants themselves to identify the key issues from which a theory may evolve. Finally, it encourages the researcher to consider the complexities of, and relationships between, the multiple realities of the research participants (CHC students) in the research context.

Since I am essentially concerned with the ways in which CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences, it is these communication acts in which the study is grounded. Although the parameters of my study are to an extent circumscribed by my research questions, it is through the unfolding of the participants' experiences that this study has emerged. Ethnography is the primary methodological framework, but this study has also been influenced by grounded theory and naturalistic inquiry. First, grounded theory enables us to explore these lifeworlds by drawing on data that is grounded and emergent in the social interaction of the community under study. Second, the study, guided by the theory of social constructionism -- particularly the claim that individuals' realities are constructed in communication in their everyday life worlds -- necessitates the emphasis on interaction, and the meanings and constructions that emerge and are changed through interaction. Finally, since the study itself is concerned with interpretation and understanding of these lifeworlds, I was guided by the principles of naturalistic inquiry, recognising the existence of values and biases in this research process.

The data for this study were obtained by using the techniques of ethnography -- participant observation and interviews. The participants' accounts are presented in ethnographic text which comprise the findings. The particular ethnographic approach taken is explained in the following section.

4.2 Ethnography: A framework for obtaining and interpreting data

If the objectives of ethnography are, as Malinowski opined, 'to grasp the native's point of view' (Malinowski 1922:25, cited in Spradley, 1979, p. 5), and to describe a culture, where culture is defined as 'the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior' (Spradley, 1979, p. 5), then ethnography as a research tool is an appropriate choice for this purpose. More explicitly, Spradley defines the essential core of ethnography, a focus which fits with the aims and purpose of this research:

[Ethnography is concerned] with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand. Some of these meanings are directly expressed in language; many are taken for granted and communicated only indirectly through word and action. But in every society people make constant use of these complex meaning systems to organize their behavior, to understand themselves and others, and to make sense out of the world in which they live. These systems of meaning constitute their culture; ethnography always implies a theory of culture. (Spradley, 1979, p. 5)

Thus, as a sense making process concerned with the interpretation of culture, such an approach will assist in the understanding of the intercultural communication experiences of these CHC students as they reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities.

The principles of ethnography have implications for at least three important aspects of the study: research approach, data collection methods, and the presentation of data as text. Stanley elaborates:

Ethnography can exist as a method or technique, as a methodology or perspective and as an epistemology or theory of knowledge; and the ethnographer can be differently positioned in regard to these in relation to ethnographic processes ('field research', or 'doing ethnography') and to ethnographic products ('writing ethnography', or 'ethnographic texts'). (Stanley, 1990, p. 8)

Ethnography as a research approach fits with inductive theories, such as social constructionism, which are grounded in the data; reality is socially constructed through the communication and actions of participants and researcher in a given social context. The method of data collection is discussed in the section on method (Chapter 4.3). The third aspect of ethnography involves the role of researcher as both participant/observer and writer of the ethnographic text. The latter two aspects

-- method of data collection, and the production of an ethnographic text -- are not without contentions, and this study is no exception. I discuss these dilemmas next.

4.2.1 Doing ethnography: Issues confronting researchers in the field

Ethnographic outcomes are very much influenced by a host of factors: namely, the researcher's predispositions and values held in relation to the domain of inquiry, the preference for certain practices in the field, the relationship between inquirer and inquiree(s) and, ultimately, in the researcher's interpretation and textual representation of the final ethnographic text. Van Maanen (1988) pointed out that, because there are many ways of interpreting cultural data, each interpretation can be disputed from many positions:

Field data are constructed from talk and action. They are then interpretations of other interpretations and are mediated many times over -- by the fieldworker's own standards of relevance for what is of interest; by the historically situated queries put to informants; by the norms current in the field worker's professional community for what is proper work; by the self-reflection demanded of both the fieldworker and the informant; by the intentional and unintentional ways a fieldworker or informant is misled; and by the field worker's mere presence on the scene as an observer and participant. (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 85)

Moreover, these interpretations are a product of the value-bound nature of interpretive inquiry, where inquiry outcomes depend on the nature and quality of the interaction between the knower and the known, epitomised in negotiations about and interpretations of the meaning of the data (Lincoln and Guba (1985). Similarly, the outcome of this inquiry -- the researcher's telling of the participants' stories (as they are presented in the findings chapters) -- is subject to similar treatment in its representation and mediation (Van Maanen, 1988), and is value-laden as it embodies the conventions of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Hence, the stories are historically situated; as discursive texts they are subject to the cultural and social processes at the time. In short, in keeping with qualitative inquiry, the stories are tellings of particular experiences at a particular time and in a particular context.

How these contentions impacted upon this study I will discuss in the section on method (Chapter 4.3).

4.2.2 The production of ethnographic text

The textual form that the ethnography takes has received much discussion. What is important for this study is the relationship between the goals of interpretive inquiry and the final text produced by the researcher in ethnography. For example, ethnographic representation is influenced by values, ethics, knowledge accumulation, and discourse (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; and Lincoln, 1990). These all contribute to the construction and production of a text that embodies the research agenda of the researcher. Atkinson (1990) points to the relationship between the research process and the production of an ethnographic text: both are constructions and reconstructions of those who are the subject of inquiry:

If we recognize -- as we must -- that our acts of research inevitably implicate us and involve us in the everyday construction of social reality, then we must also recognize that our *accounts* of the social world are equally implicated. Our textual practices themselves constitute the social realities constructed and reconstructed in ethnographic writing. Theory and method are inextricably linked: they are equally closely tied to modes of writing. (Atkinson, 1990, p 178)

Atkinson concluded that the resultant ethnography, in both subject matter and language, is full of conventions and biases which need to be acknowledged in the resultant textual representation:

The fully mature ethnography requires a reflexive awareness of its own writing, the possibilities and limits of its own language, and a principled exploration of its modes of representation. (Atkinson, 1990, p. 180)

The approach taken in the present study is perhaps best accounted for by Van Maanen's (1988) notion of the *confessional* tale where 'fieldwork constructs . . . are seen . . . to emerge from a hermeneutic process; fieldwork is an interpretive act, not an observational or descriptive one' (p. 93). And yet, this ethnography also subscribes to elements of what Van Maanen calls the *realist* tale. A realist tale takes the perspective of the *native's point of view* where events in the lives of the members of the culture are presented in accounts and explanations. However, it does not subscribe to the extreme form of the realist tale, that is, *experiential author(ity)*, where there is 'the almost complete absence of the author from most segments of the finished text' (p. 46), and where the presentation of data is 'uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, or moral judgments' (p. 47). My brand of ethnography is a melding of the two tales (realist and confessional), with a preference for the less extreme elements of each. Given the assumptions and biases

with which I started out in this study (as outlined in Chapter one), such a compromise is fitting.

Moreover, I acknowledge and, to some extent, adhere to the postmodern, feminist account of text as being partial, positioned, and constructed (Jones, 1992). As a female, European, English speaking researcher, I have a communicative competence in English which is superior to that of the research subjects, I hold the western cultural values of the research domain, and I am more cognisant of the complexities of the research environment. Thus, the participants in the study regarded me as superior to them and deserving of respect. Furthermore, upon remarking to the participants that I was a student like them, they explained that even within the category of *student* there were hierarchies. For example, one student replied that I had to be respected because I was older; another remarked that I was a student on a higher level because I had an office and my own computer. Moreover, participants had to communicate in the research domain in a second (or third, or fourth) language; they were also disadvantaged by their cultural and communicative competence.

To conclude, this study is limited by the way in which it has been described, interpreted, and shaped by the researcher, given the social relationships experienced with the participants. The text has been constructed within the confines of the researcher's partiality and positioning, that is, 'the shaped product . . . of the author's . . . assumptions, theories and other instruments of production, which, in turn, are historical, political and cultural artefacts' (Jones, 1992, p. 25). Such a positioning, then, inevitably leads to the acknowledgment that reflexivity is essential in interpretive research (Watson, 1987).

4.2.3 Reflexivity in ethnographic discourse

As researchers we create worlds through the questions that we ask, coupled with what we and others regard as reasonable responses to our questions (Steier, 1991). In the process of constructing that which we claim to find, we necessarily inscribe researcher values, perspectives, etc., onto the data that somehow need to be accounted for. However, this feature cannot be eradicated to produce an unbiased or objective account. Gergen and Gergen (1982) pointed out that there is no means of

achieving an observer free picture of nature, especially since the social construction process involves the researcher as both observer and participant, and includes the researcher in the body of his or her own research. This view of the role of the researcher is predicated on Gouldner's (1970) conception of social science where both the inquiring subject and the studied object are not only mutually interrelated, but also mutually constituted by virtue of the research process itself.

Thus, the researcher's experience in the research process, and in the intercultural encounter, needs to be accounted for through a process of *reflexivity* that enables the researcher to move outwards and thus allow an expansion of understanding. Gouldner (1970) explained reflexivity in terms of the knower's self-awareness:

Insofar as social reality is seen as contingent in part on the effort, the character, and the position of the knower, the search for knowledge about social worlds is also contingent upon the knower's *self-awareness*. To know others [s]he cannot simply study *them*, but must also listen to and confront *him[her]self*. (Gouldner, 1970, p. 493)

It must therefore be acknowledged that the biases and dispositions, the limitations of my own self-awareness in relation to the research participants and domain of inquiry, in short, the issues embedded in ethnographic research, are also embodied in this written ethnographic representation. For example, as one participant accurately pointed out, even prolonged immersion into the culture and society of the research participants may not be adequate to fully understand their experiences in the research domain: 'Although you stayed in China or in Hong Kong for some . . . for a few years . . . but maybe I think you're not very well understand . . . about the culture in China' (KZ). Although the participants' voices are included in the data, and two of the participants (KZ and YR) have reviewed and commented upon the chapters where the findings are presented (Chapters five to eight), such strategies do not alleviate the subjective nature of interpretive inquiry and ethnographic representation, as earlier addressed by Van Maanen's notion of confessional tale.

To summarise the approach taken in this study, social constructionism provides the theoretical/philosophical foundation, and interpretive inquiry the appropriate methodology. The methodology is guided by ethnographic approaches which favour thick description, and principles of ethnography as outlined by Spradley (1979) which give meaning to the actions and events of the people whose realities we are trying to understand. The study is also influenced by Glaser and Strauss'

(1967) principles of grounded theory, and by naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 1986; and Lincoln, 1990). In addition, the study addresses emergent issues in ethnographic research, such as problems confronting researchers in the presentation of data and the production of text (in this case, the compromise between what Van Maanen (1988) describes as realist and confessional tales), and reflexivity in ethnographic discourse.

Having outlined the methodological approach which undergirded this study, it is now appropriate to discuss the method by which the research was undertaken.

4.3 Method: The pilot study

In the next two parts (4.3 and 4.4), I address the method employed in the data collection process. The first part (4.3) describes the pilot study, carried out during a two month Summer School semester prior to the data collection for the main study. The second part (4.4) outlines the steps taken for the main study.

The participants for the pilot study were two CHC students from Smithfield College in Malaysia¹ who were entering the third year of an undergraduate degree. They volunteered to participate in this pilot study.

4.3.1 The pilot study: Aims

In order to engage in the research agenda outlined previously I conducted a pilot study which attempted to address issues of methodology and method in the data collection process. The key aim of the pilot study was to try out grounded theory. Through a process of data collection I would be able to generate themes and concepts to address the key research question: How do CHC students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication

¹ The School has a twinning arrangement with Smithfield College. Students take their first two years of undergraduate study at Smithfield College in Malaysia, using the School's materials but lecturers in Malaysia. They complete their third and fourth years in New Zealand at the School. Thus, there are a number of generations of Smithfield cohorts who have entered the School under this programme.

experiences? My intention was to use qualitative methods that are sensitive and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns encountered (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Specifically, the pilot study would enable me to carry out the ethnographic techniques of fieldwork (participant observation and informal meetings), and try out participant diary writing and the interview process. Finally, the pilot study would provide the opportunity to identify themes emerging from the data, themes that might have fruitfulness in the main study.

4.3.2 The research domain and participants in the pilot study

The research domain was within the School where I planned to conduct the main study. I attended classes with the participants, met with them informally before and after class, and arranged two informal meetings with them outside of the School in order to get to know them better. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that naturalistic inquiry must take place in the natural setting of the subject because naturalistic ontology suggests that wholes cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts (that is, the whole is more than the sum of the parts); because of mutual shaping the context is important for fullest understanding.

4.3.3 Techniques used in the data collection process

The techniques I used were observation in the classroom (recorded as field notes during and after fieldwork), informal meetings, participant diaries, and conversations with participants before and after class. I also recorded and transcribed two open-ended interviews, each of about 60 minutes, with each participant. From the field notes and transcriptions I identified emergent themes which were further explored in the final interviews at the end of the pilot study. In keeping with the notion of reflexivity in interpretive inquiry, I kept my own personal diary that comprised observations of participants' interactions in the field and with me, as well as my reflections on the research process. Soon I observed *mutual shapings* taking place. For example, WK asked me if I was bored attending classes. It transpired that he and his Smithfield cohorts were. A discussion ensued where I

presented a scenario to them of how New Zealand students might communicate their dissatisfaction to a lecturer. They listened with interest although they did not personally express their feelings to the lecturer. Nonetheless, I later realised that, unintentionally, my discussion represented a major intrusion in that I was influencing their communicative behaviour and contributing to the ways in which they might socially construct their reality, an intrusion I would need to be wary of in the main study.

After the two interviews had been transcribed participants read and were asked to sign the transcriptions if they agreed to their content. They were given the opportunity to discuss and question any of the content, an important process that allowed for the students to be involved in the research process. I pointed out to them that, although we could not change the content of the transcribed interviews, we could elaborate and discuss further any concerns they had or any issues that arose. Both students were satisfied with the transcriptions.

Thus began the process already described by Van Maanen (1985) of interpretations of other interpretations as the researcher sought to represent the experiences of the participants as they in turn interpreted them. The process also gives credence to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) claim that these interpretations are a product of the value-bound nature of interpretive inquiry as the researcher textualises the participants' experiences.

4.3.4 Evaluation of the pilot study process

Obtaining appropriate data: revising research strategies

Given the research question I started out with and my predispositions and biases (as stated in Chapter one), I found that the research domain limited the type and range of data I could encounter. In hindsight, Summer School was an atypical site because it was, at the time of data gathering, not popular with New Zealand students and generally tended to be dominated by international students. In this case, the two participants were cocooned by their Smithfield cohort. (There were 28 students in this Smithfield intake, and about half of their classes were comprised of Smithfield students.) The paucity of New Zealand students in their classes curtailed

intercultural interaction while the dominance of Smithfield students facilitated intracultural communication. By contrast, beyond the pilot study, in the first week of the first semester, these two participants were beginning to extend their range of communication experiences beyond their Smithfield cohorts to communicate with New Zealand students.

Some important methodological issues arose from the pilot study. First, the research site for the main study should extend beyond the learning environment of the School in order to investigate the impact of the host culture on their social interaction beyond the learning environment. Thus, the research questions (stated at the end of Chapter three) could be addressed more fully. Intercultural communication appeared to be limited in this context. Furthermore, it did not include interaction with other New Zealanders beyond the learning environment. Such experiences could also impact upon participants' feelings about cultural identity.

Second, it was apparent that I needed more informal meetings with the sample group on campus in order to increase our familiarity and comfort with each other, and to overcome reticence on their part and feelings of awkwardness on mine. An open door policy was required so that participants could come and see me whenever they wanted. This strategy could not work during Summer School as classes tended to take place in other Schools, there were fewer students on campus, and university facilities were not in full operation.

Third, diary writing, an important means of collecting data, worked only in the first week. As participants were required to spend more time reading and studying, they had little time for diary writing. If diary writing were to succeed, then a more proactive approach would be needed, for example, more regular sighting of and more interaction with the content of diaries so that participants would feel both motivated and encouraged. (One participant mentioned that he needed pushing with his diary writing.) The use of key words could serve as reminders to participants of items for discussion in interviews and informal meetings. This would eliminate the writing of lengthy paragraphs which can be a deterrent to the writing process. Sentence starters could be a useful way of eliciting responses.

Issues with interviews

Similarly, a range of methodological issues arose from the interview process. The first interview at the outset provided a way of getting to know the participants better and getting useful information about their own cultures and learning environments before coming to the School; the second, and final, interview at the end of the observation period was frustrating. Very few themes emerged, and those that did addressed a limited range of issues. The reasons for this seemed to be that my questions were too abstract, leaving the participants unclear as to what I was asking them and, therefore, unable to reveal their thoughts. For example, WK later reflected in an informal conversation with me: 'What is she asking me here? What should I say'. In directly addressing the issues encompassed in the research questions the interview questions were too theoretical. I concluded that interview protocols should contain simple questions, and should provide situations or incidents which participants could reflect on and which reflected the context, the conditions, and the consequences of communication encounters. For example, later, I was advised (by one of my supervisors) to start with a more general question put to the interviewee, as a way of setting the scene and relaxing the participant. When addressing a particular topic I should ask for specific information, like who said what to whom, so that communication experiences could be better articulated by the participants to me, the researcher. This proved helpful in eliciting more explicit communication acts and in giving participants a basis to start from.

On reading the transcriptions of the interviews it was apparent that some further issues would need to be addressed when conducting interviews in the main study, for example, developing an open ended, semi-structured interview protocol that encompassed the topics I wanted to address. Second, I needed to articulate questions carefully and give participants enough time to think about the answer before repeating or rephrasing questions, to allow participants to finish their sentences before interrupting and moving on to another issue or question, and to refrain from finishing their sentences or feeding them ideas. Nonetheless, and on a more positive note, I was beginning to see the emergence of some themes, and that progress was being made towards addressing my general research question, insofar as this was possible, given the limited time frame of the pilot study.

Observing the participants during the research period

Because the Smithfield students were a strongly bonded cohort, I had difficulty in accessing WK's and FO's time for discussion, especially since they were often involved with pre- and post-class discussion with their Smithfield friends. I felt that they showed a sense of obligation to talk with me at the end of class, rather than a willingness (although after interviewing them I think this may have been, in part, my perception). Thus, as a researcher, I often felt awkward and intrusive while in the field site. (My journal had references to feelings of awkwardness as an observer in class, worsened by the fact that I felt like the cultural *other* among the large Smithfield cohort.)

At the outset I had thought that they would have been pleased to have contact with a New Zealander, someone who was familiar with their learning environment. This was the case only to a certain extent. On the other hand, FO intimated to me that when I began attending their classes and following them around he regretted for a brief time that he had volunteered to participate. His Smithfield cohorts referred to me as *the Godmother*, always there looking after them. Clearly, they were not without ironic humour. Given my status in relation to FO (I was older, higher up the student scale, and I had been a teacher in the School), I had to be respected. However, with time, they began to approach me themselves, to initiate conversation, and to use me as a sounding board and as a source of information. Thus, the need for prolonged investigation in the field (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was already beginning to present itself as an important component of fruitful ethnographic research within this study, allied with the need to establish trust between the researcher and participants. I explore this notion of trust in the findings chapters as it proved to be an important aspect not just in the research process, but also in the participants' intercultural communication experiences.

Evaluation of the pilot study

Overall, the pilot study provided a useful process for refining issues in the field: for example, refining and evaluating interviewing techniques (asking descriptive questions rather than leading questions), recording and presenting data, and assessing the subject and frequency of observations in the field. In the writing up of the data I tried out techniques and principles of grounded theory, for example, identifying emergent themes and developing categories from which a written text

emerged. This framework provided a basis for the main study. More generally, the pilot study enabled me to evaluate the procedures adopted in the main study, to identify the short comings of the procedures piloted, and to develop further strategies in light of the limitations which emerged in the pilot study.

The main limitation was the research domain itself which, in the main study, would need to be extended beyond the School to include the wider campus and outside community in order to fully explore the participants' range of intra- and intercultural communication experiences, as well as address the scope of the study defined by the research questions. In focussing on the learning environment as the research domain only a limited part of this study was being addressed. There was a need to also consider experiences in the wider community in order to address issues of culture and identity emerging from intercultural interaction.

Second, the observation period was limited. Fieldwork lasting two months does not allow for prolonged engagement. In accordance with naturalistic inquiry, the researcher is concerned with humans who may change during the course of the study, or the emergent design may change as insights grow and working hypotheses appear (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, minimising the investigation period minimises the researcher's extent of understanding of the research context, resulting in a very limited ethnographic representation. In addition, persistent observation enables the researcher to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem being pursued and to focus on them in detail: it provides a depth to the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As noted earlier, the limited time frame of the pilot study allowed for the emergence of some broad issues that required much further exploration. The value of the pilot study, however, meant that these issues could be taken up and explored in more depth in the main study.

Although I had access to the Nud*ist manual at the time of the pilot study, I unfortunately did not have the software before carrying out the analysis of data. However, in the coding of data and in the developing of categories I adopted the Nud*ist approach and created an index tree (a feature of the Nudist categorisation process) which represented and showed the relationship among the coded data. This index tree was useful in clarifying and understanding the relationships of the

emergent themes and in providing the framework for the writing up of results of the pilot study. Thus, I adopted this model for the main study.

4.4 Method: The main study

The main study was initiated in the first semester following the pilot study (conducted during the Summer School). I anticipated spending the two semesters in the academic year collecting data. In the first semester the research domain was located primarily in the School. The rationale for this focus was to enable me to better form relationships with the participants in an environment where we had a common ground. In the second semester I continued fieldwork within the School but extended my domain of inquiry to include communication experiences on campus and in the wider community. Although unanticipated, I decided to continue my research period into a third semester, (the first semester of the following year) as a result of examining data during the long vacation, because I found that there were themes which needed further exploration.

Thus, the data collection for the main study began in early March, 1996, and was completed in July, 1997. Altogether, 42 interviews were conducted in three stages, roughly at the end of each semester. Each interview lasted about one and a half hours. Observation periods of approximately one month were spent in the learning environment at the beginning and the end of each of the two semesters in 1996. In addition, I arranged informal meetings with participants in the School and community. In total, I spent approximately 62 hours formally interviewing participants, and about 500 hours in fieldwork. (The data collection process is summarised in Figure three.)

Figure 3

A summary of the data collection process

Time period	Data collection process
	<p>Pilot study Conducted during Summer School</p>
Jan - Feb 1996	<p>Two volunteers recruited from Summer School Initial interviews conducted Classroom observations carried out Informal meetings/discussions held</p>
Feb	<p>Follow up interviews conducted Tapes transcribed and confirmed by participants Themes and categories developed (represented by tree diagram)</p>
	<p>Main study</p>
	<p>First stage: Focus on learning environment</p>
March – June 1996	<p>15 volunteers recruited (including two Summer School participants) Classroom observations carried out Informal meetings/discussions held</p>
April	<p>Template developed for first interview</p>
May – June	<p>First interviews conducted</p>
July	<p>Tapes transcribed and confirmed by participants Themes developed</p>
	<p>Second stage: Focus on learning and social environments</p>
Aug – Nov 1996	<p>Classroom observations carried out Informal meetings/discussions held</p>
October	<p>Template developed for second interview</p>
Oct - Nov	<p>Second interviews conducted</p>
Nov - Dec	<p>Tapes transcribed and confirmed by participants</p>
Dec – June 1997	<p>Themes and categories developed (Nud*ist software applied)</p>
	<p>Third stage: Focus on social environment and cultural identity</p>
March – July 1997	<p>Informal meetings/discussions held Template developed for third interview</p>
June – July	<p>Third interviews conducted</p>
July - Aug	<p>Tapes transcribed and confirmed by participants Themes and categories further developed and refined</p>

4.4.1 The research domain

I conducted the study within a school of study at a university in New Zealand. The research site was chosen for two reasons. First, the School has many international students enrolled, in particular, students from CHCs; second, as I had taught in the School and was familiar with the School environment, my knowledge of the structure of the School and the learning environment enabled me to better understand the conditions and circumstances confronting the participants (subject, however, to the limitations addressed in Chapter one).

The School had an international focus in its recruitment and programme developments. It was very active in attracting international students, in particular, from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and, more recently, China. By the end of the data collection period the twinning programme with Smithfield (described in the pilot study) is waning, due to competition from Australia. However, new twinning programmes began with other institutions in Confucian heritage cultures, namely, in Shanghai, so growth in the numbers of CHC students attending the School was expected. Many international students also came to the School to participate in the one year International MBA programme.

At the time of the study the School offered many qualifications, including a four year undergraduate degree, diploma courses, masterate degrees, and research degrees. Where international students came to do masterate degrees, they were first required to take a three-paper (one semester) pre-enrolment course. Students had the option of living in Halls of Residence or flats on campus, or renting houses in the surrounding community, or living in homestays (renting a room in a New Zealander's house; food may or may not be provided).

The greatest number of international students came from East and South Asia, for example, from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia. Students were required to have a score of 5.5 in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test, or six in TOEFL (Test

of English as a Foreign Language) in order to gain entry into the School.² When the study began the School had the following support services for international students: an international support team which provided academic and other advice to students; academic advisers (lecturers or others connected to the School in some way); a language consultant (appointed during this study); and a buddy system (developed by the international support team) which provided peer pairing to international students who were interested in the scheme. The University had a learning unit where all students could seek academic help, an international student office that provided further support beyond that of the School and managed the international students' stay. The campus also provided a range of other services and recreational activities that the students could participate in on a voluntary basis.

At the time of the study the School had 2565 students enrolled of which 291 were international students. The University had a total enrolment of 11,465 students; 769 of these were international students. The university comprised seven faculties or schools of study, and a language centre. Many of the students attending the university were not local. The university was located in a city of about 120,000 inhabitants, a city which was beginning to experience an influx of overseas migrants. However, traditionally, the city grew up around an agricultural economy. Thus, at the time of the study, the city was beginning to embark upon a changing image from an agricultural service town into a cosmopolitan city. Such demographic and social factors are significant in considering how the participants, along with other international students, were received within this community.

4.4.2 Rationale for selection of participants in the study

As mentioned, the study focused on students who came from CHCs and whose first language was not English. Participants came from a CHC and were either international students or students with permanent resident status. New Zealand born

² These scores represent a level of English language competence appropriate for university study. These score requirements are generally standard across universities, but recently another school within this university lowered its entry requirement in order to attract more international students. In contrast, the school that is the focus of this study recently insisted upon a score of six in the IELTS test for the writing component. (Before, an overall average of six for the IELTS test was acceptable). The scores themselves are to some extent meaningless as an indication of the linguistic competence of a student who does not have English as a first language, or ability to cope in the academic environment (as this study bears out).

ethnic Chinese were excluded from this study as, for the most part, questions of communicative and cultural competence and issues of identity which were addressed in this study did not apply to them in the same way. I asked the international support team co-ordinator to identify CHC students who were either starting undergraduate, diploma, or graduate programmes and give me their names and telephone numbers. From a list of 20 students I was able to contact 15. All of these students agreed to participate. One of the 15, LJ, who worked as International Support Person within the international support team in the School, volunteered when I informally told him about the study.

4.4.3 Demographic profiles of the participants

Four participants were graduate students (LJ, SX, both males, and FX, and YR both females) all of whom were mature students, that is, they had all completed undergraduate degrees in China and had worked for some years in universities prior to gaining scholarships to come and study in New Zealand. They had already completed at least one semester of undergraduate papers as a preparation for entry into graduate studies.

There were three diploma participants (KZ, JX, and ML), all of whom came from China and were in their first year of academic study at a university. JX and ML had permanent resident status in New Zealand and had been living here for over a year. KZ arrived a week after the commencement of the first semester and began classes immediately.

The eight remaining participants were undergraduate students. Two participated in the pilot study (WK and FO, both males). Two Taiwanese students (MC, female, and MP, male) were studying in a language programme on campus in preparation for entry into the School in the second semester. Two participants came from Smithfield College in Malaysia, having studied for one semester there (AS, female, and SY, male). One came from Hong Kong (PS, male), but had completed a one year preparatory business programme in Auckland. The final participant (HY, female, from Taiwan) was a permanent resident, having studied for the University Bursary exam in a local secondary school the previous year.

By the end of the first semester three students had left this study. One diploma student (ML) decided not to continue at university for financial reasons. Another diploma student (JX) left university during the first semester because his level of English was insufficient to cope with course requirements. The third, MP, one of the language school students, changed his programme of study to another School at the end of the first month and so was not included in the findings of the study.

All four graduate students (LJ, SX, FX, and YR) came from China and were married. (The spouses of SX, FX, and YR came from China to join them during the course of the study. LJ left China with his wife to take up permanent residence in New Zealand. The two women (FX and YR) each had a child (who joined them with their spouses during the study), and YR had a second child after the research period. The wives of the two men (LJ and SX) each gave birth to a child during the study period. (LJ's wife had her second child after the research period.) All the diploma students (KZ, JX, and ML) were also from China. The one diploma student who remained in the study (KZ), after completing a diploma in international management and marketing after two semesters, enrolled in a diploma in accounting.

These remaining five mature students -- the four graduate and one diploma students - - were very forthcoming and easy to develop a rapport with. They entered into the study with interest, albeit for different reasons, and willingly gave their time and their friendship to become, in most cases, friends. They also showed a willingness to confide in me. Perhaps because we were all mature students and had families, and were undertaking further education for the purposes of our careers, we had some things in common. The one remaining diploma student came to rely on me in a number of ways, to use my email, to store his luggage, and as a friend to support him in his isolation here.

The seven remaining undergraduate students presented an entirely different picture. All of these undergraduates were in their early twenties and unmarried. Only the two Smithfield students (WK and FO) were in their third year of study; the remainder (MC, AS, PS, SY, and HY) were in their first year. It was much more difficult to establish a rapport with them, perhaps because of our age difference. They showed respect and deference according to their Confucian custom. They also demonstrated a sense of honour at being part of a doctoral student's research programme and participated, for the most part, with seriousness and commitment.

Other differences seemed to be determined very much by the character of each of these participants.

Of the five first-year students, two came from Malaysia (AS and SY), one from Hong Kong (PS), and two from Taiwan (MC and HY). The two Malaysians (AS and SY) did not get to know each other in the School. The Hong Kong participant (PS) became good friends with AS, but he did not know the Taiwanese students (MC and HY). The two Taiwanese students did not know each other. In the second semester I had much difficulty in organising meeting times for interviews and observations with HY so, eventually, I had no choice but to discontinue the research with her. Her first semester of study is included in the findings, however.

The remaining sample thus consisted of four graduates (LJ, SX, FX and YR), one diploma participant (KZ), and six undergraduates, the two Smithfield participants in their third year of study (WK and FO), and four in their first year (AS, SY, PS, and MC). These 11 participants and their intercultural communication experiences in this community represent the core of this study.

4.4.4 Relationship between the participants and the researcher

The key issue in establishing and developing the relationship between the participants and the researcher was the need to establish rapport and trust.

Initially, the participants gave the impression of being willing and eager to take part in the study. I later realised that this was not so. At the conclusion to the final interview the participants were asked to discuss the research process. This was a revealing and enlightening practice as participants revealed the reasons for some of the difficulties I had experienced with them in the first semester of the research period. First, in keeping with their culture, they explained that the development of trust was an essential element before they could communicate openly. Some of them explained:

The important thing is you have, as the researcher, you have to try every means to get trust from the persons being researched. . . . Once you get trust from him or from her you can get useful information (YR);

I think maybe the more we talk, the more I can know your personality . . . so I know you will not do some harm to me and so I can trust you (KZ);

You also make some efforts beyond this interview to build this trust, like when my baby birth, and you sent a gift and visit my family. . . . [These things] also can help the trust within the interview (LJ).

KZ explained the consequences of this process: 'so if you find some conflict in the interview, you should realise rely on the later one' (KZ). WK confirmed this view, saying that his initial interviews may not be as reliable as later ones where he felt more confident to express his real feelings to me.

Another factor I was unaware of at the outset was participants' motives for agreeing to participate. Many mentioned the opportunity that the study presented to get to know a New Zealander, to develop friendship with a New Zealander, to exchange ideas, and to receive feedback on their own way of thinking. The meetings also provided them with a chance to practise their English. There was a definite sense of reciprocity. Some, however, expressed to me later the reservations they had at the outset. KZ agreed out of politeness. The graduates mentioned that they could learn about research methods. A few had strong reservations. YR felt that the interviews were wasting her time but she continued out of what she regarded as her Chinese sense of obligation. MC, although she agreed to participate, began to avoid me. Later she recounted her fear of interviews: she was scared of having her voice recorded on the tape recorder; she also believed she had no knowledge to offer in an interview. Through my persistence in maintaining contact with her, we finally overcame these obstacles and she became a valuable participant.

A few participants provided a greater challenge in terms of developing rapport and establishing trust. HY showed a reluctance to participate and her constant refusal to meet appointments may have stemmed from the same reasons given by YR and MC. PS also seemed to keep a distance throughout, perhaps through a lack of understanding of the purpose of the study. His contribution in this study consisted of interviews alone. He did not open himself to further engagement. SY showed similarities with PS in this respect. The participants' personalities and the extent to which we had common life styles seemed to be influencing factors in how I developed a rapport with them.

During the three semesters of the data collection period I sometimes felt awkward phoning the participants, often feeling like an intruder on their studies or on their social lives, especially those who lived in the Halls of Residence, like FO, WK, PS, and SY. For example, I soon realised that it was inappropriate to call FO and WK until after 11 am as they slept until then, and after 9 pm I would be disturbing them in their study. Later in the study, phoning PS in his flat became awkward because his flatmates said that he was not home, and he never returned my calls. I felt less inhibited about phoning the mature students. Living as nuclear families in flats near the university, and having their lives circumscribed by study, shopping on Saturdays, and meetings with other Chinese friends or attendance at events organised by the Chinese Society, they seemed to be pleased to have contact with the researcher.

Towards the end of this research all students in the School began to get their own email account and, thus, I was able to contact participants through email. This made a difference to making arrangements about setting up meeting times. Because email was an efficient and effective medium for maintaining contact, it helped to alleviate my feelings of awkwardness in making contact. Whereas a few of the participants had been difficult to contact by telephone either logistically or for what I felt were reasons of avoidance, email technology overcame these issues. I was pleased to receive unsolicited messages through email, even just informal greetings. Above all, email was useful for arranging appointments and contact times, that is, a good facilitator for setting up face-to-face contacts where the *real* communication and problem solving took place. Email was not a reliable medium for transmitting personal information, however. For example, YR phoned me to personally tell me that she had finally been given permanent residence; she felt that email was an inappropriate medium.

Notwithstanding these issues, all of the participants, in one way or another, related to me as a *confidante*, a sounding board, a source of cultural information, and a friend to chat with around the School. When I met these participants by chance around the University they were always pleased to see me and we would stop and have a chat. Some even called to my office from time to time. Most came to my home several times. In a sense they became friends, although to differing degrees. With the mature female students we could share similar experiences with children, work, and study. With the younger first year undergraduates I was a guiding

figure. For example, in the case of WK and FO, I became known by their Smithfield cohort as *the Godmother*; for SY I served as the guardian who offered parental advice; and for AS I was a source of information about the unwritten rules for young adult relationships here.

All of these factors reinforce the need for prolonged engagement in the field when undertaking intercultural qualitative research, in particular with those from CHCs where trust had to be established. Through continued communication in a variety of settings it was possible, in most cases, to penetrate the barrier between researcher and participant, and establish a rapport and friendship. Furthermore, participants' linguistic competence improved during the course of the study which enabled them to express their thoughts on quite difficult and abstract topics more accurately. I believe that these situations were an added dimension in this study.

4.4.5 Description of the research process

Initiating the study

At the beginning of the study, once participants had been identified and contacted, I met with them individually to explain the purpose of the study, the nature of qualitative inquiry, the need for participant observation over a prolonged period, the requirement of interviews, and the desired outcome that we, the participants and researcher, would hopefully develop a rapport over the research period. It was my impression at that time that they all showed a willingness to participate at the outset. WK and FO willingly agreed to continue from the pilot study into the main study. This proved to be advantageous in that a rapport had already been developed over the Summer School.

Consent and contracts

As this research involved human subjects I was bound by the regulations set out by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato. Thus, consent was acquired for the study from this Committee's representation within the School, and also from the participants themselves. For this purpose I developed a research contract which explained the positions of both researcher and participants, how the

data obtained would be used, and the participants' rights with respect to publication of this data.³

I used email to inform academic staff in the School of my attendance in lectures and tutorials with participants as part of my fieldwork. I received a response from one staff member who requested anonymity. Another, through lack of understanding objected initially, but this misunderstanding was resolved through dialogue. I received no other inquiry from other academic staff regarding my attendance in their classes.

Fieldwork

In the first semester the research domain was focused within the School. I continued fieldwork in the School in the second semester, but also addressed participants' intercultural communication experiences beyond the School: for example, on campus, when participants came to my home from time to time, and when I went to some of their homes. We had other social interaction through my role in the School as their adviser, and they often came to visit me in my office.

Before attending any lecturer's class I phoned to ask for consent. Responses varied, depending on their concern for others in the class. (For example, concern was expressed that in a small class of six to 10 students my presence might affect the learning atmosphere and inhibit student participation.) Another lecturer introduced me as a researcher who was in the class today to observe, and also asked the class if anyone objected. No one did. This cover accredited to me served to lower the tone of my presence. Yet another academic was concerned about how the other students in the class might feel about having me there and looked to me for a cue as to how I should be introduced. I suggested he adopt the strategy taken by the latter lecturer which he did. Lecturers were mostly co-operative, and I did not receive any complaints about or objections to (apart from the above mentioned incident) the fieldwork.

During participant observation in the first semester, I noticed that I was only scratching the surface of the students' lives here. I needed to find informal situations in which to get to know the participants better. Furthermore, the

³ Appendix A is a copy of the research contract between the researcher and the participant.

fieldwork context of the School heightened the researcher/participant distinction for the participants, and was the domain where I held superior ground (for reasons mentioned earlier), especially for the undergraduate participants.

In the second semester I sought ways in which I could meet them and talk with them individually, such as going to places around the School where I might have the chance to meet some of them, visiting the library, meeting them for lunch, inviting them to my home, going to their homes, and interviewing them informally. Some of them also called to my office to talk to me from time to time, or ask for academic help or advice. Participant observation continued in the School for the whole year, albeit with less focus in classroom settings. It also extended to less formal domains like those mentioned above. Extending the research domain into the other worlds of the participants, especially those of the undergraduates, remained problematic in this research. I tended to rely on their personal *tellings*: their interpretations of situations I wanted to explore. These tellings were revealed in informal conversations in the above mentioned contexts, and in interviews.

Data collection methods

The data in the study are comprised of initial profiles of participants' backgrounds before coming to New Zealand that they themselves constructed, notes I took during observation in the field and interaction in a range of social contexts (described above) with the participants, interviews, and a diary I kept during the study.⁴ The diary was useful for organising tasks, and provided a written reflection on the issues which arose during the study: for example, getting started (discussed above), difficulties in making contact sometimes with participants, dealing with the emergent data and confronting methodological issues, logistical problems, and the difficulties associated with immersion in the research domain.⁵

There were two data collection strategies which were unsuccessful: participant diary keeping, and weekly forums with participants. Although providing participants with an exercise book in which to record their experiences which included some suggested writing topics pasted inside the front cover, as well as giving them the guidance outlined in the pilot study evaluation, this strategy met with little success.

⁴ Appendix B contains a sample of fieldnotes recorded during observation in the field.

⁵ Appendix C contains a sample taken from the researcher's diary.

Only a few participants wrote one or two entries as they had little time after they had completed their daily study. As they told me, they wanted to relax!

The weekly forums proved too difficult to organise. I had considered that Friday afternoons would be an appropriate time as they would have little on, but, for some, this time was their weekly pilgrimage with their friends into the city, and for others, this was not how they wanted to spend their free time. Instead, I relied on one-to-one appointments arranged between classes.

I conducted three sets of open-ended interviews, one at the end of each semester. Each taped interview lasted about one and a half hours and consisted of a series of open-ended questions.⁶ As a result of observations of, and interactions with, participants in the research domain during the first semester, themes began to emerge, and these formed the basis for the first interview which took place towards the end of the first semester.

Transcriptions of these interviews were made and returned to the participants for their reading. Participants did not make many comments with respect to the transcriptions, apart from clarifying words which I had misinterpreted in the transcribing process. I felt that, in their eyes, although they were participants, the research process was in my control and belonged to me. Hence, for the most part, they remained silent with regard to any evaluation of what I was trying to achieve. There were some exceptions, however. LJ mentioned that I should provide participants with a take home interview schedule and allow them to fill in the blanks or select an answer using the multichoice approach. Then participants could use a dictionary to look up words they did not understand. The take home approach was sound and, in fact, I had tried that technique, only to find that participants had either lost the sheet or had not found time to look at the questions before the interview.⁷ In contrast, SX, an economics graduate student, who was used to a quantitative approach to data collection, unexpectedly found that he had a participatory role and was sharing in the process of creating the research. He found this process surprising, but rewarding as he was not a passive subject, but an agent with a responsibility, in the formation of the data.

⁶ Appendix D contains the protocols for the three interviews in the main study.

⁷ An exception was MC. In fact, we abandoned the first interview and I allowed her to take the questions home and prepare for the interview at a later date.

Developing categories

The transcriptions were then coded into categories. It is important to note here that the categories derived from the coding process were a result of the emergent themes elicited from discussions with participants and fieldwork observation. The focus on themes is founded in Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory. These themes were derived from the *reading* or examination of discursive texts for their normative patterning and symbolic structuring (Geertz, 1983), and 'from the observation of naturally occurring discourse as well as from solicited reflections about contexted interaction' (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p. 105). In accordance with procedures for grounded theory development and ethnographic inquiry (outlined in the earlier sections of this chapter), I addressed these emergent themes further in open-ended interviews, in informal discussions, and in participant observation.

From the interview transcriptions I was able to identify commonalities expressed by the participants in their communication as they responded to the questions in the interview protocols. For example, questions in the first and second interview protocols addressed learning the technique of critical analysis, handling New Zealand materials, and giving presentations. The participants expressed these communication episodes in terms of encountering a new learning environment and the challenges this presented. Thus, an index tree emerged headed by this category. Subsumed within this category were the experiences of the participants as they encountered having to deal with critical analysis, New Zealand materials, and presentations.⁸ These diagrammatic associations formed the basis for the organisation of the data into the findings chapters. Thus, from the identified themes emerged the categories. I developed my own index trees to show the relationships among these themes and categories as the data collection progressed.⁹ These themes and categories formed the thematic representation of the findings that comprise Chapters five to eight of this report. (I discuss how Nud*ist facilitated this categorisation process technically in Chapter 4.5.)

⁸ Appendix E shows a sample of an index tree.

⁹ The example given is presented as findings in Chapter five which is about the intercultural communication experiences of the participants in the School. Specifically, the three categories are subsumed within the general category represented as 5.2 Encountering a new educational environment: New Challenges. They are represented in 5.2.5 Handling the technique of critical analysis, 5.2.6 Handling New Zealand materials, and 5.2.8 Giving presentations.

Each category is little more than a label to the outside reader, but to the researcher, who has shared in the lives and experiences of the participants to whom these words belong, the words evoke a rich world of meaning and experience, full of nuances. The words themselves are only part of the experience. The participant behind the words carries with him/herself characteristics, values, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour which have been revealed to the researcher during the fieldwork, and which provide the kernels that get printed out under each category. In a metaphorical sense the words are the threads that the researcher embroiders to create a tapestry, an interpretation of the lives of these participants in this research context. The researcher, as embroiderer, reflects the words as they have been evoked through the participants' experiences and embroiders (writes) them into pictures (images) filled with detail (*thick* description).

The point at which I departed from the rigorous grounded theory methodology prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was in the treatment of the categories once they had emerged. I wanted to preserve the interpretive and qualitative aspects of the data, that is, the tellings of the participants as rendered in the context of the communication encounter. By contrast, Strauss and Corbin prescribe a process for handling categories, subjecting them to axial coding, selective coding, and theoretical sampling. Thus, the data became *forced* rather than *emergent* (Glaser, 1992). This forcing is evident in the description Strauss and Corbin give of coding procedures: 'Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways' (p. 57). In a further attempt to preserve the rigour of their inquiry they state that such procedures 'help the analyst to break through the biases and assumptions brought to, and that can develop during, the research process' (p. 57). On the other hand, in accordance with the principles of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 1986; and Lincoln 1990), I adhere to the assumption that no interpretive inquiry is free of bias; my preferred strategy, in accordance with naturalistic inquiry, is to acknowledge my biases and recognise they can never be completely overcome, in order to preserve the voices of the participants in their natural setting.

Putting closure on the research process

Putting closure on this research was extremely difficult. Although, officially, the data collection was completed with the third and final interview after almost one and a half years of fieldwork, I continued to maintain contact with most of the

participants. Also, I have included in the results influences which impacted upon their lives prior to the commencement of the study, and after the official data collection period, because these earlier and later experiences are part of the threads which comprise this tapestry of these participants' experiences. The starting and finishing points of these participants' experiences as students in the School go well beyond the bounds of the data collection period that took place four years ago.

4.5 Using Nud*ist software

4.5.1 A brief description

Nud*ist (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) is a software package designed for use in qualitative research. It assists qualitative research by efficiently managing data and, thus, enabling the creation and exploration of new ideas and theories. In doing so 'it does not determine the research approach, rather it provides tools to support a range of tasks required by various approaches to qualitative analysis and different sorts of data' (Nud*ist Manual, 1994).

Qualitative analysis involves the development of ideas about the data and exploration of these ideas. Such ideas may emerge from the data as descriptive categories. Categories are also created from the data during the project and linked in ways that describe the data, thus resulting in the construction of new theories which can further be tested by exploring links with the data. Nud*ist claims to 'help create such categories for thinking about data' (Nud*ist Manual, 1994). These categories are managed within the index system and viewed visually as a flow diagram, called the index tree. For the purposes of this study, the software was used for the management of data through the document system and the index system. I identified the emergent categories from the interview transcriptions (as described in Chapter 4.4.5). Next, I entered the transcription into the document system. From this, I was able to highlight the text that corresponded with each category and then enter the category into the index system. Thus, all of the communication concerning participants' experiences in giving presentations could be found within the category entitled *giving presentations*. I did not use Nud*ist for theorising in the manner

intended by the writers of the software, although, the structure which evolves from the tree index is diagrammatically representative of the emergent theory.¹⁰

4.5.2 An evaluation of Nud*ist

Nud*ist was invaluable because it provided a means for data management. Nud*ist enabled me to code, or label, and collate data in categories (through the index system), and store transcriptions (through the document system). Without the software this data would have been unwieldy and time consuming to manage.

There were other aspects of Nud*ist which I did not find so useful or user friendly, however. As a qualitative researcher I was interested in the concepts that participants were experiencing or talking about. It was from these concepts that categories emerged. Thus, the labelling of the categories was reflected in the concepts the participants were experiencing, rather than only in the words they used to express the concept. A word or phrase search may have completely bypassed the concept which was encapsulated within the category.

Similarly, I did not find the facility which enabled juxtaposition of two or more categories useful. Nud*ist allows the user to choose two or more categories to compare and contrast them for the purpose of theory building. Selvaraj noted the shortcomings of this feature:

The thinking, judging, deciding, and interpreting is still done by the researcher. The computer [program] does not make conceptual decisions, such as which words or themes are important to focus on or which analytical step to take next. (Selvaraj, 1996, p. 6)

A further limitation of the software was the inability of the tree structure to fit on the screen of the computer; instead it had to be viewed in sections. However, my own hand drawn tree diagram was invaluable during the course of the data collection as it enabled me to observe pictorially the emergence of the study in its entirety, and the interconnections and inter-relationships of the categories which were emerging from the data. With the *big picture* constantly in view the overall context of the study was

¹⁰ Selvaraj (1996) presents a more comprehensive account of the capabilities of the Nud*ist software program.

constantly in sight, as well as the categories that embodied the participants' texts. I was thus able to move categories about to better explore interconnections and relationships, and reflect the emergence of the theory grounded in the data.

My own tree began with the pilot study. This tree formed the starting point for the main study. Once the first set of interviews had been completed at the end of the first semester, I was able to refine the themes that were emerging from observation in the field, field notes, and interviews, into categories. It was these categories, and their inter-relationships, that grounded the study and led the way to the next stage. I extended this process in the second semester. By the end of this semester the tree had grown, and I was able to gain a broad picture of the emergent study, through the arrangement, interconnection, and inter-relationship of categories. Thus, I was able to refine the final stage of my data collection, and address any emergent themes which needed further refining, given the scope of the study delineated by the research questions.

One technical shortcoming of the software was its inability to cut and paste sections of a category (once coded and placed there) into another category. Cutting and pasting had to be done manually from printouts.

The software would have been better exploited if I had included all data, for example, field notes and diary entries in the categorisation process, and not only interviews. This inclusion would also have resulted in a better application of Nud*ist's memo system that allows the researcher to record parenthetical notes, and thoughts and queries in relation to a particular category. Inclusion of all the data may have resulted in a more systematic and clearer picture of the shaping of the data, the reflexivity of the researcher, and the resultant emergent understanding and interpretation. Instead, these reflections were addressed in the study as part of a separate process.

In conclusion, the main value of Nud*ist in this study was in its management of a large amount of data, through the document and index systems, which enabled comprehensive and systematic analysis of the data as they emerged. The Nud*ist software had some limitations, however. Representation of the tree diagram on the screen needs to be refined, as does the facility for cutting and pasting within categories.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology that guided the study, and the method or steps taken to collect the data. In the first part a rationale for an interpretive methodology was provided. Since the study was guided by a theory of social constructionism it was appropriate to choose a methodology and method which fitted. The principles of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986; and Lincoln, 1990) allowed for understanding the social realities of participants in their natural setting. Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) enabled the researcher to generate data that is grounded and emergent in the study. Ethnography (Spradley, 1979), consisting of participant observation and interviews and thick description (Geertz, 1973; 1983), provided a means for collecting and analysing data, and for its contextual representation (Van Maanen, 1986).

The remainder of this chapter discussed the specific methods used. The pilot study provided a means of exploring techniques of ethnography and generating theory through the emergence of categories within the data. Although some shortcomings were identified, such as, the need to extend the research site, the need for more informal meetings, as well as the need to refine interview protocols and techniques, overall, the process was evaluated positively. Thus, the pilot study set the scene for the main study.

The main study involved extensive interviews, informal discussions and observations with 11 CHC students in their school of study and in the society beyond.¹¹ The data that emerged from these processes represented the basis for this study. A reading of these texts enabled the emergence of themes, later developed into categories, in accordance with the procedures for grounded theory development and ethnographic inquiry.

In identifying the contentions between Glaser and Strauss' (1967) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) later treatment of categories, I found resonance in Glaser's (1992) critique that Strauss and Corbin's work resulted in the *forcing* rather than the *emergence* of categories, thus distorting the development of the grounded theory.

¹¹ Initially, there were 14 participants but, for various reasons, three no longer participated after one third of the data collection period had passed.

For this reason, I abandoned Strauss and Corbin's approach, allowing the categories to emerge from the themes as the data collection progressed, in the way of ethnography.

Finally, Nud*ist software was applied in this study. Despite some technical shortcomings, and its limitations in developing theory or in analysing the data, Nud*ist was invaluable in the handling and storage of the data.

Chapter 5

Intercultural communication experiences in the learning environment

This chapter, the first of four substantive chapters concerned with the findings of the study, focuses on the intercultural experiences of participants in the learning environment of the host culture. It is divided into three parts. The first part underpins the intercultural communication experience by providing an introduction to the Confucian heritage culture (CHC) learning environment. Participants discuss their constructions of their educational experiences in their first cultures, and their notions of student life in New Zealand before coming. The second part looks at the different learning environment the participants entered into and, as a result, the different challenges they faced. The third part explores participants' social interactions in a range of contexts in the learning environment, and issues in the use of English to communicate.

In considering each of these three parts I address the central research question (stated at the end of Chapter three): How do Confucian heritage culture (CHC) students reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences? Specifically, I address the communication experience of being a CHC student in a New Zealand tertiary institution, and how cultural difference is created/maintained in the learning environment through intercultural communication. Thus, I will consider the impact of context on participants' communication experiences; the challenges they face in becoming effective communicators in these contexts; and the cultural, social, and educational factors that enhance or inhibit communication and teaching and learning. I will also discuss the implications that these experiences may have on members of the host institution (New Zealand students and university staff, in particular).

5.1 Introduction: Participants' predispositions at the outset to this study

In order to address the central research question it is important to understand the position of the participants of this study as they leave their first culture and enter into the new learning culture: What was their experience as a student in their first culture? What were the prevalent communication styles among teachers and students? What were the participants' reasons for studying in the west? And what knowledge or perceptions did participants hold about the learning environment and student life at this university before they left their countries and, thus, the degree of success they could expect as students here? These questions will be addressed in the following four sections of this introduction in order to provide a framework from which to begin a study of these CHC students' experiences in the learning environment.

5.1.1 Teaching and learning in the first culture

The first culture learning environment is characterised by two important features. The first feature concerns the notion of deep approaches to learning in the Confucian tradition of education. According to the Confucian tradition of learning there is an emphasis on reflective thinking and inquiry in the process of learning (Biggs, 1991; Lee, 1996), that which is described as a deep approach in the West. And yet, studies have typically shown that classroom learning follows patterns of surface learning where students learn by listening, reading, observing and imitating rather than discovery learning or engaging in critical thinking (Cheng and Clark, 1993; Samuelowicz, 1987). Thus, CHC students tend to be seen as exhibiting surface learning approaches in the West. This contradiction needs to be resolved.

The second feature concerns the values attached to education within Confucian societies. Confucian societies value education, which is seen as knowledge, wisdom, intellect, and love of learning. There is a strong familial value placed on education, and education is seen as being attainable by all. There is a strong belief

that success comes from effort and willpower; success is not dependent on ability (as is the belief in the West).

These two features represent the basis from which these participants have been educated and socialised and upon which they have constructed their learning worlds. They discussed their constructions in the following ways.

Participants described how knowledge is given by the teacher and accepted without question, where students are dependent upon teachers: 'We just listen and receive the knowledge' (MC describing her classroom learning experience in a secondary school in Taiwan). More explicitly, YR described the strategy for success in a Chinese university:

If you get [into] University [to] study, [you] just buy the text. You may [be] required to read some other materials other than [the] textbook, but the main things is the text from textbook. The test or examinations are from text. The assignments are very easy, easy to do. All students do the same assignment, [and give the] same answer. (YR)¹

Learning outcomes were focused on examinations rather than internal assessment: 'In China if you go to university, [there are] not too many assignments' (FX); and 'In China they haven't this [assignments]. [You] just go to the lecture and no homework, no assignment' (ML). ML explained that she was sometimes required to write an essay during the semester in her own time, but it did not count towards her final grade which was based entirely on a final exam.

These accounts suggest that knowledge comes from the teacher, the textbook, and teaching within the classroom, and that students were not required to think independently of these sources.

¹ Within the quotations of the participants, which are indented and written in a smaller font, I have used brackets, [. .], to add words or parts of words to clarify the meaning where it is unclear. This was, in some cases, necessary because of the lack of grammatical accuracy in their language which, in becoming separated from the extended body of their story as they told it to me, and contextualised within this thesis, sometimes lost clarity and meaning. At times I also interchange "Asian" with "Confucian heritage culture" (CHC), usually because the participants themselves chose the former term, when they were referring to others from CHC cultures.

According to the teaching styles of lecturers students were to *receive* the knowledge or information and follow the directions given by the teacher for learning:

[In] China only teacher teach you everything you [need to] know . . . only teacher speak for two hours, and students usually don't ask the question, yeah, just receive, don't ask, sometimes don't thinking (FX);

The extent to which the teachers helped the students to succeed is reflected by LJ in his comments on his lecturers at medical school in China: The lecturer[s] . . . they help you in every areas, not only the practising, the training, even the homework. They help you with everything. (LJ)

However, SX, while agreeing to some extent with these appraisals, noted that students were able to think and learn by themselves.

In China the lecturers often teach us a lot of things, of course you can learn or think by yourself. I mean most times the lecturer also tells you what you should do and what that mean[s]. (SX)

This stance was reinforced in conversations I had with him. SX described how his father, a teacher, had always encouraged him to read and question from a young age. SX had maintained this practice throughout his study in China.

Finally, participants, particularly undergraduates, were used to small class sizes of 40 to 50. For example, ML from China felt that in the lecture halls in New Zealand, with 250 or more students, there were too many people. The participants were used to many more contact hours in class with teachers; ML cited around 40 hours of class per week in her undergraduate study in China.

Only one participant cited some similarities between his teaching and learning style in his first culture and that of the host culture in terms of the content of lessons and the teaching materials. KZ, a management undergraduate student in China, had experienced similarities with this learning environment as many of his teachers had studied in the United States: 'Because the Management is a new subject in China so their [the lecturers'] idea and their case study and lesson is similar to foreign countries. Case presentation is I think just the same'. KZ also mentioned that the terminology and textbooks used in class by lecturers in China

were American. These similarities may have to a small extent contributed towards the ease with which KZ adapted to the learning environment here.

Thus, the participants' accounts suggest that they were used to a formal and prescribed learning context based on classroom teaching, and a dependence on the teacher and textbook for knowledge acquisition. Teaching and learning styles appeared to be consistent with a surface approach to learning. However, while participants' descriptions generally conform to surface learning styles, it is difficult to imagine that their learning did not also include the socratic style characteristic of Confucian education, which included understanding, reflecting, and questioning (Biggs, 1991; Lee, 1996). Otherwise, how can the eventual success enjoyed by these participants (and other international students) in this learning environment be explained! Furthermore, participants did not comment in detail on their learning experiences beyond their classrooms, except to say that teacher-student meetings outside the classroom did occur. This situation confers with Biggs' (1996) observation that learning is not restricted to the classroom in Confucian societies, but continues with teacher-student interaction in warm social contexts.

5.1.2 Classroom communication

According to Cheng and Clark (1993) traditional Confucian principles of teaching embody a certain classroom communication style. Chinese students are not encouraged to develop skills for communicating with teachers or other students within the classroom context. They learn not to question the knowledge of or ideas presented by the teacher; nor to ask for elaboration or qualification of ideas expressed by the teacher; nor to express their own opinions during the class. Rather, they were expected to listen attentively and silently, carefully avoiding displays of disagreement. All participants expressed a familiarity with this communication style. Participants summarised the traditional Chinese way of learning, which did not include teacher-student interaction in the classroom:

Students seldom produce their own ideas. They only follow the lecturer's way. Try to remember the lecture notes. Read all of the books and doing all the practising. There is no too many chance for you to create your ideas and provide your new generation [of ideas] to your lecturer. (LJ)

And:

You receive knowledge from teacher, and when the exam coming . . . give back the knowledge and then forget it. (MC)

The practice of asking questions during a lecture in the classroom was not customary in the participants' first culture learning environments because it was not regarded as the accepted way of learning. FX discussed the Chinese attitude to asking questions (which other participants had also iterated): 'We don't know how to involve [ourselves in] the discussion and participate the discussion' (FX).

ML described this behaviour of keeping silent as a Chinese custom. In Taiwan MC described how students received knowledge from the teacher and no time was left over for discussion. However, she added that although students may have had a question, they did not like to ask it because such behaviour would be regarded as unusual.

By contrast, JX found certain advantages in the way Chinese teachers communicated with Chinese students. Much time is saved because the teacher can draw students' attention to the knowledge students need, what is important, and what should be emphasised. JX felt confused by the array of alternatives presented to him in a discussions he had with lecturers and tutors in the school where this study took place. However, he conceded that the one-way communication style he had experienced in China discouraged students' imagination and thinking, and narrowed their ideas.

Participants talked of the power distance (Hofstede, 1984) that existed between teachers and students in their first culture: 'Chinese mostly scared of teacher, more scared, quite respect the teacher, but the teacher that teaching here teach you how to argue, everything. Chinese school never do that, never do that' (PS). And MC said that in 'Taiwan [there] is more respect to teacher. We don't call the teacher [by his or her] first name' (MC).

YR (a lecturer in China herself) observed that in China, although teachers were very helpful, there was no need to go and see them very often because students did not have too many problems in their learning.

Yet, on a social level there was a close contact between teachers and students, and communication was less restricted and less one-way. LJ explained this relationship which facilitated communication with teachers outside of the classroom and provided an opportunity for broader learning:

In China [there is] the relation between the student and the lecturer, not only in the campus [but also] in the social life. The lecturer always invite us to their home to have lunch. During the holiday[s] we cook together and we go travel. . . . make the student and lecturer more closely. And they [students and lecturers in New Zealand] only discuss the course, but in China we can discuss the other things. (LJ)

This view was supported by SX and FO and WK in informal discussions I had with them.

The participants' accounts suggest that their first culture learning was very much prescribed by the teacher, not much inquiry was required on the part of the learner, and questioning in class was not customary practice, although teacher/student interaction occurred after class and in other settings and participants had the opportunity to extend their learning. Questioning the teacher, especially to raise questions of controversy rather than procedure, was regarded as disrespectful to the authority of the teacher. On the other hand, western education systems (and this School) require practices of debate and argumentation during the class which presuppose communication skills with which these participants were unfamiliar (Becker, 1986; Kaplan, 1990).

5.1.3 Reasons for studying in the West

The participants in this study explained their reasons for studying in a western tertiary institution. For mainland Chinese students, studying abroad implies privilege: the opportunity to improve one's knowledge and skills, and to obtain a western university qualification that they regarded as superior. One participant, however, provided a caveat: 'It's a very good experience. . . Maybe it's

invaluable to someone, . . . not maybe suitable for every person. It's not easy to study abroad' (KZ). For Taiwanese students, study abroad offers the chance to gain skills and knowledge over and above what is offered in Taiwan. Thus, graduates, when they return have the chance of getting higher positions and, therefore, higher salaries than local graduates. This view was also shared by those participants from Malaysia and Hong Kong.² In addition, there is the glory that such success brings to the individual concerned which, by implication, is also shared by the individual's extended family. For some, the advantages of studying in the west only became apparent after they were well into their experience here, for example, opportunities offered from gaining permanent residence (namely, access to a student allowance provided by the government), and opportunities for making choices about their futures. (These issues are discussed in later chapters.)

5.1.4 Participants' preconceptions of student life in New Zealand

It would not be unreasonable to assume that, prior to coming to a New Zealand university, either by choice or by assignment, that participants would have been provided with, or searched for independently, some knowledge of the host institution, the community and the country to which they were coming. However, participants knew little about any of these issues. Because they had little knowledge of study in New Zealand, they were unprepared for the degree of difficulty they would encounter in their study. Thus, for the most part, they had unrealistic expectations about their level of academic success. I will briefly address these two issues and participants' feelings about them.

Knowledge of study in New Zealand

Before the participants arrived in New Zealand they had little idea about what to expect with regard to living and studying in New Zealand, apart from vague ideas they had about study in western countries, or information they had gleaned from

² This trend is now changing, given the present economic downturn in Asia, and the increased competition from other graduates from Western tertiary institutions returning to their own countries to take up employment. A consequence of this trend is that some of these international students are now considering the value of work experience in New Zealand upon graduation and then returning to their respective countries with employment experience (noted in personal communication with participants).

reading pamphlets or from hearsay. Participants also had little idea about what New Zealand students were like either in social or academic contexts.

Participants' images of life in New Zealand seemed to fit with two stereotypes: New Zealand is a quiet and peaceful place to live and study (which in some instances seemed to be grounds for a conscious choice) where the people are friendly; and it is a western country where (as some students recognised) the people are individualist and independent.

Some of the participants in this study thought that the teaching and learning methods would be similar to their own countries. JX related how this preconception made adjustment to the new learning environment difficult for him: 'Before I come here I thought it must be similar with my country and I don't know the study way is much different with my country, so I can't suit that immediately' (JX).

On the other hand, KZ and FX thought study would be easier than in China but, on arrival, found that this preconception was incorrect: 'I think maybe much easier than in China, but actually it's not' (KZ); and: 'When I was in China I hear a lot about [what] the foreign countries do . . . they don't study hard . . . but after I came here and begin my study, I think they study hard' (FX).

For others, especially participants from the People's Republic of China, the choice of country was made for them by the government officials who provided them with a scholarship. Because these participants had no choice about their destination of study, they were not required to have an information base from which to make evaluations about possible alternatives.

Expectations of success

All of the participants reported that, before commencing their programme of study, they had higher levels of expectation than they were in fact able to achieve. They all expected success in passing their courses and obtaining a degree. Although levels of expectation differed, none imagined failure. Study abroad meant considerable sacrifices for the families of those who did not have scholarships (namely, all of the participants who were not from China). Thus, the onus was on these students to graduate as fast as possible to reduce the outlay. As AS put it:

‘Spend more time, [then spend] more money’. Undergraduates in particular were conscious of the prestige they would bring to their families by returning to their countries with a western degree. On the other hand, some graduate students from China suffered a loss in status as they became students again after being respected teachers in their country.

Two of the participants, in particular, had positive expectations for their study abroad: ‘At the beginning, yes [I imagined success]’ (PC), and: ‘Before I come here I can do everything if I am hard working’ (FX). However, upon commencement of study, their respective comments indicated that these expectations were false: ‘After I start I think I will fail one or two subjects’ (PC), and ‘After come here I think it’s culture shock . . . pass is okay, it’s my objective’ (FX).

At the outset JX felt his language competence was adequate for passing the university courses he had enrolled in and, thus, expected to succeed: ‘I have passed the one year full-time learning English [English language course], so I think I can pass’ (JX).

Students who came from Malaysia and who were affiliated with the School’s twinning programme there had a clearer idea of what to expect because they had already been taught for two years by some of the School’s university teachers who had gone to Malaysia. All of their Malaysian teachers used the School’s materials in their courses. FO was aiming for A minus averages or higher. WK aimed to graduate with honours, a personal goal, which meant grades of B plus or better. He achieved this goal. AS, who had only spent six months studying with the twinning programme in Malaysia, aimed to get B and above and to return to Malaysia as a university graduate: ‘I don’t want to disappoint my parents’. However, she managed only a B minus average after the first semester which disappointed her because she thought she had put in the effort required to succeed. HY’s expectations were measured by the degree of prestige an overseas qualification would bring compared to a local Taiwanese diploma and was thus committed to completing a bachelor’s degree.

Only one participant, LJ, took the view that gaining knowledge was more important than obtaining a good grade, unlike other students, particularly from

Taiwan and Malaysia, whom he claimed 'only want to get a degree . . . [as a] passport to get into a big company in their native country'. LJ was surprised to find that, contrary to his initial expectation of C or B minus passes, with extra effort he could obtain a grade of B plus or A minus.

The participants' comments indicated the limited prior knowledge they had of what was required of a student in a western learning institution or how learning took place. The participants' assumptions based on their first culture learning, that success is equated with effort and willpower (Yee, 1996) was, with the exception of LJ, misleading as a gauge to success. In the first semester especially, participants worked hard but found that this effort did not necessarily bring them good grades. Success in western institutions of learning is dependent more on understanding and ability than on effort.

5.1.5 Conclusions

This introduction provided an understanding of the ways participants constructed their learning experiences in their first cultures, and the preconceptions they had of education in New Zealand. The participants in this study showed extremely limited knowledge of the learning, social and cultural environment to which they were coming.

Participants' descriptions of their learning styles appeared to conform to descriptions found in the literature: knowledge is to be received and learned, and not questioned; the teacher holds the key to knowledge and, even where participants disagreed, they would not in any way display their disagreement, partly out of respect towards the teacher, and partly because it is a cultural norm not to question (Ballard, 1991; Beeby, 1966; Cheng and Clark, 1993; and Zhao, 1995). Furthermore, within such collectivist cultures as CHCs, successful academic achievement is the greatest attribute a child can bestow on parents and the family (Triandis, Brislin and Hui, 1988, cited in Cheng and Clark, 1993). Thus, the value placed on education by those from CHCs, and reinforced by their families and their Confucian values (Yee, 1996), meant that these participants, who also embodied these values, arrived with a fierce determination to achieve.

Participants' accounts about teacher-student communication confirmed Biggs' (1996) description of teacher-student interaction in modern Chinese universities, where much of this interaction takes place not within the classroom, but on the campus and beyond, in a warm social context, as LJ's story affirmed. My experience of teaching in a Chinese University in Hunan Province in 1987 also conformed to this scenario.

Participants arrived with little knowledge of the learning environment. Similarly, Burns (1991) found that overseas students were not prepared for study in Australia. However, the participants in Samuelowicz' (1987) Australian study showed a greater awareness. In the latter study, 60 percent of overseas students said that they expected language problems, while 36 percent and 35 percent expected problems in adjusting to a new educational system and 35 percent to Australian culture respectively.

The misconceptions about study in New Zealand with which the participants arrived resulted in their experiencing study shock on arrival (Burns 1991). (Participants' experiences of study shock are explored in 5.2.) A lack of knowledge of the learning environment also led to higher expectations than they could realistically achieve, perhaps because they had little idea of how the new situations they would encounter would impact upon their lives and their studies in New Zealand.

This introduction to the participants' constructions of their first culture learning environment and their preconceptions of education in New Zealand provides a background from which to examine their learning experiences in the second culture. The evidence presented in this prefatory section demonstrates, not unexpectedly, that the participants constructed their reality very much from their prior learning experiences. However, it is not unreasonable to expect that they might have refined this reality against some preparation for entry into a new or different environment and culture. That they did not explains what happened on entry, during which the participants experienced various degrees of *reality shock*. According to Schutz (1971; 1973) reality shock occurs when the cultural patterns of the approached group do not have the authority of a tested system of recipes already formulated by the individual in their first culture. Although newcomers may be able to interpret the cultural patterns of the approached group, they do not

have the experience for social interaction. The experiences of the participants upon arrival reflected this situation.

It is this reality shock, manifested in their learning experiences and in their interaction with people in the host learning environment, that are discussed in the remaining three parts of the chapter. Next, I consider the learning interface and the different learning and communication challenges it brings; then, social interaction in the learning environment, especially the challenges arising from communicating in English; and finally, the networks participants established as coping strategies for dealing with the new learning environment.

5.2 Encountering a new educational environment

As Mehan (1980, cited in Portin, 1995) noted, socialisation and identity within the learning environment are influenced by the larger society of which they are a part. The participants arrived at this host institution with little knowledge of what to expect. Thus, they needed to learn the culture of the new learning environment, the communication patterns and strategies appropriate to this context, and the ability to enact them in another language, English. To some extent these participants shared the experience of their New Zealand counterparts, learning how to be students in this university. However, in addition, they had to develop a knowledge of the communication strategies in another language -- English -- which would enable them to negotiate their way in the learning environment.

In this section I address the participants' constructions of their learning experience as a result of their initial encounter with the new learning culture. Their accounts showed the shifts they had to make to accommodate differences in learning and teaching, and the communication challenges they faced in a range of learning contexts. I then look more specifically at particular learning strategies they encountered which, because of their unfamiliarity, appeared problematic. These were: listening and understanding; reading; writing; learning the technique of critical analysis; handling New Zealand materials; and giving presentations. Finally, I consider their attitudes towards the host education system. As they acknowledge the impact of a different learning environment, I discuss their

reconstructions and renegotiations of their social realities as a result of their learning and communication experiences in each of these contexts.

5.2.1 Acknowledging a different learning environment

Once in the School, participants had to accommodate an unfamiliar learning style which included: being independent in learning and thinking; adapting to different writing styles and genre; giving presentations; arguing for and against the ideas of classmates and teachers; responding to the ideas presented in the literature; and learning about and avoiding plagiarism. They also had to familiarise themselves with the electronic learning medium (which meant word processing all assignments, using the internet and on-line data bases to search for materials, and communicating with others through email). The range and enormity of the difficulties participants faced in reconstructing and renegotiating their social realities varied among participants: for most something was to be gained; for only one (JX) there was failure and humiliation. For example, WK acknowledged the disadvantage of the Malaysian system which was based on what he described as spoon feeding, resulting in an 'over-reliance on our lecturer' (WK). If he wanted to excel in this host learning environment, then he would need to develop independence.

Understanding

Understanding was a key theme which undergraduates constantly referred to as they negotiated the new learning environment. WK noted: 'You have to do your own research, understand, more thinking, not just memorise things' (WK), and, in his view, understanding came as a result of this independent thinking. MC reiterated: 'If you can't understand you will fail' (MC). She felt that if she understood then she could communicate her ideas to any other person; understanding was a confidence building exercise for her. For PS, understanding also meant coming to terms with the application of theories. He had to understand them first in order to apply them in his assignment writing.

WK and FO explained how the Smithfield group was important in this understanding process. Initially, WK explained how the Smithfield group relied on each other and talked over difficulties they had when they did not understand.

Later, he realised that, by restricting the exchange of ideas to this level and by not asking the tutor or lecturer for the information, they disadvantaged one another because they failed to develop or extend their ideas beyond the thinking of their own group: they were missing out. And FO noticed that the rote memorisation patterns which had served him well in Malaysia precluded his opportunity to show that he had understood the material in his assignment writing. He began to change his study methods from memorising to general reading, followed by summaries of his responses to the reading. He noticed how some of his Smithfield classmates were still memorising and reciting in their written work and, as a result, were not scoring so well.

That WK and FO, along with some of the other undergraduate participants, could appreciate the importance of understanding over first culture patterns of memorisation and copying showed how they adapted and acculturated to the conventions of academic study here in the School (conventions which are characteristic of western academic institutions). Houlker (1996) noted a similar situation among the CHC students in her study of overseas students. Those students who had moved away from what she called a reproductive approach had a feeling of having gained a better understanding and knowledge in their studies, thus making the learning experience richer.

A new teaching and learning method: post-graduate study

The post-graduate participants from China experienced the greatest differences as a result of their undergraduate study in China. YR generalised the differences and the difficulties participants faced in coping with a new teaching and learning method:

Study here is very very difficult because [there is a] different teaching style, learning style. . . . The teaching method and study method, the way how students do their exams is quite totally different from the way we do in China. And also the materials we learn here. . . . You have to read a lot materials to do one assignment. (YR)

Having been educated in the Chinese way, YR felt disadvantaged compared to the New Zealand students who carried their education and learning culture with them from secondary school.

All the graduate participants were required to take an introductory semester of undergraduate papers before study at masterate level. When they proceeded to their graduate study they made similar comments about the differences between graduate and undergraduate study: learning depended much more upon each student's initiative; lectures, with their detailed structure, were replaced by student-generated seminars with lecturers raising emergent issues to which the class responded; students had to identify research topics, carry out their own research, and present the research themselves; students were required to critically analyse their reading and the work of their peers; and all students were expected to participate in each seminar. This style of learning required participants to develop very different written and verbal communication skills from those they had developed in their CHC learning environment. For example, LJ observed the graduate teaching style here: 'Most of the lecturers tell you what topic or objective you should achieve, but they don't tell you how to get it' (LJ). And SX concluded that, even if you asked the lecturer for an answer to your question, 'no one can give you the satisfied [satisfactory] answer except yourself' (SX). This was a huge departure from the education system the participants were nurtured in.

LJ remarked upon the differences between the discipline he had studied in China and his present discipline, management. Whereas medicine required a particular thinking which did not encourage the creation of new ideas of new treatments, management encouraged creativity and independent thinking to find new and better ways. He also explained his lack of technical preparation in dealing with the subject matter at graduate level:

If you directly go to the post graduate courses it's very hard to do. The knowledge you have learned in China . . . doesn't support you. You have to go back to check the undergraduate textbook. It's very tiring. (LJ)

However, his ability to adjust to the changes are evident in the conclusion he drew later after one year of study in the School: 'I have digested my life and study and I know how to do it' (LJ). He noticed that, as he proceeded through his graduate course, the pressure he felt became more bearable, more acceptable. My observations of his performance in class confirmed this.

Participants who experienced extreme difficulty

Participants who faced more serious difficulties were MC and JX. MC, who, having completed secondary school in Taiwan and six months at the University's language centre in small classes of six international students, found the experience of being an undergraduate in the School 'a big change from the past' (MC). She thought that she was not a very good student in Taiwan. In the School she began to behave according to her Chinese understanding of a model student which she defined as never missing classes, handing in assignments on time, concentrating in class (and not napping as she did in Taiwan). However, this model was inadequate in this context and, being unprepared and not yet having learned the New Zealand student model, she found this learning environment threatening. Nonetheless, she persisted and, in spite of some failures, she succeeded eventually.

By contrast, JX, a mature student with permanent resident status in New Zealand, underwent the most difficult experience upon entry into University. JX had graduated in engineering from a Chinese university some 20 years earlier. Having learned English for a year in a language school in New Zealand and having been accepted into a university to study, he considered his level of English good enough to succeed at University. Unfortunately, it was not. Nor did he appear to grasp the requirements of working in groups, the requirements of assignments, using the technology to acquire notes, and tutorial formats. I became the go-between between JX and his teachers. For example, one of his teachers explained to me how JX had failed to grasp the instructions given to him for group performance. JX's explanation was that the teachers were 'not patient' (JX) with him. Neither understood the needs and requirements of the other. There were three reasons for this: first, JX lacked the language to understand or explain the issues; second, he was unfamiliar with the learning environment; and third, teachers incorrectly assumed that an explanation would be sufficient to enable him to understand the requirements.

JX recounted his bitter disappointment with the School to me and felt that I was the only person who understood or helped him. He expressed a desire to continue to study in the future, when his level of English had improved, but not at this School. He left the School with the feeling that he had been badly treated. In fact, from my observations I noted that his lecturers had tried very hard to accommodate him and make allowances for what he had not understood. For

example, one of his tutors intimated to me that JX had been given specific help and instructions about joining up with a group, interpreting assignment questions and structuring answers, handing in assignments on time, and participation in tutorials. This was a no-win situation for all concerned. After two months of study, JX was advised to leave by the person in charge of his course of study. In terms of this study, this participant's departure from the School signalled his failure to reconstruct and renegotiate his educational experience from his first culture to this host environment. The result for JX was a sense of failure, a loss of face, and a bitter attitude towards the host institution.

Attitudes toward study: differences among the participants and their New Zealand counterparts

Participants expressed how international students held different values and attitudes towards education from their New Zealand counterparts. For example, KZ valued the importance his Chinese education placed on diligence and hard work for success in life. When KZ came to the School, this hardworking attitude, that he believed was noticeable in Asian students here, enabled him to push himself onwards to try and improve his grades in courses. In fact, because these participants came from educational systems that were competitive and required them to be hard working, this attitude largely prevailed. They continued to work hard in order to get good grades.

WK noted that New Zealand students gave the impression that their first priority was to 'enjoy life' and assignments were relegated to what he regarded as 'the last minute'. After one semester LJ concluded that the New Zealand students were far less ambitious than he and other international students. They were satisfied with a pass and did not push themselves. They did not have any pressure on them to do well as they could receive family support or income support from the government for their education. By contrast, in China, academic performance determines an individual's future. A good grade means entrance into a prestigious university, or a scholarship to study abroad. Furthermore, success brings honour, respect, and recognition to the family. These values were embedded in the CHC students' attitudes and, for the most part, were exhibited by the participants. As later experiences suggest (in further chapters), these differences impacted upon their attitudes towards their studies from time to time.

This attitude was expressed by others in terms of competition. The participants all referred to what they regarded as a casual attitude on the part of some of the New Zealand students towards their studies. None of the participants shared this casual attitude, except SY, who was content with merely passing his courses, and relying on his New Zealand student friends to supply him with material which would enable him to pass. Unlike the other participants, SY's attitudes were more aligned to those of the New Zealand students: to pass was enough. SY exhibited little interest in gaining knowledge or in learning the skills that other participants came to value, for example, being more critical about knowledge and about the world, that is, speaking out one's opinions and questioning the opinions of others.

To some extent, AS had displayed an element of this casual attitude towards studies in her second semester here. When she reflected upon it, she appeared to be surprised. She confessed to being one of those students who went to bed after midnight, skipped classes, left her assignments to the last minute, and enjoyed life, contrary to her first semester where she had studied hard. She justified these actions as the result of observing her CHC friends' behaviour. She was surprised to notice that they had done well in a test. On learning of their strategies for success, 'they know the exam techniques, they study smartly' (AS), she adopted their approach. However, she concluded that this approach was not compatible with her objectives for coming here. She did not want to just prepare for the exam in order to pass it; she wanted to 'gain knowledge' (AS). In fact, I observed that both AS and FO broke away from the diligence and self-discipline they demonstrated at the outset, and which was characteristic of the other participants, to lead a more active social life, participate in sports activities, and go away at weekends. However, for AS this breaking out was followed by a period of reflection and acknowledgment of the values she held when she arrived here. In her conversations with me she acknowledged that it was not so easy for her (or FO for that matter) to jettison those values she had lived by in her first culture. Nonetheless, those social experiences had changed their values. By the third semester both participants appeared to be less conservative and less conformist with regard to the values of their first culture than when they first arrived.

All the participants had been educated in competitive learning and social environments. In the case of the two Smithfield participants, because they came to the School in a group, they brought this competitive phenomenon with them and

practised it in their classes here. For example, not only did they compete amongst themselves, as a group they also identified who the best New Zealand students were in the class and, unbeknown to the New Zealand students, began competing against them too. Both WK and FO were highly competitive in their courses in the earlier part of the study (especially during the pilot study when they had first arrived, FO coming first in his Summer School class, even outperforming the New Zealand students). WK explained how this competitive relationship with these top performing New Zealand students manifested itself:

Sometimes we ask what's going on and how they actually do things, or just, yeah, the way they do things. Is it that they are naturally smart or they are hard working or something like that? (WK)

WK was not sure if the New Zealand students objected to being beaten by the Smithfield students, but he certainly felt that they were 'fast in their thinking, information, . . . everything they want to do, they are very fast'.

To summarise, the models by which the participants had been educated were culturally different and thus, participants had to reconstruct their education experiences to become independent workers; part of this process included understanding of material. Graduates, in particular, expressed the need to make adaptations to different learning styles. However, participants appreciated the Confucian values embedded in their first culture education system, values such as diligence, competition, and the value placed on education within their society, which encouraged them to be successful students in the host learning environment. For most of the participants, something was to be gained; for only one (JX) was there failure and humiliation.

Participants were faced with having to reconstruct and renegotiate their learning models in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to better understand and interpret the required learning strategies and the communication among students and teachers. I will now discuss these differences and the strategies participants needed to acquire in order to succeed.

5.2.2 Listening and understanding

Both graduates and undergraduates expressed difficulty in understanding lectures upon arrival. Undergraduates had difficulty in contending with 50 to 100 minutes of extended listening in English. Graduates had to adjust to listening for up to four hours, not only to the variety of accents exhibited by the multicultural faculty, but also, and with greater difficulty, to the New Zealand accent of the students, who clipped their words, often did not speak in fully formed sentences, mumbled, and used idiomatic language.

The undergraduates revealed multiple difficulties. MC explained her feelings as she first started attending lectures and was unable to understand anything: 'Worried. Every day confusing. Every day. I don't know why [what] I will do here' (MC). AS felt that after 15 minutes her concentration went, and then there were always (CHC) friends next to her with whom she could talk to during the lecture. She felt that her comprehension had not improved much into the second semester. SY said that by the time he had understood the lecturer's first sentence, the lecturer was already onto the fifth sentence. By the second semester he could understand about 60 to 70 percent of what the lecturer was saying. These first-year undergraduates did notice that when they prepared the lecture beforehand their comprehension improved considerably and, thus, they felt more confident.

One aid to listening to and understanding lectures was the use of lecture notes. In the School the lecturers of first-year (and other undergraduate) courses put their lecture notes on L Drive, a computerised system from which students could print out the notes before the lecture for previewing. All the participants made use of this system and, in fact, relied upon these notes as a bible for learning. They took them to class, wrote on them, and used them for essay writing and exam study. The notes represented the blueprint of the lecture in that students had something tangible to follow during the lecture, and a guide for further study. From my observations and questioning, most of what else happened in the lecture went by unnoticed by the participants. For example, one lecturer gave a preview at the beginning of a lecture which contextualised the topic within the framework of the course and provided a useful rationale for its inclusion. However, the preview was not included in the L Drive notes the three participants (whom I was observing) had in front of them, so they took no notice: one was talking; another was

fiddling; and another appeared to be daydreaming. As soon as the lecturer put up the overhead their concentration switched to what he was saying. For them the lecture had at last started, but all of the useful background information given by the lecturer was lost. Departures on the part of the lecturer from the notes projected overhead, in the form of humour, embellishments, or examples, strategies which enriched the contents of the textbook and the lecture notes, appeared to be a sea of words to the ears of the participants in the early stages of their time in the School. One participant explained:

The lecturer talks really very very fast so I'm just trying to figure out what he's talking about. . . and sometimes he told a joke . . . and all the people laughing and I think, "Oh, what's going on?" . . . I feel a bit bored. (HY)

In the rare cases where there were no L Drive notes, I observed participants copy down the notes from overheads verbatim; they explained to me that they would try to understand the notes afterwards. Previewing and reviewing of notes from the L Drive were important learning techniques, although one participant found that going through the textbook and reviewing the notes did not help that much in her understanding of the lecture because she was not sure what the lecturer really wanted her to notice. Participants also explained how they were dependent on their friends for borrowing lecture notes, and for asking questions when they did not understand. For example, MC often relied on the notes of her friend if she had not understand something the lecturer had said. Others commented to me that they asked their CHC classmates whom they were sitting next to in lectures for an explanation of what the lecturer said, sometimes during the lecture, or after it. I observed how undergraduates tended to sit with their friends (other CHC students) in lectures.

By contrast, ML found that the lecturers were 'active and interesting' whereas in China the students 'feel sleepy' during lectures. For example, teaching styles such as buzz groups, quizzes and discussions, performed in groups of about four during lectures, were new to participants. However, PS and SY found them unsatisfactory as they did not always understand the point of focus, or they complained of no group cohesion, or they had difficulty in communicating with their New Zealand peers. This system of independent learning was incomprehensible to them.

As a third year student WK noticed a change in his listening habits during lectures. At the outset (I observed in the pilot study) he took notes on everything that the lecturer said. Later, I observed how he considered the overall picture the lecturer presented, and wrote down only the main points.

SX related to me how he felt very depressed and worried a lot when he first started attending classes because he could not understand what the lecturer was saying. Because he was so afraid of scoring low marks as a result of not understanding in these early stages, he actively worked at improving his listening comprehension by spending time listening to television and radio programmes. None of the other participants took these steps.

Lecturers gave examples, often derived from the New Zealand social context, to illustrate a point in a lecture. These examples were unfamiliar, and students had difficulty understanding them. ML asked her neighbour in the lecture, another international student, about an example she had not understood, but the neighbour, who also lacked the knowledge relating to the example, replied that the point was not important.

To conclude then, the key difficulty for the undergraduate participants was understanding during a lecture. Data drawn from interviews and participant observation showed that they struggled in their first semester. The outline of lecture notes provided by the L Drive gave them materials for learning, along with the textbook and readings. The undergraduates, particularly, were reliant on these materials. Over three semesters, however, many participants felt that their comprehension had improved significantly. Similarly, Ballard and Clanchy (1988) cited examples of international students whose comprehension increased to the extent that they were able to undertake graduate study.

Many of the problems and strategies adopted by Hong Kong students during a lecture in English in Hong Kong, as cited in a study by Flowerdew and Miller (1992), were apparent here: namely, dependence on same culture classmates; reluctance to ask for clarification or elaboration during a lecture; and pre-reading. Participants seemed more competent at note taking than Flowerdew and Miller's Hong Kong students, but exhibited similar strategies in highlighting and marking rather than note taking, as illustrated in the participants' use of lecture notes taken

from the L Drive. Flowerdew and Miller's suggestions as to how to organise content lectures are useful, although as the undergraduate participants' behaviour indicates, overt explanations and background knowledge (labelled *scene setting* by Flowerdew and Miller) need to have the appearance of being part of the lecture, possibly included in note form in a visual display, or in slides on printed L Drive notes.

5.2.3 Reading

All participants felt that they were required to do much more *homework* in the host learning environment, and more reading for courses and assignments. They also believed that the level at which they had to read was more abstract, requiring them to analyse theories, compare and contrast ideas, and select from a range of ideas and approaches. They commented on the inadequacy of their reading speed for these tasks and, for many, this inadequacy slowed them down in their progress. They all considered themselves to be much slower than New Zealand students, taking more than twice as long to read an article. Many of them, both graduates and undergraduates, found that reading took up a lot of their time in their academic lives. Undergraduates' reading consisted of meeting course requirements each week, leaving little time to write assignments or study for tests. Graduates were required to read much more extensively, not only for their course materials, but also for their research topics within each course.

The participants described the reading skills they needed to develop. For example, LJ commented that reading caused him a lot of stress. Sometimes he had to read an article twice before comprehending, because without comprehension he could not move to the next stage and he would have to start all over again. KZ observed how lecturers gave the general idea in a lecture but, to understand that idea more fully, to go beyond the general idea to the particular, then further reading was required after class. KZ mentioned how all of his time in the first semester was spent finding materials and reading them late into the night. KZ noted how, when it came to reading, he was developing the useful skill of sifting through materials and deciding what was useful to present an argument. He was also, like other participants, learning to manage his time more effectively, to prioritise, as it was impossible to do all the reading.

YR could understand the materials she read, but could not synthesise all the ideas into an essay. In her diligence she was trying to cover all the reading for each weekly seminar. Halfway through her first graduate semester she realised that the New Zealand students did not read the materials if they were not presenting on that topic. She felt that she had sacrificed much of her time, leaving little time to read the materials for her own presentation.

Others spoke more positively of the reading requirements they faced. For ML, this process represented a unique and illuminating experience for her: by reading many articles and books she was able to find a variety of ways in which a problem was addressed; and by considering and evaluating a range of alternatives she, was able to develop a clear and reasoned solution independently. Similarly, SX felt excited by all the latest journal publications that he was given to read, because the debates in them challenged his thinking.

Some became quite pragmatic in their approach to reading. FX's reading speed had increased considerably by the third semester and, like SX and ML, she appreciated what she could learn from the reading. She developed strategies like reading only the abstract and conclusion, or the introduction and summaries in a book instead of every chapter. And FO read only when it was absolutely necessary, such as when he had to do assignments.

Participants found that the reading and researching of materials took up a lot of their time as they had to, first, process the ideas and, then, develop a written response. The range of attitudes participants exhibited towards reading seemed to be partly determined by their goals for being in the School. The more interest they had in the subject, the more they seemed to respond to the challenge presented by the wide range of readings offered to them. Where their goals were more instrumental, that is, of doing only what was necessary or in order to graduate, as in the case of FO and FX, they tended to look for short cuts.

5.2.4 Writing

Written communication in CHCs has been described as circular. This is contrasted to the western linear and logically developed process of writing, where many parallel points, all of which further explain the topic, are developed simultaneously (Kaplan, 1966). Cheng and Clark (1993) noted that professors may construe circular writing as reflective, incomplete, or disorganised in presentation of thoughts compared to the syllogistic, logically patterned sequences of ideas where an idea is introduced, supported with arguments, and then concluded. The problem for participants appeared to include not only adjusting from this circular style, but also of having to develop an independence in organising material, and then in having to sequence it.

Approaches to the reconstruction of writing styles

All the participants found that they had to reconstruct their style of academic writing upon entering the School. YR remarked:

We didn't learn academic writing in China. Academic writing is you have to write very professionally, and when you write essay[s] you have to write introduction, and then write discussion, all the points related to introduction, and finally give the conclusion. I learned this style since I came here. (YR)

They described their writing style of their first culture as a process which depended upon the words and ideas of others, of extracting quotations from their textbooks and readings, and somehow threading these together to formulate an essay. Compared to their previous experiences of writing, assignments here were longer, and topics more extensive and therefore required participants to research many materials, organise relevant information and then evaluate it. Upon entering the School, all of them eventually underwent a process of change, but how this process occurred seemed to be haphazard, depending on experimentation, and trial and error over a period of time.

For example, FO noted that the writing technique which had worked for him in Malaysia, of getting quotations from reference books and putting them into his essay, was no longer appropriate. Upon receiving a B minus for an essay in the second semester, a grade which he regarded as poor, he went to see the lecturer concerned. The lecturer suggested that, rather than copy straight from the

textbook, FO should start with his own argument, conclude, and give his own opinion. After his first semester as a student in the School he became critical of his first culture approach and started working on one which evolved as a result of the way in which he was learning. He described his strategy:

I formulate my argument [first] and then I try [to] find people who support my argument, or disagree with my argument, and then write it down and then express my opinion. . . . I tend to think more. (FO)

He was learning to be a critical thinker, and he was beginning to recognise that the reproductive approach he had used in his first culture would not enable him to score high marks. However, as Biggs (1993) and Lee (1996) noted, CHC students do demonstrate deep learning approaches and FO's approach, learned in his first culture, seemed to involve some degree of reflection and argumentation. The main difference appeared to be in the process and product. FO now appeared to be internalising the ideas and re-presenting them in his own words instead of in those of the author. The latter results in the risk of the student being accused of plagiarism, while the former is considered to demonstrate all the hallmarks of critical, independent thinking. The right or wrong of either approach is dependent upon the cultural orientation of the assessor.³

SY was astonished at having to write assignments of 800 words, but he had a source of help in his New Zealand floor mates, with whom he had established good relationships, in his hall of residence.

PS only found out how to write a case study after he had received feedback on his first case study assignment. Although the lecturer had given him a framework or format to follow for the assignment, he had not read it.

JX noticed a clear difference in the writing style, although he had difficulty explaining exactly what it was. He expressed his understanding of the approach to writing assignments here:

³ Perhaps a New Zealand student would perform poorly in a Chinese University using an independent, critical approach. Thus, there may be a caveat here for those educators who teach in universities in China, for example, in the way they proselytise with missionary zeal the superiority of western critical and independent thought over the Chinese way which is as old as Confucius himself.

I think essay ask students and organise from this knowledge they got, and argue some questions, then explain the question, then finally give the conclusion. . . . [The knowledge comes] from teacher, lecture, and reading, and tutorial. (JX)

By contrast, YR's approach to writing showed the greatest departure from the accepted writing style described by the other participants in their first cultures. YR described her first attempt at writing an essay. She had realised that she was required to *respond* to the topic, to write her own ideas and opinions. Her written response consisted entirely of her own thoughts and she had not made any reference to the existing literature. YR related how her lecturer, on reading this draft, exclaimed: "Oh, YR, you didn't read anything. How can you write an essay!" He suggested readings that she should do which YR followed up on. She then rewrote the essay, responding to these ideas, with a more successful result. In that same first semester she also felt very lucky to have received from one of her lecturers a handout outlining the format of an essay. This outline provided a foundation for her to build on. When she became a postgraduate she had to learn to 'argue more, be more critical' (YR).

Language challenges

JX cited language as being a huge barrier for him. However, he thought that each culture had its own solution to a problem and, in this case, there was an Asian way and a European way to approach writing (as argued by Kaplan, 1966). He regarded his writing as 'Chinese style' written in English, that is, organised and written in Chinese and translated into English. Although his wife could understand his Chinese style of writing in English, the teacher failed his essay. JX felt that cultural interference was at fault and caused him to fail, rather than his lack of competence in using English. He argued that, because he had graduated from a Chinese university 'with a good grade', then he had to be a good student. However, he also placed some blame on his limited language and felt that, had he been able to translate his assignment better, then his grade would have improved. JX's situation concurs with Kaplan's (1966) notion that it is a fallacy to assume competence in essay writing (and in language) in the first culture implies an ability to do the same in a new culture and language.

JX and ML both expressed difficulty in understanding the assignment questions and, in their early attempts at essay writing, provided answers which did not 'fit'

the question. ML addressed this problem by reading the words one by one. She also sought clarification from her tutor and classmates.

During the first semester lecturers commented at the end of AS's assignments that she had a poor level of English. However, she did not know what steps she should take to improve it. Interestingly, she made immediate reference to her own group as a source of help, but she did not want to 'trouble' them because they were already busy with their own work. AS continued writing assignments without seeking help with her grammar.

Largely, participants did not have their work proof read by a native speaker, although some lecturers recommended it. They relied mostly on friends for proof reading. Usually these friends were also non-English speaking (NESB) students whom these participants regarded as having a good command of English. I was asked on a few occasions to proof read, but participants felt that they were burdening me. FO regarded such requests of his friends as 'favours' which he would return in some way. Because of this reciprocity, many of them did not see too much difficulty in asking those from their own culture.⁴ LJ was fortunate because, with his employment in the School, he could ask his New Zealand colleague to proofread his work. ML did not have anyone to proofread her work so she relied on the dictionary.

Plagiarism

Only one participant, AS, brought up the issue of plagiarism. She had been accused of plagiarising a part of an essay which she and a friend had developed collaboratively and, as a result, the lecturer gave her zero for the essay. Given the approach AS took to her writing, it is not surprising that she was accused of plagiarism. Early on in the study AS expressed an uncertainty about what academic writing was and, overwhelmed by the length of the assignments, she continued on with her Malaysian style which bore similarities with FO's in that it relied upon the words of others rather than her own. Nonetheless, she felt that her approach enabled her to learn. She described her style:

⁴ Among the Malaysian students, those students who were 'English educated' were regarded as having a good standard of English for academic study.

I always do my assignments not in my own words to tell you the truth. I just borrow as many reference books as I can, and I look through it and then I copy some from there and some from there. Made an assignment. But sure, I learn something from that. Is a good way to do assignments? I don't know. (AS)

AS claimed that the extent of the plagiarism, where she and her friend had both copied a section from a book, amounted to three paragraphs and a few lines. Although she passed the end of course exam, she failed the course and was sent before the University disciplinary panel. Initially, AS tried to downplay the plagiarism case to me:

Although we have the same information both of us, but although we didn't match each other, I mean, of course I won't, I know quite [well] what is plagiarism, of course I won't copy my friend's and my friend won't copy my work, because but it's just I mean coincidence. (AS)

AS felt that the small amount of copying that she and her friend had done together did not warrant the accusation of plagiarism. She did not expect to be reprimanded:

We don't change the sentence much, you know. We just copy, I mean a little bit change, but look very similar, just very similar . . . because I'm doing it together with my friend, and we have the same kind of information so maybe we just copy. But I don't know, but I just don't imagine. (AS)

When appearing before the board AS was told by the two panel members that, as this was the first time she had been sent, no further disciplinary action would be taken. Although AS was frightened and nervous about having to appear before the board, she nonetheless felt that being made to fail the course was extremely harsh, given that she had paid \$1,700 to enrol in it: 'I thought it was just a waste [of money]', and to some extent, unjustified, given that the amount plagiarised was, in her view, minimal: 'He's right, but just two, three [paragraphs]!' (AS). She explained her response: 'I feel that the lecturer is very strict, because I beg him to give me some marks so I can pass the course, but he just [said] no' (AS). It was clear that AS believed that this lecturer had been far too harsh and her misdemeanour did not require a course failure as well as an appearance before the disciplinary panel.

Stevenson (no date), in a paper concerning plagiarism and the first year university students, noted that most plagiarism, as this case concerning AS indicates, is

unintentional, and results from a mismatch of the educational experiences of many commencing students with the expectations and rules of the university, and a failure by universities to make clear and justify those expectations and rules. CHC students who have been educated in a system where there is greater allegiance to established authorities place a greater emphasis on acquiring information rather than contesting it (Biggs, 1993; and Deckert 1993). There are also cultural differences in attitudes about the ownership of knowledge. In some cultures, including CHCs, knowledge is considered public domain and is not ascribed to the individual who thought of it first (Robinson, 1992). With the added complication of working in another language and with using a specialised discourse in that language, a common strategy is for these students to keep very close to the words and ideas in their source material, substituting synonyms for occasional words, a strategy which also results in the accusation of plagiarism. Further, as these participants have demonstrated, collaboration is part of their first culture learning style which can often lead to unintentional plagiarism, as was the case here with AS. Negative attitudes towards collaborative scholarship prevail in academic culture in the West (Roen and McKenny, 1992). As Stevenson noted, the problem of plagiarism lies not just with CHC students, but with host students as well, particularly those in the first year of study, and with teachers who may not be making explicit the expectations of learning tasks, nor the academic norms which accompany them (Houlker, 1996). Clearly, this mismatch and lack of understanding about plagiarism needs to be addressed in the learning environment. While course outlines in the School usually contain a reference to plagiarism, its consequences are perhaps not fully understood by CHC students like AS.

To summarise, it is interesting to note the extent to which participants internalised the writing process. Rather than seek help from outside sources, such as their lecturers and tutors, the TLDU, or take one of the two credit bearing courses on writing in academic contexts offered within the University (one of which is specifically tailored to international students), participants struggled to find the accepted way here, even if it meant, as in AS's case, having to face a charge of plagiarism from the university authority. Unfortunately for them, the accepted way relied not so much on a mental process or intellectual skill, but on a culturally specific world view that is individualistic, egalitarian, scientific and is based on a direct, and (what some cultures might regard as) sparse, communication style that assumes little shared knowledge between writer and audience (Fox, 1992). Thus,

unless participants were able to adopt the western notion of academic writing favoured in this learning institution, they were disadvantaged by the communication strategies by which they had been educated, strategies which tend to value indirectness, expect the reader to infer a great deal that is left unstated, value tradition and authority more than originality, and eschew the critiquing of authorities in a field as inappropriate or unfruitful.

5.2.5 Learning critical analysis

The technique of critical analysis, which requires the analyst to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of an argument, was a skill which provided the greatest mystique for participants. Traditionally, for people from CHCs, especially the Chinese, the concept of critical analysis is an unknown cultural construct in their culture as illustrated by FX's comment: 'In Asian culture [there is] no critique. You can't critique other people' (FX).

The greatest confusion around the notion of critiquing came from the graduate participants. Similarly, the graduates in Samuelowicz' (1987) study also commented on the challenge posed by the technique of critical analysis. Graduate students were required to critique the ideas of the authors in their course readings, or to critique the seminars of their classmates and, at least initially, failed to understand what was expected.

For example, LJ's initial encounter with the concept of critical analysis caused great confusion. Both he and FX came to me informally to ask for help with the technique. LJ related to me how he had discussed the technique with his classmates, and then with his lecturer. He explained that the best solution for him was to see an example of the critical analysis method. He found that an explanation was insufficient because he sometimes had comprehension problems. As he commented, the final solution might be clear, but not how to arrive there. Finally, upon reading the critique of his Singaporean classmate (she got an A minus), he was able to understand what a critique was.

LJ construed this particular process as typical of his learning at the School. Each time he was required to operate in an unfamiliar learning medium he had a

problem. An explanation of the process, although helpful, was not enough. LJ had difficulty in putting abstract notions about the technique into practice. He needed to see a concrete example of someone else's work. From a pedagogical perspective, LJ's comments are significant because they call into question the pedagogical approach which teachers here, and elsewhere, often take. Teachers, while good at outlining the steps students need to take to arrive at a certain point, sometimes do not like to provide specific examples as these may impinge upon students' creativity processes and inhibit their own interpretation of the process, thus resulting in prescribed outcomes. Thus, Samuelowicz' (1987) recommendation, that students be exposed to good and bad examples of work in a discipline, complete with criticism which focuses on thinking and learning processes, is appropriate here.

Although YR questioned lecturers and other students about the technique of critical analysis, the revelation finally came when she talked with her Thai friend and classmate. The Thai student explained that she had got a good mark for her critique just by writing what she thought was right and wrong, by giving her opinion. Later, in talking with a lecturer this approach was confirmed for YR. YR related what the lecturer said: "Just write about your own opinion. That's critique! Easy!" (Lecturer to YR). As a result of these experiences YR started to get better grades for her critical analysis assignments. FX shared YR's interpretation of critical analysis and, similarly, found the strategy less arduous or mystifying as a result.

However, the understanding of the meaning of critical analysis that YR had acquired did not help YR to address the dilemma which arose for her in trying to critically analyse an idea from within the perspective of another culture. For example, in contending with all the readings which, first, were in English (a foreign language), and second, were by western authors with western ideas and values, she questioned how she, a Chinese, could critically analyse what American authors were saying, given these differences in language and cultural perspective. For example, how was she to critically analyse an American writer who questioned the rights of women in the work place to have pregnancy and breast feeding leave when these rights were already firmly in place in China? YR seemed to be in a quandary about what she was expected to think. Should she critically analyse from a western perspective since she was studying in a western culture? Or should

she base her analysis on her own cultural values? She was uncertain, because of these different perspectives, in discerning in the text what was important and what was not, and what she should say. The quandary that arose from these different cultural perspectives could not be resolved in YR's mind.

Closely aligned to the difficulties the participants experienced in critiquing the ideas of others is the notion of grading one's peers. This technique was usually applied during presentations when students were asked to give their peers a grade based on some established criteria shared among the class. Grading the performance of peers in class is often viewed as a useful approach as it helps students to better recognise and understand the expectations of and standards in performance and assessment (Samuelowicz, 1987). However, some of the participants in this study did not accept this view. Just as FX had expressed the inappropriacy of critiquing anyone's ideas in China, similarly, WK illustrated how grading the performance of one's peers in class was inappropriate for CHC students. He found it an amusing exercise because, unlike the New Zealand students, it was impossible for him to grade his Smithfield classmates objectively. In accordance with his culture he was obliged to show loyalty and respect to them by giving them a good mark, even though the work may not have merited it. There was an unexpressed expectation operating here which WK iterated: 'I'll back you up, you back me up' (WK). WK knew that he could expect the same treatment when his time came to perform. This example illustrates how WK transferred his CHC values to the host learning environment. It could also be construed as giving these CHC students an advantage over their New Zealand peers. It is unclear whether WK was unable to assume the implicit objectivity embodied in the requirements of the task and in those who performed it. It is clear, however, that this implicit objectivity contravened the rules for treatment of others in his CHC, of maintaining harmony and of preserving face in relations and communication with others.

In summation, critical analysis was a skill which the participants did not readily absorb into their repertoire of academic skills. As WK's inability to maintain neutrality in awarding participation marks showed, these participants maintained their Confucian practice of preserving harmony and face when among those from CHCs in this context. Nonetheless, the graduates' ability to adopt the practice of

critical analysis suggests that they were able to renegotiate their values to adhere to the requirements of the host culture, at least in this respect.

To facilitate the acquisition of the skill of writing critical analysis, Samuelowicz (1987) posited that university teachers could model it in their teaching. From my observations during post graduate seminars both university teachers and New Zealand students did this to some extent. However, LJ's experiences suggest that specific examples which have received a high grade in the teachers' eyes, carry much more meaning for these students. And YR and FX apparently failed to pick up on the modelling approach applied by lecturers in their teaching. Interestingly, YR, who had benefited from a semester at the language centre of the university, may have been expected to acquire this genre in the language classes there. Thus, more attention needs to be given in both NESB training classes and within schools of study in the teaching of critical analysis.

5.2.6 Giving presentations

Giving a presentation, a significant part of assessment in the School, was a new learning experience for these participants. Little instruction on how to give presentations is given (except in one core paper of the undergraduate degree at second year level). Thus, participants were faced with somehow having to acquire the ability to participate in an unfamiliar activity. In-class presentations have their own principles which require a familiarity and understanding from those presenting. For example, students must show independence and also co-operation with others, they need to develop an organising framework, research and assemble materials into a structure, and then present the topic to their classmates and lecturer. Presentations may also vary according to the skills, creativity, and interests of the presenters. As LJ noted, they may be formal (using overhead transparencies, and words and diagrams on the blackboard), or they may be role plays or panel discussions. Whatever the format, presentations give the opportunity for individuals to show their ideas, but in a 'Kiwai way, a European way' (LJ). All of these skills are new to CHC students and need to be learned.

Undergraduates shared experiences similar to LJ. They all felt nervous at giving presentations, and for one participant this resulted in her speaking too fast. They

all expressed a dependence on notes, that is, reading from an overhead transparency which precluded the use of examples or extemporaneous speaking, factors which usually result in a more lively and interesting presentation. They themselves acknowledged the limitations of note dependence which resulted in what they regarded as a more 'boring' presentation. As mentioned in the preceding section, they tended to be assigned minor roles as New Zealand students perceived them as being weak in presenting in English and expressing their ideas clearly and grammatically.

The Smithfield participants, however, had had experience of presentations in their college. Ironically, though, AS found that giving a presentation here was less threatening than it had been for her in her first six months at Smithfield College. There she had to memorise her whole presentation as all her classmates would be evaluating, albeit informally, her performance. She could not afford to lose face among her classmates who were also her friends. However, here she felt anonymous and therefore less threatened. Furthermore, she was influenced by what she felt to be the perceptions of New Zealand students towards international students: they did not expect her to do well, to have perfect English, so the stakes were not so high. She concluded:

They don't know me very much. So what if I say anything wrong, if my English is wrong. So what! They don't mind. . . . They will forgive me if we say anything wrong . . . because of [my] English. (AS)

YR explained how co-operation during presentations with New Zealand students was not always so 'co-operative'. As an international student who did not have English as a first language, and who did not fully understand the interpersonal communication patterns, she was disadvantaged. She told me about one particular injustice: a presentation experience with a New Zealand female student who was also a tutor. Initially they met twice to divide the presentation into two parts. Then they met the day before the presentation. YR, who had already discussed her presentation with her lecturer some weeks earlier, was fully prepared with overhead transparencies. She asked the NZ student what she would say, but the New Zealand student said she had not thought about it. She had not had time. The New Zealand student asked YR what she was going to say, and YR told her. Then the New Zealand student explained very vaguely what she would say. At this moment YR was thinking:

It's not fair, it's not fair for me to tell you all my detail. . . . When you meet such a person in a foreign country and English is not your mother tongue, and you meet the person whose English is the mother tongue and is in her country. . . . I feel it's not fair for me, but I didn't say it, I didn't say why [do you] behave like that? (YR)

The outcome was ironic. YR was forced to confess: 'Strange, during the presentation she did good' (YR)! Sometimes it was difficult for other students, both New Zealand and international, to arrive at the same high standards that YR expected of herself.

YR also took much delight in relating a very successful presentation where she got the highest mark in the class. She described the scenario:

I had a very good feeling. I could see the response and reaction from the lecturers and the students, because during [the] presentation all of them laugh and talk, so I can see. And immediately after I had finished the presentation [the lecturer] said, "YR, you did a very beautiful job today. Thank you". And later my daughter came, so the Kiwi ladies [said], "Oh, your Mum is very smart". And the next day I discussed, I went to [the lecturer's] office and talk with her about ... another assignment, and she said, "You did a very good, you did a wonderful presentation yesterday, YR". So from the time of presenting I have very good feeling because I could see everything very confidently, to convince the students and lecturers, to stimulate the class into discussing. And after class all the lecturers and students give a very, give a, praise my presentation so I think it's very successful. . . . But I didn't expect such high marks. I thought I should be successful because I talked with [the lecturer], I showed [her] how I was going to do, showed her the overhead, everything, the examples I'm going to give, the theory I'm going to give and the questions I'm going to ask, and she said, "Should be okay! You're fully prepared". (YR)

YR, in her telling of this story, showed how she succeeded in fulfilling the requirements of the presentation format. She also showed an understanding of the expectations of graduate level performance. Her interpersonal skills were sufficiently developed to enable her to benefit from interaction with and gain feedback from lecturers. Although she expressed her feelings of being disadvantaged, in fact, her communicative facility with both teachers and students enabled her to be a very successful student. The reason for her success in this particular presentation may need some qualification though. She explained that the topics in the course enabled her to draw on real life experience and, therefore, 'It's not so difficult' (YR). By contrast, SX, an Economics graduate, expressed his unease at giving presentations because of his lack of confidence in speaking

English and in using the presentation format. He was worried that the students would ask him many questions at the end of his presentation about the content, questions which he would have difficulty answering due to his lack of confidence in speaking English. He therefore wanted to be prepared 'in detail' (SX). In both of these examples YR and SX have suggest that they needed to be much more fully prepared than New Zealand students. They felt that they could not leave anything to chance.

In conclusion, the participants' stories indicated that learning to give presentations came by doing them. The undergraduates, in their note-bound deliveries and in their being assigned minor roles by their New Zealand peers, demonstrated their lack of confidence with the genre. And yet, AS's story, of not having to meet any expectations from her New Zealand peers as she would her CHC peers, suggests an advantage created by the detachment she felt from her traditional learning environment and from having to perform well among those of her own culture. Preparation also appeared to be a key factor for these participants, unlike their New Zealand peers who could perform satisfactorily in the genre with minimal preparation (as YR's story illustrated). Topic also posed a problem. Where there was technical language, participants felt at risk, especially in follow-up discussion where they might be required to give explanations but not be equipped with the technical language to do so. In fact, for all the participants, having to present in English was their main stumbling block and cause for concern.

5.2.7 Handling New Zealand materials

The course content often required students to make practical applications of significant (and newsworthy) events in New Zealand life to their assessment tasks, or such knowledge was addressed by lecturers in lectures or applied in class discussions. Thus, participants needed to have some general knowledge about business, economics, politics and cultural life in New Zealand. With the exception of LJ, SX, and WK, the participants had little interest in these events, nor did they follow radio or television news or read newspapers. For example, one Malaysian student mentioned that it was difficult for him to relate to examples concerning cows. And a Chinese participant said she had difficulty in understanding the concept of political campaigns in a news media course because in China there is

only one party and no political campaigns. Many felt that they did not have time to spend on finding out about these issues, especially if the story covered several years. For JX, introducing practical examples into course content seemed to contradict his conception of education. When students in his tutorial for a marketing course were required to discuss the way in which a particular product had been marketed in New Zealand, he thought that, as a mature student, this request to discuss a *real life* situation was particularly odd, especially since the students, all young undergraduates with little or no work experience in the field, were asked to evaluate this process.

LJ observed that, in the first semester in particular, communication with New Zealand students in the class was impeded by cultural knowledge. For example, to illustrate an argument he would use an Asian case which the other Asian students understood, but not the New Zealand students, resulting in an impasse in the discussion. New Zealand students preferred to use New Zealand cases, with which the Asian students were not familiar.

A participant in Zhao's (1995) study, who had an excellent command of both the New Zealand language and culture, explained the importance of understanding not just the language but the issues within the culture. Obtaining this cultural literacy was important in facilitating communication and, by implication, learning within the learning environment:

[It] is not only a matter of language. It is concerned with social background knowledge of this society. You don't have their [NZ students'] cultural understanding and you don't have the subject background knowledge. It becomes a psychological barrier which undermines your self confidence. You find you don't understand this and that. So finally, you can't talk at all. (Mainland Chinese post-graduate, in Zhao, 1995, p. 115)

So what were their reactions to the use of examples of New Zealand society? The pragmatists replied that 'if there's nothing to do with assignments I just forget it' (YR). Others asked their (CHC) friends for further information, or if they thought it might recur in course material they read further in the library or in the resource folders in the School's reference library. All admitted that, where there was unfamiliarity, they just remained silent in class, or avoided New Zealand issues wherever possible.

The participants' lack of interest in New Zealand examples was partly tied to their objectives for studying in New Zealand, and partly to their life styles here. For example, the undergraduates were focused on completing their degrees in the fastest possible time, then returning to their countries with the prestige of an overseas degree which would bring success and honour to their families. Then there were those graduates who had a thirst for expanding their knowledge and experience, whether they were returning to their country or not, or were undecided. These participants wanted to learn about New Zealand society. For the majority of the participants, class attendance and study took up much of their time, leaving little leisure time; finding out about New Zealand politics, economy and society was not how they wanted to spend this leisure time.

5.2.8 Participants' evaluation of the education system

Participants felt that the education system here opened their minds. They felt that they were learning skills for life and developing an awareness of the world. KZ realised that students were required to be critical not just in the learning environment, but also about the functioning of society in general. KZ explained his experience:

The education system here is different and I think opened my mind. . . . This is very important, and when I see, when I look at something I have some different point of view. I find I'm now more critical in thinking. . . . If I read something I can have some very different thinking, and I think it's some valuable thinking. But if I didn't come here, maybe I will not have this kind of thinking. . . . If I still in China, maybe, I really just [go] to the company, do some normal work and then go back and watch TV. Waste all my life! (KZ)

That KZ's education here could result in a complete shift in his perception about the world, an awakening, suggests how positive and valuable international student exchange programmes can be, and how far reaching in their impact on those participating. Surprisingly, before he left China he never expected his educational experience to be so meaningful. YR felt the same. She valued not only an improvement in her English speaking ability, but the gaining of knowledge, a new study method, how to write an essay, how to research and how to be critical. SX, as an economics student, transformed his attitudes about economic development for China. He explained that when he lived in China he did not question the

prevalent view at the time that China needed to develop at a rapid pace to try to catch up with the western world. He also believed that western countries were highly industrialised and grew rapidly. As a result of his study here, he changed his opinion and came to believe that balanced growth was important, not just for China, but for society as a whole. Like KZ, he was pleased that such an enlightenment could ensue from study abroad. Participants like SX and LJ thrived in this learning environment because they liked to question and challenge, traits which had got them into difficulty in China.⁵

5.2.9 Conclusions

These participants' experiences indicated that they were inadequately prepared to cope with the challenges of a different style of teaching and learning. All experienced some degree of study shock (Burns, 1993). For example, participants had to learn to work and think independently of others. They had to move from a reproductive or memorisation mode, a *surface* learning approach, to one of understanding, reflecting and questioning (a *deep* learning approach). Once this understanding had been achieved, then it was easier to communicate difficulties or problems to others. Confucian values of diligence, and notions of competition, taken from their first cultures, drove them to work hard and therefore achieve success.

However, from the accounts given by the participants of their learning in their first culture (in 5.1), the extent to which they may have adopted deep learning approaches in the new learning environment is inconclusive. From their accounts, as presented in this section, it would seem that CHC students do demonstrate both surface and deep learning strategies (albeit at different times), as do their western counterparts (Biggs, 1989, cited in McLean et al, 1995). Thus, it is likely that the participants already had in their learning repertoire the skills of understanding, reflection, and questioning before arriving in New Zealand. Otherwise, how could they have accommodated these skills in the host learning environment! SX's

⁵ For example, in China LJ never gave up his struggle as a political dissident, and SX, in the early stages of his career found that his openness got him into trouble. He made the mistake of criticising his Dean. He learned from his mistake and took more care about making criticisms of others' ideas from then on.

account of his learning in China affirms the prior existence of these skills. A deeper investigation is required, however, to establish the overlap of these approaches to learning from the first to the host learning environment.

Listening and understanding, particularly during lectures, was the first hurdle undergraduates faced. The issues identified in Flowerdew and Miller's (1992) Hong Kong study were also apparent here: namely, a dependence on same culture classmates; a reluctance to ask for clarification or elaboration during a lecture; and pre-reading. Participants, as in Flowerdew and Miller's study, were competent highlighters and markers of lecture notes, rather than competent note takers. However, where lecturers engaged in scene setting behaviours, in the form of overt explanations and background knowledge, participants frequently failed to attend or to acknowledge that such information was embodied in the content of the lecture. More importantly, participants felt that their listening comprehension improved significantly over the three semesters of this research.

Participants were overwhelmed by the amount of reading required in their courses and the amount of their study time it consumed. First, participants had to process ideas and then develop a written response. By trial and error they evolved strategies for dealing with the quantity. Participants' responses to these demands ranged from pragmatism (doing the minimum) to illumination (of feeling challenged by the range of ideas presented to them within the content of the materials).

Where writing was concerned participants had to make an adjustment from what Kaplan (1966) described as a circular style towards developing an independence in organising and sequencing material. All the participants found that they had to learn the style of academic writing upon entering the School. They described their initial writing style as being characterised by a dependence on the words and ideas of others, quotations which were then threaded together to formulate an essay. While some continued with this process, others, who realised that higher grades relied on a more critical and independent strategy, recognised the need to adopt the process of writing an introduction, presenting and evaluating information critically, and then drawing conclusions. Participants experimented with different strategies, from finding lecturer guidelines, to self-experimentation. Only JX failed in making the necessary adjustment. Only one participant, AS, faced a

disciplinary panel over plagiarism. However, she felt that she had been unjustly treated as a result of applying her first culture writing approach, even though she was beginning to question that approach. The participants' experiences raised questions about the extent to which CHC students, with their culturally embedded ways of writing, are disadvantaged in this host learning environment which favours the western approach to academic writing.

Along with writing, critically analysing the work of others, whether students, teachers, or published writers, was a perplexing technique for these participants. And like learning the technique of academic writing, participants had to learn how to critically analyse the work of others. For some, the learning process required the sighting of an example of a critique, that is, only by seeing the work of other students were they able to grasp the technique. While for some 'giving your own opinion' may have been an adequate explanation, others required more explicit examples. Some participants noted that lecturers were often reluctant to show these examples in their teaching and, where lecturers modelled the technique in their classes, participants also failed to pick up on the underlying process within the technique. It was noted that teachers needed to address these discrepancies where CHC students were concerned.

In presentations the participants felt ill-prepared and learned the technique by experience as the technique was not taught to them in class. The undergraduates gave note-bound deliveries and tended to be assigned minor roles by their New Zealand counterparts who perceived these students as being a weak link. The technical language required placed a further burden on the task.

There was a notable lack of interest in dealing with New Zealand materials in their learning. The reasons they cited were partly tied to their objectives for studying in New Zealand and partly to their life styles here. The undergraduates were focused on graduating and returning to their first cultures to pursue a career, whereas the graduates were often overwhelmed by other study requirements. All the participants felt they did not want to spend time exploring New Zealand issues which had little relevance to their lives and often had a history which required extensive background reading. Only three of the male participants expressed an interest in knowing more about New Zealand political, economic, and social issues. It was noted by Zhao (1995), however, that a lack of cultural knowledge of

the society in which these participants lived restricted possibilities for intercultural communication with those in the host learning environment. Thus, where participants showed a reluctance to immerse themselves into the cultural and social fabric of New Zealand life, they disadvantaged themselves both academically and socially. This further served to create and maintain cultural difference.

And finally, participants, particularly the graduates, appreciated the open learning environment which they felt *opened their minds* and allowed them to question and challenge.

The participants' learning experiences indicate that they had to reconstruct and renegotiate their learning styles in order to adjust to the host learning environment. Their intercultural communication with teachers and students and their observations of other students' performances, all contributed to this process. As their accounts show, some of these reconstructions maintained cultural difference in that participants' inability to adopt the forms which characterised the teaching and learning environment served to further differentiate them from those in the host culture. This was most noticeable in the technique of questioning and critiquing the ideas of others within the classroom. That only one of these participants failed in the host learning environment suggests that, for the remaining participants, the process of reconstruction and renegotiation was strong.

The next section explores the participants' intercultural communication experiences as they socially interact with the cultural other.

5.3 Social interaction in English in the learning environment

In the first part of this chapter (5.1) I explored the participants' first learning culture, approaches to teaching and learning, and social and familial values attached to education. It was established that, given the different background by which they were educated, and the limited knowledge they held of the learning environment into which they were about to enter, they were faced new challenges. The second part (5.2) dealt with these challenges, in particular, with the learning

skills and strategies they had to develop to succeed. All but one of the participants coped with this reconstruction and renegotiation process.

This third section builds on the previous section in that it considers the social interaction and associated communication strategies and skills the participants had to construct for successful interaction in the host learning environment. They now needed to find ways of communicating with other students and university teachers, both in and out of class. This process required the reconstruction and renegotiation of their culture-specific communication patterns and codes. Through this communication they were able to extend their knowledge and their way of learning: they had to learn to question, to challenge, to interrupt, and to assert their ideas over those of others in order to demonstrate that they could be effective learners. They also had to negotiate interpersonal relationships with the cultural other in dyads and small groups.

In the next sections (5.3.1 to 5.3.8) I discuss the communication styles characteristic of Confucian heritage cultures, followed by participants' perceptions of their oral communication development. Then I describe participants' experiences with spoken communication strategies in English in a range of contexts and for a variety of functions: asking and answering questions; giving opinions and expressing ideas; working in small groups; interacting with New Zealand students and university teachers; and finally, negotiating School and University support services.

5.3.1 CHC communication styles

First, a recognition of the important features of CHC communication styles will facilitate the understanding and interpretation of participants' social interaction in the School.

An important goal in communication in CHCs is to retain harmony among social groups. CHCs typically demonstrate what Hall (1976) described as high context communication patterns. In this situation little information is contained in the verbal transmission of the message. Instead, the receiver must correctly interpret the speaker's intent without direct reference to what he or she means; information

may also be conveyed in the physical context. Communication is characterised also by formality, the need to show a respect for the authority and status of the person being addressed. Children learn these attributes from an early age.

Considering the linguistic and prosodic features of tonal languages (to which the participants' first languages belonged),⁶ each syllable has a distinct pitch or tone, and thus the syllable may convey several meanings depending on the tone variation employed. Tonal languages are not inflected, nor do they use morphological markers to indicate grammar (as English does with tenses, pluralisation, or possession). As tonal languages are monosyllabic they do not exhibit stress or intonation patterns. Thus, differentiating statements from questions, excitement from sarcasm, enthusiasm from indifference, demands from requests, in English, may be problematic for the speakers of these languages.

Cheng and Clark (1993) mentioned five forms of non-verbal communication which characterise the indirect communication style of those from CHCs. First, maintaining silence during a conversation is an expression of respect as well as willingness to listen. Second, silence following another speaker's verbal response could indicate disagreement or even anger. Third, direct eye contact is discouraged as it suggests hostility, impoliteness, and disrespect, whereas in European cultures it suggests politeness, trust, and attentiveness. Fourth, control of emotion is part of childhood education. However, giggling may indicate embarrassment, a smile may mask other emotions, such as pain, or it may avoid conflict. And fifth, in terms of body language, body contact or touching is avoided, except for holding hands with the same sex (applicable to both males and females) in public. Distance from a speaker is also determined by the age or social status of the speaker.

YR, among other participants, supported the argument that CHC students' communication style is indirect, and emphasises politeness and maintaining harmony:

⁶ As well as having a knowledge of English, participants also cited varying degrees of fluency in some of the following languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Malay; and in the Hokkien, Szechuan and Teuchow dialects.

Later I realise maybe students from Asia, from some parts of Asia, make [their behaviour] more covert. Even [if] they feel discomfort or uncomfortable, they may not say. They emphasise more on politeness to others. They don't want to say directly. Even they feel it is unfair, they may not say it directly. (YR).

Thus, participants arrived with these communication styles which they then had to adapt to accommodate the style of those in the host learning environment.

5.3.2 Participants' perceptions of their oral communication development

Overall, participants felt that their performance in writing had improved throughout the research period. Graduates expressed an improvement in their critical analysis skills and, along with some of the undergraduates, had learnt to incorporate theory into their writing, and to respond to, rather than merely quote, the ideas of others whom they had read about in their textbooks or set readings.

Speaking, however, was another matter. Many participants felt that they had made little improvement, and they expressed a lack of confidence when having to speak in English, whether to classmates informally or in class. In some cases, these perceptions were unfounded because I noticed an improvement in their fluency and their language control (especially with AS, WK, FO, MC, SY, and KZ). That they lacked confidence and that they perceived their English to be weak severely hampered the extent of their communication in the learning environment and, consequently, their chances for improving their speaking skills.

For example, PS described his difficulty in speaking up in class due to his limited vocabulary: 'I think they don't understand me. Sometimes I don't know how to talk about that subject, how to express [my ideas]' (PS). AS shared this difficulty:

I found it's hard to talk with them because they don't understand me. I don't understand them. I mean English, the way we talk, they will just say one topic, say something right, I have to ask them a second time, "What did you say just now?" Yeah, the way they talk is different. (AS)

SY noticed some improvement in his social English since he was around New Zealand students in the Halls of Residence, but this he regarded as 'not proper English' (SY) as it was characterised by New Zealand colloquialisms. MC

expressed how her lack of confidence in English affected her self-esteem in the learning environment:

I always think I will finish [the] first year of University and my English, still, this level is quite low. I really really, very worry, and because of worry, let me afraid to speak up, yeah, so it's not very good. (MC)

AS valued the opportunity to study in an English speaking context because she wanted to 'go back to Malaysia and find a job and using this kind of English to converse' (AS). She was pleased to have occasions where she could talk to me as these gave her the opportunity to practise her English, and to find out more about how New Zealanders think. And yet, AS intimated to me that I was the only person with whom she had extended conversations in English. However, AS, along with SY and MC all lacked confidence with their spoken English, even after three semesters, especially in the learning environment.

ML was aware, however, of an interest in communicating on the part of the New Zealand students. ML noticed how they were interested in talking to her but, because they knew her English was not good, they did not. She felt that her English competence was a barrier to her communication.

The graduates, who had more opportunities and need to use English in the School, felt the need to make more of an effort with language skill development. LJ had noticed the importance of speaking up in class and was, thus, the most active participant. He put pressure on himself to interact in discussions and introduce new ideas, and to try to emulate the New Zealand students' enthusiastic involvement:

The New Zealand students are much more positive and they get [more] involved than the Chinese students. . . . It's interesting and drive you to be positive, but sometimes I feel stress[ed because it's] hard to explain my ideas. (LJ)

As a result of his observations he concluded that presenting his ideas in class impacted upon his grades, because he was seen by both classmates and lecturers to have ideas which were both provocative and challenging to others. Thus, he could create an image of himself to others. SX also felt language improvement depended upon how much he pushed himself, which in turn influenced his

progress academically. He felt he needed to be more active in class, though, and had not yet reached LJ's level of confidence:

I know, it's all due to myself. If you want to change the whole thing, if you want to make progress, . . . I must [be] more active. I must find some way to change this situation. . . . I must create some opportunities. (SX)

YR, the only participant to express confidence when speaking English, described her proficiency thus: '[I] just feel as [I do with] my own language, . . . no difficulty whenever people talk! Very natural to talk!' (YR). By the end of the three semesters YR had become very competent in her written and spoken English. She was able to participate with confidence in class, and felt comfortable communicating with teachers, although she noted that at times communication was made more difficult due to differing cultural perspectives.

To conclude, participants perceived their oral communication ability to be weak, resulting in their lacking the confidence to engage the cultural other in intercultural communication. For the most part, nor did they feel that they had greatly improved during the course of the study. This situation had serious consequences on their communicative intercultural interaction in the learning environment, as the following sections illustrate.

5.3.3 Asking and answering questions

While discussions and questioning were not part of the first learning culture of these participants, they are, however, key features of western education. In the School university teachers typically do not direct questions specifically to individuals, and especially not to international students. However, there is the assumption that students will engage in discussion with teachers, ask questions as part of the learning process, and respond to teachers' open questions to the class. Some courses in the School also include a participation mark in their course assessment criteria.

In a variety of ways participants expressed anxiety and frustration about asking and answering questions. For example, FX did not have the habit of asking and answering questions from her first culture, she felt bewildered here in the School:

Sometimes the question is not very hard, sometimes it's very simple, but we have not habit to answer the question. We don't know how to involve [ourselves in] the discussion and participate [in] the discussion. (FX)

Initially, YR felt uncomfortable about the interaction she observed between teachers and students:

I feel uncomfortable in the class when the students ask teachers questions, or something like arguing or challenging with lecturers, because we can say this: it's very impolite to ask teachers questions, [you should] not challenge the teacher in class. If you have problems you can ask [the] teacher after class, not in class because that makes [the] teacher feel embarrassed. That's [an] impolite way. (YR)

YR's feelings accord with Samuelowicz' (1987) finding that Asian students, in their high regard for authority, accept the authority of the teacher or the material studied without question. However, as YR's first semester progressed she began to recognise this cultural difference, and in her second semester (upon entering graduate classes) she realised that such interaction was the norm. As a participating graduate student in class, she had renegotiated this construction of the learning environment.

FX expressed her difficulty in asking questions at the end of presentations. Since participation marks were often given, being seen to ask questions was crucial. FX described a strategy adopted by another international student to address this disadvantage: the presenter discussed the topic of the presentation with a classmate (that is, another international student, preferably a CHC student) beforehand and decided which question(s) the classmate could ask the presenter after the presentation. Thus, both the classmate and the presenter were seen to be exhibiting the behaviours expected of them by the lecturer, and demonstrated by their New Zealand classmates. FX aptly concluded: 'We all benefit; you [the student] benefit because you can easier to [more easily] ask some question[s], and I [the presenter] know what to expect because I ask the question' (FX).

KZ astutely debunked the style of learning by asking questions, along with the practice of giving participation marks:

This style is not quite good because, actually, [all] the students are just asking questions, because when the lecturer give you the mark, [he/she] never consider the discussion during the class, so I think most of the student just want to give the lecturer an impression they discuss. . . . So I think most of the reason they ask question is to get a mark. Actually they don't want to ask. They learn it, not care about the answer. They just want to ask [ie, be seen to be asking]. (KZ)

Like other graduate participants, he prepared questions he could ask in the class beforehand. And like other participants, he expressed similar feelings about asking questions: the difficulty of having to formulate language and process ideas quickly before New Zealand students interrupted or the discussion had moved on, and an unfamiliarity with this learning style resulting in an awkwardness in speaking up.

Among the undergraduates, FO, whom I would describe as one of the most linguistically competent of the participants, and who was perhaps the most familiar with the learning environment of the School, related his fear about being asked a question:

I hate that because I don't formulate answer very quickly, so sometimes when they just spontaneously ask me I get shock and my mind completely blank out and I don't know what to answer. So you may look very stupid and I hate feeling stupid. . . . Maybe it's because I didn't revise enough. I find that I don't have a lot of general knowledge and they tend to like to talk about general knowledge, I mean some issues, and I sometimes I can't follow, I mean I don't have the knowledge with me so I can't really answer. (FO)

Loss of face was another reason for participants feeling wary about asking questions. For example, MC, hindered by her weakness with the English language and her lack of confidence as a result, expressed her fear of losing face. The question she asked might be too simple; all the students might know the answer. Thus, she was always afraid to ask, unlike the New Zealand students whom she recognised did not suffer this fear. Initially WK did not participate in tutorials because he thought his questions were 'stupid' or 'irrelevant' and the answers could be found in the textbooks. WK qualified this interaction by admitting that only when he understood that the tutor was there to help and 'not to see whether you are smart or not so smart, then you dare to ask something' (WK). Trust had to be established first. By the time he reached fourth year courses (in his second year of study in the School) he felt more confident about asking questions because he had a more 'mature' level of knowledge. Even SX, who had been a lecturer in

China and who felt competent with his knowledge, was afraid to ask questions in class because of his lack of confidence in using English. Zhao (1995) also recorded that feelings of stupidity and ignorance, and potential loss of face were reasons given by participants for lack of participation in class.

Even after three semesters, WK felt barriers when asking questions. He explained why:

Our language, the way we form sentence[s] is like still, either is lousy or it's not correct. . . . Even now when I go and ask questions, or question the tutor . . . I must arrange my facts properly and get the sentence properly, and get things right, get the substance of the questions before I ask it, ask them. (WK)

WK would not initiate a point of discussion, but he preferred to contribute and extend the discussion because, as he was working in English, he would then have had time to organise his thinking and language. If he wanted to extend his knowledge, or if his opinion differed with that of the lecturer's, then he would seek further information or clarification himself after the class. However, he noticed that in some instances the New Zealand students enjoyed challenging the lecturer's ideas and debating amongst themselves, a practice which, because of his first culture education, he preferred to withdraw from:

Even though [the lecturer's idea] is wrong we just say, "Oh, forget it!" They [the New Zealand students] would say, like, "I think it's wrong", or something like that. . . . We won't challenge his [the lecturer's] ideas. . . . If we don't agree we probably say, "Oh, I see". Just hear the ideas and go back [home]. . . . We don't [say] like "I think you are wrong because of . . .", or things like that. . . . For me, even though I know that person is wrong, I just [think], "Oh, he has the wrong sort of opinion". (WK)

Even in situations where the Smithfield group dominated the class by sheer number, WK felt that they still did not dominate the interaction: 'I think the majority of them are still very quiet, only like three of them, make, I mean talk, like coming out, being more daring' (WK). However, FO had a different interpretation of the situation:

It is in our opinion [Smithfield students] that if we have too many Chinese in the class they [New Zealand students] won't [talk], although they do answer questions, but probably the chance of them answering the questions is less, because we know when there are a lot of Chinese in the class, Asians in class, we tend more to be brave in answering questions, or asking questions. And in turn,

they are reluctant to ask or answer questions. But if the thing was turn around, there are a lot of Kiwis in the class, they will tend to ask more questions.

In spite of this advantage WK and FO had in many of their classes, FO did not like to engage in in-class discussion, even though he was communicative amongst his Smithfield cohort socially. For most of the participants, their attitudes and experiences were similar.

For the most part, these findings concur with those of Portin (1995) who found that students from China, on arrival into an American classroom, seldom spoke because they feared losing face, feared confrontation, feared being singled out, and feared being questioned. Such factors contributed towards a reluctance to ask questions or participate in classroom activities. Portin (1995) concluded that, instead, these students 'should be overcoming these barriers and they should be building strategies for increased learning in the classroom' (p. 4).

Some participants began to ask and answer questions later in the research period, approved of it as a learning method, and even became more comfortable with the practice. However, the majority of them did not express much confidence in their ability to perform this skill, even after three semesters in the School. While they claimed to respond internally to the ideas, I did not observe them verbalising their responses with any great frequency. Reasons they attributed to lack of participation in asking and answering questions were, first, poor English language skills, that is, lack of fluency, and lack of speed in formulating language to express their ideas, given the constant pressure on time in class and the rapid movement of ideas. And second, they expressed a fear of losing face. Thus, learning this communication pattern was both stressful and difficult for them. Given that CHCs value formality and the maintenance of harmony among social groups, and given that the practice of asking and answering questions in class was simply not done in their first cultures, it is not surprising that participants would have difficulty in accommodating this communication style.

5.3.4 Giving opinions and expressing ideas

Closely related to asking and answering questions is giving opinions and expressing ideas. As I noted earlier, participants were not required to hold their own opinions supported by reasoning and argumentation in their first learning environment. Many of the outcomes expressed here can perhaps be understood in the context of Chinese social history. Becker (1986) noted that taking opposite sides in an argument necessarily meant becoming a personal rival and antagonist of the one who held the other side: venturing an opinion contrary to the other person's opinion in public meant a lifelong opposition. Thus, communication has never been marked by the 'spirit of controversial dialogue', nor by a 'tradition of free public debate' (Becker, 1986, p. 78). The educational practices in many Asian countries of presenting only one point of view prevents the development of the intellectual skills of comparing, evaluating different viewpoints, arguing, and presenting one's own opinion (Samuelowicz, 1987). Samuelowicz conceded, however, that some overseas students did develop these skills. Certainly, the participants in this study are testimony to that view.

Attitudes towards voicing opinions: graduates

The most confident of the participants, LJ, expressed his feelings about speaking in class. His construction was similar to the other graduate participants. Although he liked to learn in an environment which encouraged students to give opinions and challenge ideas, he had some difficulties which stemmed partly from linguistic shortcomings and partly from clashes in values. Because he would take some time to organise his ideas, he was afraid that the lecturer might think that he was, as he put it, a 'silly student':

The challenge is you have to show your ideas, and you have to find your classmate[s]', even the tutors', the fault of their ideas. If you want to beat somebody you have to have a strong idea and a strong comments or explanation. This is the challenge. . . . I like this. . . . It's interesting and [it] drive[s] you to be positive, but sometimes I feel stress. . . . The language is a problem. Sometimes I want to ask a question; sometimes I don't agree with the tutor, but I have to organise my language. . . . I have to check my language in my mind and speak it out. . . . I know how to beat them in Chinese, but how to use the English to present my idea, sometimes I can't. . . . I have to take a long time to react. Yes, sometimes like, oh, very silly students. (LJ)

However, he astutely remarked how NESB students were able to turn this disadvantage into an advantage. For example, where an NESB student provided an opinion which was difficult to understand, it could be seen in the light of a communication difficulty due to language errors rather than an incorrect idea. LJ described it thus:

If Kiwi students make a mistake during this presentation, it's a mistake; if Asian students make a mistake, "Oh [thinks the lecturer], maybe it's a language mistake". . . . They will remind you, "Do you mean this one is this one?" You get a chance. (LJ)

And yet, because one of LJ's goals in coming to the School was to improve his English, he looked positively on the opportunities that classroom interaction gave him, and he enjoyed illustrating to his class members the political, social, and economic differences between New Zealand and China. In my observations I noted that LJ took great pleasure, through his use of colloquial language and humour, in outsmarting his New Zealand classmates, and in gaining recognition from his lecturer. He also enjoyed the situation where it was possible to hold a particular view that differed from that of the lecturer; both student and lecturer appreciated and respected the other's perspective. He appreciated this approach to independent learning and the opportunity it gave him to argue for his own perspective and be critical.

LJ noticed how many Asian students dropped out of one course after the first class, when they found that they were expected to participate extensively in discussion. He was the only Asian student who stayed which pleased him because he had 'more chance to practise [his] English and to get the different ideas from Kiwi [New Zealand students]' (LJ), even though he admitted that this situation put more pressure on him because 'you have to show your ideas, you can't keep quiet (LJ). LJ's comment here affirms the experience of many lecturers, that CHC students prefer to avoid situations to which they are unaccustomed and which they therefore find threatening, for example, situations where they are required to discuss critically and voice opinions.

Expressions of openness and the voicing of opinions were sometimes construed as boastful by participants, and contrary to the Chinese way of seeking harmony and balance. For example, FX opined that the students' keenness to talk about their

research topics and how much they had done was not characteristic of Chinese behaviour. By contrast, she noted that Chinese students, if asked, would reply that they were doing their work but would not go into detail and would instead be quiet about such matters. Similarly, it would be improper for a Chinese lecturer to relate to the class, by way of introduction, details about his or her research interests and achievements. FX found this sort of disclosure boastful. From a New Zealand perspective it is instead seen as a way of informing the students of the strengths and interests of the lecturer. Such interaction thus does not fit with the Chinese character of reticence.

Because of the pressure of time and the lack of confidence in using English, graduate participants often preferred to remain silent, or shelter within their preferred communication style. YR epitomised this strategy in her early behaviour in the School:

In the beginning I did not [express an opinion in class]. I thought it's impolite to do that. And if I have some different opinion after class I may ask the speaker, stay behind or discuss with her, behind of other students, so that he or she might not lose face, not feel embarrassed. (YR)

YR displayed a surprising degree of confidence early on in her studies in the School. She explained to me a story about how she had challenged a lecturer, also of Chinese ethnicity, during his lecture. He had given an example about China which she felt was out of date. She felt angry because her country was under attack, and she did not want the students in the class to think that China was still like that. She related the incident:

What he said was right many years ago, but not now. So when he said this [is] what happened many years ago, so from his talk students might have [the] impressions that China is still like this. So I feel angry in class. So I challenge the lecturer. I said, "No, it happened many years ago, not now". And I said, "If you want to know China today you'd better go. If you go back to China now you can find a different China". So maybe he felt a bit uncomfortable with what I said. He said, "Don't interrupt me. I'm just give the fact". So I said, "Your fact is many years ago now".

So after class [the] lecturer asked me to his office and talked about that. He said, "YR, I just tell the students what happened many years ago, not now". I said, "You didn't distinguish [whether] it's happened many years ago or now". You know, I'm Chinese, I sit there, I love my country. I said, "If you say anything untrue, of course I feel uncomfortable and I feel embarrassed. (YR)

During this dialogue in the lecturer's office, the lecturer then explained to YR that he himself did not hold that opinion, but that it was the opinion of a professor from Korea, the source of the information he had given to the students. He then gave an illustration to YR to show that, even though opinions may be false, they can still be presented as knowledge for debate. However, YR failed to recognise his point:

“Oh yeah”, he said, “Someone said Chinese people are very lazy”. So I said, “No!” with a big loud voice. And he said, “That’s not my opinion. Professor Dadada said that”. (YR)

YR countered:

I said, “John, you are Chinese, your parents are Chinese, you should learn something from your parents. You should know what Chinese people are like. And Chinese people are not lazy. They are hard working”. And he said, “That’s not my opinion. That’s Professor [Dadada’s opinion]”. I don’t know his name, a professor from Korea. Because you know, he really said something, I feel very bad, I feel it’s unfair to say China [is] like that. It was very emotional. (YR)

In spite of the lecturer's attempts to explain that he was merely presenting an opinion which was certainly open to debate, YR could not transfer the level of this exchange from the emotions to the intellect. Fundamentally, she felt, as a Chinese, that she and her culture were under attack.

Such an outburst is uncharacteristic Chinese behaviour and contradicts interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture which seek to preserve moderation, face and harmony (Harris and Moran, 1987). It was also uncharacteristic of my observations of and conversations with most of the participants who repeatedly said that, even though they disagreed with what had been said, they preferred to remain silent rather than to challenge. Perhaps this behaviour is not uncharacteristic of YR though. Much later on she voiced the feelings of her New Zealand classmates in a graduate class. During a break in the class she mentioned to the other students how there were so many small assignments which were difficult and time consuming, each worth only ten percent, and the New Zealand students agreed. When the lecturer returned she explained to him their dissatisfaction. Although she was obliged to do the work, she had at least voiced her feelings about what she regarded to be yet another injustice. Such courage was not found among the other participants.

And towards the end of the research period, with the confidence she had gained, she was able to conclude: ‘Whenever I feel discomfort I speak out’ (YR), even to the extent that she championed the cause of her Asian classmates when the assessment system disadvantaged them over their New Zealand classmates. She said to the lecturer:

“It’s not fair, you put so much percentage on class discussion and it’s not fair for us . . . international student”. All class and all the students looked at me to say that. . . . The lecturer was surprised at, and I said, “Because of different culture we Asian student, not only me, just came from different culture, we, one thing we, we were brought up in a culture where power distance is very strong. One thing! Another thing is the language ability. We are not so quick as the Kiwi students to speak up, even we know the question. So if you put 30 percentage on our discussion, you give the 30 percentage to student just depends on how much you [they] talk in class, is not fair on us”. Maybe the lecture[r], I don’t know whether he was embarrassed or not. Then he explained it all, “I will consider that, it’s a good suggestion. (YR)

Given her upbringing and first culture education, YR’s behaviour, of pointing out how the assessment system disadvantaged Asian students, may be regarded as courageous. It was unusual, not just in participants, but among students from non-English speaking backgrounds in general. From my observations, unfortunately, where CHC students felt that they were disadvantaged, they usually remained silent. YR’s protestation was a refreshing break from the pattern.

Like YR, SX also realised that not speaking up disadvantaged him. However, he lacked her confidence and courage. At first in class he used to mainly listen and, although he had his own thoughts and ideas, he never expressed them. He described this behaviour as being characteristic of those from CHCs. According to their values, you must always show humility and say you cannot do something or do not know something, even when you do. SX had to overcome this value and force himself to speak his thoughts because, if he continued to be humble in class, that is, not to show that he knew something, or to say that he was not good at something, then his classmates would think he really did not know. As a result, he felt he would lose a lot of opportunities as, unlike the Chinese, New Zealanders would only ask once and not repeat the request until the person concerned had sufficiently exhibited his or her humility. SX concluded that he preferred the Western way: ‘If you don’t talk [say] anything, who knows you really know that or not’ (SX), whereas in China, SX implied that one could hide behind one’s

servility and humility. Having made this observation, SX claimed that he tried to participate much more in class which raised the opinions of his New Zealand peers about his knowledge and ability. Nonetheless, he still felt inhibited. This was the contradiction that he constantly faced. His experience was typical.

Attitudes to voicing opinions: undergraduates

Undergraduate participants, in particular, were overwhelmed initially by having to present an opinion. Participants were very much aware of the ease with which New Zealand students spoke up in class which, for many of them, was intimidating. For example, SY was impressed by the ability of the New Zealand students when it came to discussing and giving opinions, and their extensive knowledge of New Zealand business. AS described New Zealand students as 'more expressive, confident, they talk in classes a lot too . . . [and are] brave' (AS). She expressed how their facility to speak intimidated her: 'I won't express it [my ideas] in front of a class. I think it's hard to express [my ideas]' (AS). She attributed her difficulty in speaking up to her English because she could not think as fast as them. Yet, the following semester she managed to speak up more, although she attributed this to a knowledge she already had about the subject. The development of her language ability and subject knowledge had two consequences: she could understand what students were saying in class, and she also had a foundation from which to have the confidence to speak. Similarly, PS remarked that understanding the subject facilitated talking about it in class: 'If you don't understand you've got no way to discuss'. For MC, being forced to participate in impromptu speaking in a Business Communication class was made difficult due to her weak English ability but also to her feeling ill at ease about speaking in class. She said this about her speaking ability:

When I speak, when I talk my subject learned [ie, I recite what I have prepared], I always ask them, "Can you understand what I say?" because I use the wrong sentence all the time. . . . After my speech they give me shake hands. . . . And after class, have [there was] one Kiwi student and she ask me, "This is quite hard for you, isn't it". And then I say, "Yes, very difficult for me to speak in a class and have one special topic, very difficult". (MC)

MC felt that their support and 'friendly' attitude towards her gave her 'more power and more confidence'. Yet she added that she knew she had not done a very good job. Thus, even after three semesters MC was reluctant to present an opinion in

class, partly due to her lack of confidence in using English, and partly because she felt she would lose face if the answer was wrong.

Discussing topics considered taboo in the first culture

Participants had to adjust to different topics of discussion, topics which were considered taboo in their first culture classrooms. For example, YR spoke of a different level of rapport between students and lecturers in the classroom regarding topics of debate. YR felt that she was decidedly closed minded compared to the New Zealand students, although as the study progressed, and as these results indicate, she began to address her conservative ideas. As a mature student, a product (student) and exponent (lecturer) of the Chinese education system, she was both amused and shocked by the self-expression and openness of the students here. She remarked how Chinese people are sensitive to issues concerning their private lives and do not discuss them publicly, whereas, particularly in one of her classes, issues of gender difference resulted in discussion about explicit sexual behaviour, discussions which she found both shocking and amusing. In relating the situation and the typical Chinese reaction to it, YR revealed her own moral position here:

And even in class lecturers will say, "What is utility or happiness, something, if you have wonderful night with a new partner what is your feeling, your love?" My goodness, lecturer spoke such things in class. This will be considered very bad words, very bad action in class in China. (YR)

KZ also recounted a situation where he observed differences in values pertaining to sexual issues and shared a similar reaction to YR. He related the story:

It's very funny. The lecturer talk about something, something about some product in the bathroom. And talk something about, and the student, one student, a Kiwi student, he said the product is very boring. And then the lecturer said, "How can you imagine a bathroom can be exciting!" And the student [a different student] said the bathroom could be very exciting. It's a girl, a Kiwi girl, so it's very funny. . . . You can't imagine students speak something like that in China. It's quite interesting. (KZ)

For these two participants, voicing such ideas contravened the social values which guided their communication. While they found the topics entertaining, they could not imagine saying such things in class themselves.

Acknowledging advantages in voicing opinions

Participants also expressed advantages emergent from communication in the classroom. The tutorial provided ML with the opportunity to discover that, when it came to writing assignments, there was not just one correct answer and that her classmates shared their different ideas and opinions, all of which contributed to an understanding of the topic:

You discuss the assignment . . . so in that time we know how the other students answer the question, because usually they have a different idea, different way to answer that, . . . and maybe you use your way to think this question how to answer it; that's the tutorial. (ML)

Participants appreciated the eagerness of the New Zealand students to discuss in class as it facilitated learning: 'We have discussion in class, discussion about some topic [or] scene in a class, and they can always give some ideas and then we can continue our talks' (KZ). ML noted that, whereas Chinese students (traditionally) remained silent rather than speak out their ideas, New Zealand students 'like to tell the other people what their ideas of their thinking' (ML). According to LJ, this silence can mean agreement or disagreement as, traditionally, Chinese do not voice disagreement in this direct and challenging way: 'In China and Japan, you know, we usually, okay, agree, but in fact we don't agree' (LJ).

Barker (1990), in a study of ethnic Chinese and Australian students in their first year of university, found that students were aware that they were expected to express their own opinions, but they felt that they did not have the English competence or knowledge about how to participate actively in tutorials. Participants in my study shared a similar experience, but when they did participate, either through coercion or through sheer effort, they felt positive about the experience. For example, SX acknowledged the contradiction that he constantly faced. While he felt that the New Zealand students merely tolerated the time he took to express his ideas, on the occasions where he had spoken up the experience had been positive. Nonetheless, he still felt inhibited. WK, too, found that, when he did start to present his ideas, he spoke too fast and the words got 'swallowed up' (WK) but, eventually, students started rephrasing what he was trying to say. He liked this strategy because it helped him to improve his English, and made him feel more accepted within the group.

To conclude, participants considered language to be an interference in their giving of opinions and expressing ideas, resulting in a loss of face if unable to respond to an argument or to further questioning. The graduates appeared to accommodate this communication style with more ease than the undergraduates, perhaps due to the fact that their learning environment, based on seminars and discussion rather than lectures, required them to develop this communicative style. From the graduate participants' accounts some reconstruction of their communicative style was clearly taking place.

The undergraduates had more difficulty in reconstructing their style. They were required to a much lesser extent than graduates to voice their opinions. Thus, even towards the end of the three semesters of this study, some participants were still uncomfortable with the practice of expressing opinions, more so than with the practice of asking and answering questions which did not necessarily lead to further argumentation and debate. Nonetheless, the fact that some participants were able to gain some sense of achievement out of this practice, despite the pressure they felt, provided encouragement for them as they had an opportunity to hear others' views and thus observe a model from which to develop this communication style. Such interaction also provided an opportunity to gauge their own ideas and to help build their confidence in using English. Certainly, for the graduates, their participation was welcomed by both New Zealand students and lecturers. While their differences in world views served to highlight cultural difference, their efforts in intercultural communication gave them a higher profile in the eyes of the students and teachers, thus enabling them to feel a part of the in-group.

5.3.5 Working in small groups

Should working in small groups be problematic for CHC students who share collectivist backgrounds where the individual is subordinated to the group? Samuelowicz (1987) claimed that learning to participate in group discussions was one of the most difficult adjustments for overseas students. In this section I

consider the cultural difference in approaches to group work, the preferences participants showed in working with their group members, the difficulties they encountered in communication, and the organisational processes at work and their implications for communication. While staff and New Zealand students in the School claimed there were no expectations about who should work with whom, participants' experiences and comments suggested otherwise. A variety of dynamics were operating within the context of group work, dynamics that were influenced by the communication styles and culture of the group members, and that resulted in intercultural communication issues for members of both cultures.

Cultural differences in approaches to group work

The issues arising from working in groups appear to be founded in the culturally embedded understandings of group formation and group co-operation. Participants' comments suggested that the approaches employed by New Zealand and CHC students differed considerably.

LJ explained that group work in China is founded on a strong network of interdependence. Group members depend on one another and work out problems together, and members, when making decisions, are expected to consult other members of the group. He saw the New Zealand approach as being exactly the opposite. When New Zealand students start a research topic they ask each other which part each would like to do, each member goes away and researches the part, then returns, and the parts are put together to make a whole. LJ considered that this way lacked an integrative framework and, due to limited communication, could result in greater divergence of information and a lack of focus. LJ related an experience which illustrated his point:

I said [to my group members], "We have to decide our direct course, we have to utilise the same methodology, we have to go for the same direction so we can help out each other". And they said, "No, we share the parts and we go, we come back, and we put it together, and we check it". And okay, because most of our group member[s] are Kiwi. After we got back and we put it together and read it and, oh, it was terrible. The part one students, they say this, and the second part, the other students, they say, "It's not true". Okay, we have to rework this group work. We spent a lot of time in [on] this group work. (LJ)

KZ had a similar experience. He found initially that the New Zealand students in his group did not have 'logical thinking' (KZ). He thought they should start by having a framework and then collect materials around this framework. They thought the materials should come first. He finally convinced them to use his method.

And HY concluded similarly:

I think it's [a] different view about the relations. We have different cultural backgrounds so we think different things, so sometimes they don't think that's [my ideas are] important, so they ignore that. I think, "Okay, that's all right".
(HY)

Another aspect of group work concerned the lack of interest New Zealand students generally held towards those from CHCs in particular. LJ felt that the majority of New Zealand students were not interested in 'Asian' cultures: 'They pay more attention to learning some other experience, cultural experience than Asian' (LJ). LJ further noted that, where New Zealand students had an interest in working in an international company, they were more interested in those from other cultures. From his experience he found that those doing accountancy showed the least interest in international students because, upon graduating, they intended to work in New Zealand. (I would add that this perspective was not one-way. Given the aspirations of some of the Smithfield students, and FO and AS in particular, this lack of interest in the cultural other appeared to be reciprocated on the part of the Malaysian students who aspired to return to their country to pursue their careers; this sojourn was an interlude in their structured lives.)

There was also the issue of communication. LJ also noticed that when new courses got under way, New Zealand students wanted to find out who the good students in the class were before forming groups. This was especially the case at graduate level because, where international students had very recently arrived in New Zealand, they would often have very poor English language skills which would severely affect presentation grades. Nor would they be familiar with the

presentation style of teaching and learning in the School.⁷ LJ mentioned that, where all group members were New Zealand students, they were able to prepare the presentation very quickly and everyone could understand each other: 'If you get a[n] Asian student you have to slow down your language and make even more efforts' (LJ). Thus, there was the perception held by the participants that New Zealand students felt that CHC students' limited communication skills would be a detrimental influence in their final grade for a presentation.

LJ explained that there were also differences between the way CHC students and New Zealanders approached group formation in the School. CHC students would come together when the class ended and ask one another if they wanted to form a group. Once agreement was reached they would then approach a New Zealander to join their group, perhaps the one sitting next to them, and typically the New Zealander would not want to join with them. LJ felt that, for New Zealanders, the process is much more open, and that it was 'not the Kiwi way' for lecturers to push students into groups: 'You have to work together, but the Kiwi way. You choose your friend by yourself. You decide your topic. And you find your way' (LJ). And what were his feelings about this strategy? 'To some extent it's fine, but for the Asian student[s], we lose some chance[s]. We lose some opportunities to meet the Kiwi student[s]' (LJ). He did have a positive experience, though, where a New Zealand student, who was planning to go to a CHC country after graduating, expressed an interest in working with LJ because he liked LJ's 'presentation style and the style of thought'. However, among participants this situation was unique to LJ.

To conclude, CHC participants appeared to prefer a group interaction which relied on interdependence and was founded on close relationships, hence, their tendency to gravitate together in class. The School environment, and the strategy preferred by the New Zealand students of choosing group members informally, often

⁷ In the semester after I stopped the data collection for this study, KZ described to me his own experience of this problem. He found himself in a course with only two other students, both international but newly arrived. One came from Indonesia and the other from China. Both were extremely dependent on KZ for help, not just in giving a presentation, but in carrying out the research as well. KZ found this a very frustrating experience because the group received a grade below his standard. He renegotiated his grade with the lecturer after explaining to the lecturer how he had had to take a leading role in the process of collection, organisation, and presentation of data. In response, the lecturer gave him a higher grade than the one received by the two new students.

disadvantaged CHC students who were seen as having weak communication skills. The New Zealand students' loose approach to assigning tasks and working individually also appeared to create difficulties for these CHC participants.

It would thus seem that, where working in groups with New Zealand students was concerned, these participants had difficulty in reconstructing and renegotiating their social realities to fit with the New Zealand students' strategies for group formation and their preferences for carrying out group work. The participants' interdependent approach fits with their collectivist orientation; by contrast, they had difficulty in accepting the individualist strategies of their New Zealand counterparts.

Preferences for choosing group members

Some participants had definite preferences about who they wanted in their group. Undergraduates expressed a preference for working among those from the same culture. FO explained the rationale for this choice:

We find that if you work with other people [ie, New Zealand students] you also have to start all over again. You have to get to know him. You have to get to know his style of working and you have to start everything again. But if we know each other well, we know how you do your work, we know what is your good point and what is your bad point. We can assign work easily, so we don't have to have trouble assigning work. . . . In that way it's more efficient and we don't have to meet a lot of times and we know what is the best time for us to meet and we can even meet late at night, 12 o'clock, one o'clock. We can do whatever we like, so I think that is easier. (FO)

The ease FO described here, of doing group work with members of his own culture, became even more important to him as he moved towards completion of his degree and had greater pressure on his time. FO summed up the importance of his Smithfield cohorts with respect to group work: 'I have always been with the same group of people for my group discussion for my entire [university] life' (FO). And WK reiterated the preference for working with those from the same culture: 'We know [each other] so closely, so we just state our ideas, we can just comment [on] each other's work. If I don't like what you are doing, or how you are doing it, what you do [then I say so], because we are quite close' (WK).⁸

⁸ This cohesion can be attributed to the School's twinning relationship with Smithfield College, resulting in a large Smithfield student population being spread over the four year undergraduate degree.

Within this network each member was recognised for the specific contribution he or she could make. For example, if there were specific needs FO had, like computer expertise, or knowledge about current events, or politics, then one of the *gang* would help him out: 'They [the gang] are always there for me' (FO). YR, from China, gave an explanation for this situation: 'It's emotional I think. Because we're Chinese, we're [from the] same culture, and I find it's easier to access, easier to get along with' (YR). In both instances, both groups felt more comfortable with those from their culture and they could also use their own language.

This close network shared by the Smithfield students sometimes resulted in their dominating tutorials. I observed that, as they engage in learning activities together in these tutorials that their interaction was much more animated and humour based, but only with one another; it did not include the other New Zealand students. WK noted how this cohesion and interdependence was a disadvantage at the outset:

We all manage to discuss among ourselves, and I think the disadvantage in it initially was that we don't ask the tutor if we don't understand, so we miss out quite a lot in the beginning. (WK)

AS also felt that conflict was easier to resolve if all students were from the same culture. In the case where the lecturer arranged the group one participant objected: 'You want to join a group [where] you know the people well; that's much better' (PS).

By contrast, AS observed that, in doing group work with students from the same culture or ethnic group, she had to make more of an effort to keep up with them: 'I have to do more, study more, because we are all about the same level, so we all have to put in a lot of effort to get things done' (AS).

Gender differences emerged in group work preferences among the graduate participants. The graduates, especially the male participants, showed a stronger preference for working with New Zealand students. However, LJ expressed frustration at the degree of dependency some of his female CHC peers exhibited in their preferences to work with other CHC students, especially if these CHC students were male. He explained that, according to the CHC culture, CHC

women tended to follow someone else. He compared the situation with his experience at medical school in China where the Chinese male students would play the leading role in the group, and the women would follow. Similarly, in the CHC family the male plays the key role in the family with the female being the care-giver of children, husband and parents. In the classroom here, LJ felt frustrated and hampered by the CHC female students who followed his ideas compared to, for example, the stimulation he received from working with a New Zealand student. He recounted the scenario:

When I work with other Asian students [females] the other partners in our group always follow my idea, and didn't provide their own idea, their different opinion. They always say, 'Oh, LJ, you have a good idea'. And when I discuss with this [New Zealand] guy, this guy told me, 'Oh, I don't think this one [idea] is good. How about mine?' And I have a look. His one is better than me [mine], but I suggest some change[s] for his idea, so I feel the discussion, the combination at the same level, from the different direction. So we not only present my idea, but also can get abstract, some other ideas from [a] different point of view. . . . I think the Kiwi [New Zealand] students is more pro-active. [They have] the positive attitude, and the Asian culture, especially the female students, they always follow someone else. (LJ)

He was impressed by the way the New Zealand female students competed against the male students. In these situations he indicated how he felt shackled, and thus irritated, by the Confucian way of learning demonstrated by his CHC female classmates. Through his intercultural communication experiences LJ always sought to break from this traditional CHC way of following and accepting others' points of view. By contrast, SX, the only CHC student in his economics classes, did not have to contend with this problem.

Gender issues did not emerge among the undergraduate participants. The Smithfield participants, especially, seemed content to transfer their learning practices to the host learning environment and maintain their interdependence in mixed gender groups both in class and in social groups within the School, thus enhancing cultural difference with the host group.

The preference for working with New Zealand students was not a common attitude among participants. Only SX and JX expressed this preference. Although they did not specifically attribute it as such, this preference may have been due to their different goals; the graduates were less oriented towards returning to their first

cultures upon graduation than were the undergraduates. They showed more willingness to acculturate wherever possible and, thus, reconstruct their educational experiences to fit with the host institution and to facilitate intercultural communication.

In summation, the undergraduates, especially, showed a preference for working among those from their own culture or from other CHCs because of ease of communication in achieving the task, and because there was a clearer understanding of the roles each of the group members was to perform, a product of the interdependence that LJ mentioned in the previous section. Their preference appeared to be based on the role of trust in Confucian cultures, established over time, and an important element in the management and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Established relationships facilitated interpersonal communication and enabled participants to deal with conflict or difference more easily. Given the competitive base of their education system, these participants felt compelled to make more effort in CHC groups. There appeared to be gender differences among the CHC graduates, where females showed a dependence on males in carrying out tasks. I did not observe this behaviour in my female participants, however.

Working with New Zealand students

In working with New Zealand students, participants described emergent difficulties: from New Zealand students acknowledging their ideas, to groups breaking down as a result of miscommunication, to lack of confidence in expressing themselves in English.

First, they often had difficulty in getting their ideas accepted by New Zealand students. PS explained how, in one group, the students had many ideas and were able to convey them convincingly, but he felt that the presentation was not coming together. Although he tried hard to persuade the others that their thinking was incorrect, he said that they listened but rejected his ideas. In a similar situation HY also had difficulty in communicating her opinions and eventually gave up:

They got two points, one think[s] planning is more important than organisation, where[as] I think both of them [are] important, . . . and they just want to stay [on] one side. I don't think that's a good idea but they did that, so I said, "Okay,

that's fine", because I don't think that's meant to be quarrel [there is any point in quarrelling]. (HY)

While these two participants endeavoured to go beyond their cultural conditioning of acquiescence, finally, for both of them, acceptance seemed an appropriate conclusion as challenging could result in a loss of face.

WK found that New Zealand students were very assertive in group work and often regarded the ideas of CHC students as minor, 'not considered seriously' (WK). There was a sense that the New Zealand students took control, and usually the controller was the student who had been identified as the "best" student in the group. WK encapsulated his frustration in this process, frustration which he shared with his Smithfield cohort, but not with the New Zealand students:

Usually the Kiwis really know most of it. What is their ideas, how you approach that, all Kiwis, their ideas. Then when they have finished they allocate the work. . . . The Kiwis have more control. They state their ideas more clearly, and they can defend their ideas. But for me I will start, not say withdraw, but, "Okay, that's fine". I don't really comment, criticise their work, even though I don't really like it. I just say, "Okay". I just tell my friends [ie, I criticise the Kiwi students to my Malaysian friends], not tell them [I don't tell the New Zealand students themselves]. (WK)

During my observations of participants I noticed that the first year undergraduates often took minor roles in group work and group presentations, being assigned introductions and conclusions by New Zealand students, which they could read out. SY, however, considered that playing a minor role was justifiable because of his limited knowledge and language ability. Although he wrote the introduction and conclusion to his group's presentation, his group members checked it and developed it further. When I asked him if he had helped them in any way with their work he explained that he was 'not qualified' to do so.

Second, groups sometimes broke down through a failure to understand one another. WK explained how one group failed to communicate and share their ideas and synthesise them into a presentation. He noted that one New Zealand student asked all the group members for their ideas, but when that student gave the presentation in class he had ignored them all and presented something completely different. WK expressed his frustration at the lack of integration and co-ordination in the whole process when Asians and New Zealanders work together:

I don't know whether it's, they don't bother about our ideas . . . or whether it's just like, "Oh, Asian, they just don't know what to talk [about]". Sometimes we just don't communicate. We just say our ideas, and then, okay, we just sit down. We finish and we just go back. (WK)

Later (after three semesters in the School), he stated the difficulty in another way. He was unable to assume the individualist and independent approach taken by the New Zealand students:

Sometimes, Kiwis, even though they don't know each other, they get together, they just can talk about something. But when we get together we do our work, then okay, everybody sit at their own place.⁹ Sometimes I still don't know what to talk about, what to talk to them about. (WK)

Here WK is explaining the difference in communication styles between high context cultures, a feature of CHCs, and low context cultures, as found in western cultures like New Zealand (Hall, 1976). That is, as WK noticed, those from low context cultures do not need much time to establish roles or relationships since these are made explicit through language and communication, whereas people from high context cultures need more time to develop relationships, establish trust and determine strengths and weaknesses, a process akin to establishing an understanding of an individual's character and personality. These processes had already happened among WK's Smithfield cohorts. Each one knew the others' strengths and weaknesses. WK explained that, when it came to group work, one person might be good at organising the data show on the computer, another might be good at the research, another at co-ordination and so on. These roles had been worked out over time and through experience and were tacitly understood by all the Smithfield students in the group. Similarly, LJ alluded to these dynamics above in his description of how Chinese approached group work, that is, through interdependence, thus necessitating consultation in the decision making process. On the other hand, New Zealand students do not work from such a basis. Time is not as essential to establish a basis for communication or a structure for the group because they have a more direct communication style, and an independent approach to decision making and information gathering. WK felt more comfortable working within the style of his own culture.

⁹ That is, everybody knows his or her role which is determined by individual strengths and abilities.

A third difficulty the participants faced in group work was the challenge of having to express their ideas in English within groups where there were New Zealand students. AS had difficulty expressing an idea spontaneously, requiring time to process the idea and search for the language needed to express it. Early on in the study she felt that the effort required to compete with the New Zealand students was just too great and too 'stressful' given her English ability: 'I want to say these things but I just don't know how to say them. I like to try and push myself more but I'm just too afraid' (AS). She felt that the New Zealand students understood her limitations with the language 'because sometimes when I talk they know I can't express myself very clearly' (AS). Even after three semesters in the School AS still had difficulty following the New Zealand students' English during their discussions, resulting in her feeling excluded:

I try to say something but they just ignore me and just continue discussing. Maybe it's because my English is not good, maybe they think my point is not important, they just keep on. (AS)

She concluded that their disregard of her may have been due to her English or to racism. PC also experienced a similar rebuttal and also attributed this rejection to poor English and racism and, additionally, differing attitudes about what each culture thinks is important.

By contrast, JX, after two months of study at the university, felt he had been encouraged by students' responses to him during group work:

I think [it] is not very hard to join in. Not very hard. I have the language problem, so I feel a little bit hard, but I'm sure after I improve my language it's very easy to join in because the Kiwi student[s] are very friendly. They like to talk with you. I think they are patient. (JX)

As a mature student, JX's enthusiasm gave him the confidence to try to express his ideas to others, in spite of his extremely limited English vocabulary and fluency. However, I observed that his lack of understanding often left him excluded from the dynamics of interaction.

To summarise then, participants experienced difficulties in getting their ideas recognised and accepted, were usually assigned minor roles, felt a lack of control

in the organisation and management of the group process because of their different communication styles, and lacked confidence in having to express their ideas in English.

5.3.6 Interaction with New Zealand students

In addition to communication in group work contexts (discussed in 5.3.5), participants discussed communication with New Zealand students in the classroom for two main purposes: learning support and socialisation. Participants' experiences in these two areas are explored next.

Communication with New Zealand students for learning support

Some differences emerged in participants' constructions of how intercultural communication with New Zealand students took place in the context of seeking learning support. All experienced for the most part some degree of difficulty in this area.

PS noticed some drawbacks in getting help from New Zealand students. On occasions where he had asked them for help, they provided an answer very easily and convincingly, believing the answer to be right, although (as PS came to realise) it was sometimes wrong. He gave an example in group work where he knew that the argument a New Zealand student in the group was advocating was incorrect. PS, the only international student in the group, disagreed, but the New Zealand students did not accept his challenge. Eventually, PS asked the tutor to come and tell them they were wrong; only then did they accept the correction. On the other hand, PS commented, CHC students were the exact opposite: if they were not sure of the answer they would say so. So for PS there was this difference in trust; unlike the CHC students he felt that New Zealand students could not be trusted to give him the correct answer.

In the early stages, PS used to ask New Zealand students in his tutorials for help but, as they tended to do their assignments at the last minute, this was not satisfactory for PS. He was the only participant to have a *buddy*, a New Zealand student who was paired with him to support him in and beyond the School. However, he chose not to use this buddy for help related to learning in the School,

preferring his CHC contacts. The reason for this was that after some months the relationship with the buddy waned due to differing attitudes and values.

WK recognised that New Zealand students knew about the procedures required in the course work, and were good for ideas, but he very seldom consulted them, preferring to revert to his Smithfield friends, whom he could trust, for specific information and references.

LJ talked about his desires to find a New Zealand student with whom he could discuss ideas, especially in his first semester here. LJ's efforts to get the students to share their resources sometimes resulted in success and sometimes in a rebuff, depending on, in his opinion, whether they wanted to be generous or not. For example, LJ met a student outside his class who was holding an exam paper for the course they shared. When LJ expressed an interest in this exam paper with a view to borrowing it, the student just acknowledged LJ's expression of interest but put the paper in his bag. Similarly, SX recounted one occasion where he asked a New Zealand student after class about a point he had not understood. Although the student was quite impatient in his reply, SX was magnanimous:

I'm not very happy about that, but I think I will if I were he, and if another foreign students said to me, maybe one or two times, I would explain it patiently, but maybe several time later I would lost my [patience]. . . . It's natural. (SX)

Contrary to some of the undergraduate participants' views, LJ felt that the New Zealand students had a more *reliable* understanding, whereas CHC students 'might still be wondering about this question' (LJ). LJ's feelings of trust towards them could have been because he was more willing to establish and build up a rapport with them, thus facilitating an exchange of ideas based on a mutual understanding of one another and of the problem at hand. For example, he described a cooperative experience with a New Zealand student in establishing a learning relationship in the classroom:

I enjoy it [working with New Zealand students]. And this guy, I get some understanding from him. . . . And he told me he enjoy work with me as well. He also get some ideas from me. . . . We always look at some topics from the different directions, or get the different logistic consequences, so we share these ideas and combine them together and present it during class. . . . [It's an] exciting experience! (LJ)

Generally, YR was not interested in talking with other students about non-course related issues: 'I've never tried to get along with other students. Not interested. It seems not very necessary' (YR). Given YR's position as lecturer in her previous employment in China and her commitments to her family here, YR had little time for what she regarded as 'chatter'.¹⁰ YR's behaviour further maintained cultural difference between her and her New Zealand peers. In this instance she was clearly not renegotiating her communication style to fit with the approach of these New Zealand students.

SY was the only participant to rely heavily on New Zealand students. As he lived in a Hall of Residence he was surrounded by New Zealand students, some of whom had taken his courses earlier. These students gave him considerable help in understanding questions, in writing answers, in giving him notes, and in helping him to use a computer. In fact, SY had a barter system in operation: he would provide beer for them in return for help with his work. In contrast to YR, SY saw that in reconstructing his social world to fit that of his New Zealand student peers he would find the path to success with his studies.

Socialising with New Zealand students

With the exception of SY, none of the participants described the level of their communication with their New Zealand classmates as constituting friendship. YR concluded that CHC students had difficulty in making friends with New Zealand students because of their cultural differences, and language:

It's very hard to get to know New Zealand students. . . . Whenever I talk [to] students from other countries, from China, from Thai[land], and Malaysia . . . they have the same opinion of mine: it's hard to make friends with Kiwis. Some do, I know, but not many. You know, when I have questions or problems to discuss, we just discuss problems among Asian students and the Kiwis among them[selves]. . . . Maybe one [reason] is the language problem, because the language is our second language, and if we Asian students talk together we are on the same level. . . . Another thing might be the culture. The East, the West, different culture, different cultural patterns. (YR)

And KZ described the issues for him in trying to develop friendships:

¹⁰ In fact, YR showed a reluctance to participate in one interview I had with her because she was very busy at the time and felt that I was wasting her time. She suffered the interview only because she felt an obligation to do so, having agreed to participate in my research.

I think that people here is polite but not very easy to get familiar with them, . . . to be a friend with them. . . . When class is over everyone . . . goes home and we haven't chance to meet them. (KZ)

After a year in the School, FO was forcing himself to have informal conversations with the New Zealand students in his class, but he felt that the conversation tended to remain superficial. Instead, he preferred to rely on those he knew, his Smithfield group, rather than those he did not:

I'm already surrounded by my groups of friends [so] . . . you tend to talk with your friends rather than . . . strangers, . . . so unless I know the guy, I mean I know the Kiwi . . . in a few classes, then I will try to, I will say, "How are you today?" . . . or "How's your assignment going?" . . . or something like that. (FO)

WK preferred to describe this socialisation as 'casual' and even 'artificial' but conceded that, as many of them were friendly, it was up to him as to 'whether you want to open up' and extend the communication into friendship (WK).

In part, the tendency not to socialise may have been due to stereotyping. For example, AS perceived New Zealand students as "lazy" and justified the comment: 'They (other Malaysian friends) say we are more hardworking. I think some is true because we spend a lot of money here. We have to be hard working' (AS). She then added: '[New Zealand students] mix around very well, they socialise I think, more expressive, I mean in talking, confident'. ML too, thought they were more 'active' than Asian students. By acknowledging the stereotype which New Zealand students held of them, and by deferring to the volubility of the New Zealand students' communication styles, these participants perceived themselves to be inferior in their ability to socialise in this context. Instead, they often preferred to remain silent. This feeling was not unique to AS; others' behaviours and attitudes accorded with these perceptions. For example, Zhao (1995) noted that the reticence to communicate displayed by the CHC participants in his study resulted in New Zealand students' apathy towards them and a failure to understand the reasons for silence. The resultant lack of interpersonal knowledge caused a gulf between the two groups, even though they may have shared a class for almost a year. In addition, participants described their limited English competence as a barrier to socialising.

To conclude, for many of the participants communication with New Zealand students within the classroom and School context was neither easy nor common, because of differences in language and culture. These findings concur with those of Nesdale and Todd (1993) and Perrucci and Hu (1995). An important reason for this reticence was a preference for maintaining relationships with those from their first cultures where friendship and trust had already been established. Participants felt that socialising with New Zealand students tended to be casual and artificial.

Furthermore, participants needed to develop feelings of acceptance during discussion, to feel that New Zealand students had an interest in what they (CHC students) had to offer, and were also willing to help and encourage them to communicate their ideas in English and thus gain confidence. Zhao (1995) concluded that a lack of background knowledge between CHC students and local students inhibited continuation of conversations between them, causing New Zealand students eventually to give up the chase because it was too tiring.

For the most part, participants had difficulty in renegotiating their interpersonal relationships to accommodate the students in the host culture, preferring instead to maintain relationships with others from their own or other CHCs within the learning environment. By contrast, LJ and SY showed a willingness to enter into this renegotiating process in order to facilitate communication with their New Zealand counterparts.

5.3.7 Interaction with university teachers

Participants were required to communicate with their teachers (lecturers and tutors) either in the classroom, or to receive guidance or feedback in their learning. There was a noticeable difference between undergraduates and graduates in their interaction with them.

Undergraduates

The undergraduate participants were reluctant to engage in a discussion with teachers over written feedback they had received, generally because of a lack of confidence in their English and in their understanding of the topic. However, in

the early stages especially, they acknowledged that written feedback helped them to realise their misunderstanding of questions.

Yet, in some cases, participants were unable to reap all the potential benefits. For example, MC found that she could not always understand the comments written on her assignment, especially if there was simply a question mark beside a paragraph with no explanation of the problem. She mentioned that she had thought of going to talk to the lecturer about the written feedback, but did not go because of a lack of confidence. She related an example of a lecturer who gave a detailed example of a correct answer on an overhead projection during a lecture. For her this mode of feedback was unsatisfactory because she could not follow what the lecturer was saying, and there was not enough time to write down all the words on the overhead projection. Similarly, LJ, in his graduate class, discovered that, through written feedback, his *short* weekly report was too short. The lecturer's understanding of "short" was one page: his was one paragraph. He also wondered if "short" allowed him to use point form. And did "make some comments" mean that he should write a critical analysis? Like MC, he felt that sometimes teachers' comments and suggestions were inadequate and too abstract and, thus, open to misunderstanding. Only upon seeing an example of a short report did he feel comfortable in the genre.

Similarly, FO described the feedback he received as 'a bit vague', and explained that in going to discuss the written feedback he might appear troublesome to the teacher concerned:

Normally they just give a grade. Some will say, "Your discussion is hard to follow", or sometimes they will say, "Very good, interesting argument". Basically this is it. They don't really say how you should approach. . . . So I just learn by experience. I just try and experiment. (FO)

HY and MC expressed a reluctance to talk to lecturers about their difficulties because they (the participants) were 'not prepared' (HY); they lacked a knowledge base or grounding in the particular subject from which to discuss. WK reiterated this view. Again, they risked losing face. Even in her third semester of study in the School MC was afraid to go to lecturers with her difficulties for fear of losing face. She explained:

When I talk to my tutor I more scared than I talk to Kiwi friends, because the tutor I afraid they think, "Why this student, this overseas student, her English is very poor, but she can study [at] University?" And I also afraid he will think, "You are a second year student, but your English is still the same, didn't improve much". . . I think they have this opinion, so when I talk to them I have no confidence at all. (MC)

Instead she asked her CHC friends (mainly her Thai boyfriend), even though she realised that they too were having difficulty: 'I just ask my friend[s], give me some idea, and I catch their idea and organise by myself, become [form] an opinion' (MC).

WK described his feelings of intimidation in face-to-face discussion of feedback with teachers in a slightly different light. Although he valued the feedback given by teachers here compared to his Malaysian lecturers, he felt that it was easier to approach his Malaysian lecturers because the communication between them was almost 'like friends' and 'casual', whereas in the School communication was much more formal, thus making discussion more awkward. (This informality with their lecturers in Malaysia had emerged as a result of communication which took place beyond the classroom, a situation that rarely happens in the School context.)

AS noted how her expectations for lecturer-student interaction, grounded partly in her first culture assumption that knowledge is given by lecturers to students, were dispelled in an exchange she encountered:

[He looks] not approachable, right. I went to him before the examination a few times. I think he's a brilliant lecturer. He doesn't give . . . the knowledge to you straight away. He wants you to prepare first before you come to him. I find that I learn a lot from him. (AS)

Her experience was contrary to her expectation; she described her meetings with the lecturer as stimulating.

FO, even towards the end of the research period, still had had little communication with lecturers. He seldom sought help from lecturers, although he was much more confident at speaking up in class compared to the outset. He explained why:

I don't have the intention of going to them and approach them and ask them about my technique. I'm afraid that I might trouble them. . . . I don't dare to. Maybe it's the time, the office hours, sometimes it's really just an excuse. . . . Perhaps I'm afraid that they might be impatient. . . . I hear people saying that

some lecturers are quite impatient so I know that if the lecturer is impatient I won't bother to go and ask. . . . Most of my Smithfield seniors they always like to ask questions. They always go and approach the lecturer to ask. So instead, mostly I ask from them and see how they think about the lecturer and, . . . if they think the lecturer's not okay, then I won't go. (FO)

Although FO explained his reluctance to approach lecturers in terms of being troublesome and thus causing the lecturer to become impatient, there may have been other factors operating. For example, his reluctance may be due to what Brislin et al. (1986) described as the difficulty international students face in negotiating their relationship with university teachers as social roles and boundaries may be unclear. In fact, FO later explained to me that as he began to know and understand more about relationships between teachers and students in the School, he realised the inaccuracy of this misconception.

Among the undergraduates, only PS expressed a confidence in approaching university teachers. When he had a serious problem, for example, how to address a question or organise an assignment, he considered it was better to ask the lecturer rather than other New Zealand or CHC classmates. However, he regarded friends, like AS, as a source of help for minor problems.

JX, the participant who failed, experienced perhaps the greatest difficulty of all in his communication with university teachers. His two months in the School were fraught with frustrating conversations with lecturers and tutors who understood neither his English nor his needs. He could not clearly express himself or articulate the kind of help he needed. Thus, when JX received his failed essay, he found that the teacher had written "It's hard to understand". For JX, did "hard to understand" refer to the 'total topic, or paragraph, or argue the question, or sentence, or word. I don't know' (JX)? He explained:

In my country the teachers always help you how to write an essay and which part is very hard to understand, then [if a] word or sentence is not correct then they will help us to correct [it]. (JX)

Although JX acknowledged that the teacher probably had difficulty in understanding his English, he nonetheless felt discouraged by the lack of guidance and help the feedback offered in this case. By contrast, the teacher felt that JX still seemed to miss much of the explanations and guidance offered. Clearly, this was a

case of talking past each other. As researcher I was caught in the middle, empathising with each, and providing the interpretations of the situation for each of them. He appeared not to recognise the efforts his teachers made; instead, he had the impression that tutors were unfriendly and not sufficiently helpful:

I feel the hard pressure, and the tutor, I don't think is very friendly. So I feel hard to learn. . . . I don't want to learn in the [name of department] any more. (JX)

And later:

Maybe I said that tutor not friendly, not exactly right. . . . I should say that the tutor not very patient, not patient to the foreign student like me. . . . So the result is I have I fail all courses and I get the bad experience. . . . The tutor should give me help, give me help. (JX)

Thus, in requesting him to leave before he received a “fail” on his academic record his supervisor could be seen to be acting responsibly. Although JX understood and accepted this advice, he revealed in discussions with me that he had been misunderstood and badly treated.

To conclude, participants generally found teachers friendly and approachable, however, expressed a reluctance to communicate with them, especially to receive guidance or feedback. Few of the undergraduate participants used the lecturers' and tutors' office hours, preferring to defer to their CHC peers. This is similar to Cooke's (1995) findings that international students in the United States preferred to seek clarification from their international peers or muddle through on their own rather than consult a lecturer. And it was consistent with Portin's (1995) findings that Chinese students in the United States seldom made appointments with their professors.

Participants responded best to written feedback which was detailed and offered guidance as to where improvement was required. Vague comments and question marks in the margin were regarded as unhelpful. Such findings correspond with those of Samuelowicz (1987) who noted that international students preferred feedback which was both specific and instructional, could be generalised as rules in essay writing, and could be used in the future as a guideline (Samuelowicz, 1987). However, of concern is the fact that the undergraduates preferred not to go

to their tutors and ask for elaboration either through fear, in particular, of losing face, or through a lack of confidence in communicating their problems.

Large undergraduate classes of 250 were not conducive to interpersonal interaction and represented a communication barrier for students. They heightened the existing power distance between student and teacher. And hourly tutorials once weekly were not sufficient for undergraduates to develop confidence in their interpersonal communication with their tutors. Thus, roles and boundaries could not be clarified between CHC student and teacher.

Graduates

The graduates were much more confident about interacting with their teachers both in class and in going to their offices for further feedback and guidance. This was probably due to the nature of graduate teaching in the School: small classes of about 20 students with a focus and expectation on discussion between teacher and students. Furthermore, the graduate participants, who were all mature students and had worked in their own countries before coming to the School, were probably more confident individuals as a result of a wider range of life experiences, although they did not necessarily have more confidence in speaking English than their undergraduate peers.

YR observed from the outset that lecturers 'often say in class, "If you have difficulty come to me, make appointment", so that's encourage me to do that' (YR). Although YR conferred with her other Asian classmates, in particular, a Thai friend, she deferred to lecturers to seek confirmation in her handling of more complex issues, like the structure of a research project, the organisation of ideas in assignments, and even previewing her presentations and written work. YR was perhaps the most successful of all the participants in using university teachers to her advantage during her course of study. Perhaps because of their maturity and life experiences, the graduate students coped much better than undergraduates with lectures and lecturer interaction. They described how they felt comfortable talking with lecturers because the lecturers were "friendly", "kind", and "helpful".

LJ, however, recalling his experience as a tutor in China, preferred to use his own initiative as much as possible in order to avoid appearing lazy or foolish:

I prefer to do my best to resolve the problem by myself. If I really, really can't, I will ask. . . . When I was a tutor in Medicine School I don't like the students ask all the questions. You have to try yourself. If you ask me [a question], I will ask you, "Have you found this, have you read this article, have you read this textbook?", and they said, "No, I didn't". {So I reply} "Go back and read it".
(LJ)

Here LJ was verbalising the apprehension undergraduate students, especially, might feel when approaching university teachers, that is, that their question might in some way appear stupid and would result in their losing face. With so much at risk it was much safer to ask a friend who could be trusted; later, the friend might be able to return this favour. By comparison, Barker et al (1991) noted that Asian students, like their Australian peers, were willing to go to a lecturer to question an unexpected low grade, although they also found that Asian students were reluctant to deal with higher status figures generally. Students also attributed a reluctance to communicate with lecturers due to their lack of English language competence (Barker et al., 1991; Burns, 1991). Thus, they concluded that the student-lecturer relationship was a fragile one. Certainly, for the undergraduates in this study, that was the case. By contrast, the graduates, as a result of closer and more frequent interaction in smaller classes, felt more confident in approaching their teachers to receive feedback. Having little recourse to CHC peers, they were obliged to construct relationships with university teachers in order to succeed.

5.3.8 Interaction with School and University support networks

Participants tended to rely very little on the formal School and University based support groups. Participants used the School-based support team for international students (MIST) to check on courses for the following semester, or to check enrolment fees. Generally, participants did not go to the social functions organised by MIST because they were either too busy, did not get the information (either at all, or in time), or did not understand the purpose or nature of these functions. Some of them did not know the purpose of the MIST office or its location.

Similarly, the International Student Office (ISO) in the University had helped orient participants on their arrival about course of study and settling in, but participants had little reason to go there after that, apart from checking on

enrolment or visas. This finding is consistent with Ballard's (1987) conclusion that overseas students used counselling support services primarily 'as an intermediary to negotiate problems with bureaucracy, visas, fees, [and] finance' (p. 111). And Houliker (1996) noted that sources of help beyond the School were only marginally useful to students. Instead, as was the case in this study, Houliker's participants sought help at the level of staff-student interaction more 'to monitor academic adjustment and progress' and evaluate the appropriacy and effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Participants also found little use for their advisers (volunteers within the School who provided their time to advise international students in any way). I was one of these volunteers. I had asked that my participants be assigned to me as their adviser. In this role I found it difficult to distinguish whether I was giving them advice as an adviser or in my role as researcher. Given that I had little contact with the other students I had been assigned to as adviser, I believe these participants came to me for help in many areas because of the rapport and associated trust which I had developed with them in my role as researcher.¹¹ Ironically, SY thought that, as I was his adviser, then the purpose of an adviser was to carry out research with international students. Clearly, he had not understood the nature and purpose of the adviser system.

A few participants had found out about the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) which had a separate section for providing learning assistance to international students, and a few had used the TLDU more than once. PS sought their advice initially on how to get help with his written English. He also received advice on listening during lectures. He found out about the TLDU through the ISO. KZ and JX found support there for their written English. KZ discovered the existence of the TLDU in his first week on campus. KZ found that his grades improved when he had his written work checked by them. Some (HY, MC, AS, ML) had no knowledge of the TLDU or its purpose.

At undergraduate level, many of the large first-year courses ran extra tutorials called drop in tutorials, or international student tutorials. Largely, participants did

¹¹ For example, SY came to me two years after I had completed the data collection to ask me for a character reference.

not make use of these. Two (PS and SY) cited laziness, although SY had been requested by MIST to attend as he was failing one of his courses. MC said she had no time. HY thought that they would not help much, instead preferring her usual habit of working alone. The findings in this study indicate a preference for support from friends, usually those from the same culture, rather than institutional assistance.

Only one participant, KZ, went along to the University's Brown Bag Lunch series, a weekly forum on learning issues for all students in the University. The reasons he cited for attending were to make more friends with other international students, and to meet other international graduate students who might offer him help, rather than to obtain information about study and university related issues.

That the University incorporated a policy and strategy to address these students' (and participants') needs is commendable. However, as these participants' experiences demonstrate, the service that the University and School provided was little utilised because the participants preferred to resort to their own informal channels for help and information. Their non-use of the service may also be due to the perception of the participants that these services are unhelpful in meeting their perceived needs (Felix, 1993; Gollin, 1991).

5.3.9 Conclusions

The experiences of the participants, described in parts 5.2 and 5.3, indicate that they had to reconstruct their communication styles to engage in meaningful social interaction in the teaching and learning environment. Chandee (1992), who conducted research at the same university as I, identified the difficulties faced by international students on this campus. They have:

- (a) a lack of understanding of the educational system and its requirements in a culture very different from their own, (b) inadequate language to cope effectively, and (c) fear. (Chandee, 1992, p. 2)

This appraisal seems to describe my participants well. Similarly, Wang (1983, cited in Portin, 1995) remarked that Chinese post-graduate students found that cultural differences brought about by antithetical educational systems provided the

greatest barrier to participation in the classroom. In 5.2 participants commented on the antithetical nature of the host educational system and, in this part (5.3), on the issues posed by the communicative interactions they were expected to perform within it, interactions that required students to think critically and work independently, and to be active in their own and others' learning processes.

The communication constructions that participants identified as being particularly problematic were asking and answering questions, giving opinions and expressing ideas, and managing interpersonal skills in group work. A lack of participation in class could be attributed to the incompatibility of the interpersonal skills they learned in their first culture with those required for successful communication in the host culture. As the findings show, some participants managed these differences while others preferred to defer to their in-group. Their comments also suggested that progress was hindered by cultural predispositions acquired in their first learning environment: CHC values such as respect for authority, maintaining harmony with others, and preventing loss of face to oneself or to others seriously hindered their ability to speak up. Differing communication styles between high and low context cultures provided a further stumbling block. And lack of confidence in using the English language further militated against their willingness to communicate, and thus served to enhance the cultural difference between the participants and those from the host culture.

Participants were largely unsuccessful in developing co-operative relationships and friendships with New Zealand students. Generally, participants regarded New Zealand students as polite, but often could not find a meeting point resulting in communication which was awkward and stressful. Similarly, Mullins, Quintreel, and Itancock (1995, cited in Biggs and Watkins, 1996) noted that international students in Australia claimed that they wanted to mix with Australians but felt that 'Australian students stay in groups and it is difficult to join these groups or make friends' (p. 278).

Undergraduate participants expressed a preference for doing group work with those from their own culture. Reasons they gave were: it was easier to communicate ideas for both linguistic and cultural reasons and have them accepted; interpersonal communication patterns were easier to read; there was a familiarity with the organisational strategies used and the style of interaction based

on a cultural preference for interdependence; where they knew one another, there was a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of others thus facilitating the assigning of tasks, and time was not required to build trust before criticism of others' ideas could take place; marks could be affected by groups which did not function well; and, finally, participants were forced to make more of an effort in the research and presentation because they could not rely on New Zealanders to take control and manage the process. These reasons all point to differences in communication styles. The participants perceived New Zealand students as: being more direct; accustomed to working, thinking, and making decisions independently; challenging others ideas; not requiring time to establish working relationships and trust; and not needing to show deference. Nor did the individualist strategies adopted by their New Zealand counterparts fit with the participants' collectivist constructions of social interaction. Some participants believed that New Zealand students preferred not to have Asians in their groups as well for much the same reasons.

The propensity for undergraduates to remain within their cultural groups is supported in other studies. For example, Gatfield and Gatfield (1994) noted that Asian students have a propensity to work and create in a co-operative environment conducive to deep learning. They also found that CHC students, as shown by the Malaysian students in this study, quickly rebuilt the support mechanisms of their own social context in the new learning environment. In addition, Zhao (1995) observed that cultural peers at the New Zealand university in his study were more willing to collaborate with one another in coping with their shared learning problems. However, the great disadvantage of this co-operative strategy was that explanations always came from a source whose cultural perspective and linguistic orientation were not the same as those of the host culture.

While inadequate English was one reason cited by some, the participants also appeared to be hindered by their first culture predisposition to remain silent in class for reasons of either appearing *silly* to others and thus losing face, or for a preference for communication with those from other CHCs because it was less threatening than communicating with New Zealand students. In addition, participants, particularly the undergraduates, felt constrained in their communication because of a lack of patience and tolerance displayed by some of the New Zealand students towards them. Clearly, the classroom culture is a place

of discomfort when it comes to intercultural communication for these CHC participants with their New Zealand counterparts. Unfortunately, these orientations on the part of both the CHC participants and the New Zealand students served to diminish opportunities for intercultural communication and, thus, may have enhanced cultural difference.

Graduate participants, however, especially the males, showed more willingness to work with New Zealand students. These participants expressed the view that, in working with other Asians, they lost a chance to improve their English; they did not have the opportunity to draw on New Zealand knowledge from New Zealand students; and they could not learn the working style of New Zealand students. Nonetheless, only one graduate participant (LJ) actively sought out New Zealand students to work with. The others, while valuing the opportunity to work with New Zealanders, also acknowledged the difficulties it sometimes posed.

Undergraduate participants had more difficulty in reconstructing the nature of teacher-student relationships from their first culture learning environment than did the graduates. Generally, undergraduates preferred not to go to their tutors for guidance or feedback for fear of losing face or through lack of confidence with their English. On the other hand, because of small classes, the graduates were able to develop rapport with their teachers, and interaction was more frequent and a necessary part of graduate learning, thus inspiring their confidence to communicate.

Of critical importance, too, was the participants' competence and confidence in using English to communicate with university teachers and students. All participants demonstrated that language provided a key difficulty for effective communication and study. This finding concurs with Burns (1991) study where overseas students' self-reported inadequacies in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing were a source of stress and an emotional impediment to study. However, this needs to be placed beside the converse findings of Zhao (1995) and Houlker (1996) who both reported that the participants in their studies attributed many of their communication and learning difficulties to language when other factors were the cause. For example, Zhao noted that assertiveness, self-confidence, and the verbal skills needed to argue, discuss, and present their work in class were lacking and, hence, contributed to

lack of confidence in using English. These factors undoubtedly influenced participants' intercultural communication in the learning environment. Further, becoming 'acclimatised to English (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988, p. 3) after a few months does not diminish the problems of being an international student as these participants' experiences have indicated. Thus, there is room for further clarification here.

Houlker (1996, p. 205) noted that the English of the academic environment is a specialist language. Generally participants were not prepared for the difficulties posed by such technical language, but nor were they prepared for the range of communication functions they would be expected to perform in the learning environment. While the participants appeared to be reconstructing their communication strategies in these new learning contexts, only one participant reported an improvement in speaking. However, during the course of the study in my interactions with participants, I noticed that their language competence was improving. I observed increased interaction in the classroom among graduates, but not so much among the undergraduates. For example, some of the graduates began to adopt appropriate problem-solving strategies such as voicing their opinions, being critical, and presenting ideas to others. LJ, YR, and SX realised that the New Zealand assessment system encouraged and rewarded questioning, arguing, analysing and giving opinions, and applying the acquired knowledge to real world examples. Such change began with an awareness of difference and led to a recognition of the importance of fitting into the expectations and culture of the learning environment through communication with the host community and with other international students. Largely, it was a slow and painful process for these participants. Nonetheless, it was rewarded by recognition from New Zealand students and teachers who appreciated the contribution of another world view.

Turning now to those in the host environment, Zhao (1995) noted that university teachers, who may have been constrained by time, may not have asked CHC students questions or may not have wanted them to talk, resulting in these students being left aside or forgotten. To some extent my observations during fieldwork support such a conclusion. Thus, a reciprocal understanding is required here: on the one hand university teachers need to understand the educational background of these students in order to assist them in their adaptation and, on the other, students need to understand the expectations of the host learning environment

(Samuelowicz, 1987). However, the findings in this study suggest that there is a need to go one step further: New Zealand university teachers and students would benefit from an understanding of the rules for communication underlying CHCs, and CHC students need to have a greater empathy for the more direct and open communicative style of New Zealanders, as typified by their individualist orientation. At present, there is an inequality in this double-edged relationship. The status quo places the onus on CHC students to reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities in the learning environment; there is much less reconstruction or renegotiation on the part of the New Zealand hosts: the university teachers and students.

Generally, participants had difficulty in renegotiating their interpersonal relationships to accommodate the cultural other. As a result, same culture and CHC networks provided an important source of information and social interaction. However, the strength of such networks further distinguished the CHC students from their New Zealand peers, thereby maintaining cultural difference.

While there were certainly common experiences among these participants, their learning, adaptation and communication achievements varied enormously and could be attributed as much to individual attitudes towards the host culture as they could to shared cultural values.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was concerned with the communication experiences of the CHC participants in this host tertiary institution, and how cultural difference was created and/or maintained through intercultural communication. The first part (5.1) introduced CHC learners within the context of their first learning culture. Participants' descriptions of their learning styles appeared to conform to descriptions found in the literature: that is, knowledge is to be received and learned and not questioned, but learning also continued beyond the classroom through warm social relationships with teachers. Furthermore, education was seen to be valued as it bestowed honour on the family. Participants were not prepared

for the new learning environment they entered which resulted in study shock (Burns, 1991) and reality shock (Schutz, 1971; 1973).

The second part described the challenges participants faced in the new learning environment. Participants explained the skills and techniques they needed to construct and renegotiate, for example, listening, writing critically, and dealing with New Zealand material. Developing independence and critical analysis were the most difficult techniques to construct as their first learning environment had focused on reproducing skills characteristic of surface learning. It was suggested that because students were largely successful in adopting the skills associated with deep learning, namely, understanding, reflecting and questioning, that they already had developed these skills to some extent in their first learning environment. The findings in this study are, however, inconclusive. Participants were largely successful in reconstructing and renegotiating their learning skills to accommodate the new learning environment, but where they were less successful, namely in the technique of questioning and critiquing the ideas of others within the classroom, then these differences served to further differentiate them from their New Zealand counterparts. Participants generally showed little interest in exploring New Zealand based teaching materials for reasons of lack of time and irrelevance of the topics to their lives. Finally, the undergraduates tended towards pragmatism in their approach to learning. Their goal was to graduate and return to their country. On the other hand, the graduates and diploma students from China felt stimulated and challenged, describing it as a learning environment that *opened the mind*.

In the third part the participants described their social interaction in the learning environment with university teachers, and New Zealand and other students. Participants were required to reconstruct and renegotiate their CHC communication styles in an attempt to engage in meaningful interaction. For the undergraduates participation in class and interaction with New Zealand students and university teachers was a slow and painful process because of their lack of confidence in using English, but also because of their cultural predispositions, namely, respect for authority, the need to maintain harmony, and fear. They preferred to work with those from their own culture or other CHCs as they had difficulty accepting the individualism and independence displayed by their New Zealand counterparts. Such behaviours and preferences served to diminish

opportunities for intercultural communication and thereby enhance cultural difference.

The graduates showed a greater facility in reconstructing and renegotiating their communication styles to accommodate the expectations of teachers and New Zealand students. They developed degrees of confidence and proficiency in voicing their opinions, being critical and presenting their ideas to others. This change emerged from an awareness of their part of the need to fit into the expectations and culture of the learning environment. However, while they valued the opportunity to work with and learn from New Zealand students rather than their CHC peers, they still experienced difficulty in achieving co-operative working relationships. Their willingness to develop teacher-student relationships appeared to promote intercultural interaction as well as their academic success.

Participants were willing to attribute difficulty in intercultural interaction and communication to their language deficiency. However, the difficulty they experienced in reconstructing and renegotiating the communication styles of their first culture also militated against them in their attempts at meaningful intercultural interaction.

Undergraduate participants showed a reluctance to engage in communication with university teachers or use them as a learning support mainly due to fear of asking questions, of being unprepared, or of failing to communicate successfully in English. One Chinese participant who failed his courses felt discouraged and let down by the School. Miscommunication between himself and his teachers only exacerbated the situation. Largely, the student-teacher relationship was fragile. By contrast, the graduates experienced more active and fruitful teacher-student relationships. They demonstrated more confidence in establishing rapport with their teachers and readily used them for support. This situation could be attributed to the smaller classes and the nature of graduate teaching in the School. Participants tended not to use School and University support services, instead preferring to rely either on themselves (the Chinese participants), or on their same culture and other CHC groupings (the undergraduates, especially the Smithfield students).

The next chapter shifts the focus from participants (re)constructions and (re)negotiations of their intercultural communication experiences in the context of the learning environment to the context of their social worlds beyond the School. Differences in interpersonal communication styles are established, followed by participants' accounts of their (intercultural) communication across a range of cultural groups and in the variety of contexts which make up their social worlds.

Chapter 6

Intercultural communication experiences beyond the School

In Chapter five I discussed the communication and learning issues which confronted the participants in this study as students in the host learning environment and how these impacted upon their constructions and negotiations of their social worlds. In particular, I addressed the impact of context on participants' communication experiences; the challenges they faced in becoming effective communicators in these contexts; and the cultural, social, and educational factors which enhanced or inhibited communication, and teaching and learning for these participants.

In this chapter I move the focus of discussion beyond the learning environment to consider the nature and extent of the participants' intercultural communication experiences in their everyday lives in the wider community. Initially, differences in interpersonal communication are discussed. I then explore participants' communication experiences with those from their own culture, with New Zealand students, with other international students and, finally, with other New Zealanders. This chapter specifically addresses the following issues (identified in the research questions at the end of Chapter three): the intercultural communication experiences of CHC students in the host community, the extent to which they reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences, and the ways in which cultural difference is created and/or maintained by intercultural communication in the host community.

At issue in this chapter is the notion of *cultural literacy* (Hirsch, 1987, cited in Robinson, 1992). According to Hirsch a culturally literate person is an individual who is able to connect spoken and written utterances with a larger cultural and historical context. The purpose of becoming culturally literate is not so much to believe and agree with the *giants* of western thought, but to have a basic shared context within which to discuss salient issues of the day with others. Thus, the challenge for these participants is how to become more culturally literate by achieving an awareness of the hosts' assumptions and

expectations, not just as students in the learning environment, but also as intercultural communicators in the larger community. To some extent this was more difficult beyond the learning environment as participants faced fewer opportunities for intercultural communication opportunities.

The key factor which differentiated participants' communication experiences in the School (explored in Chapter five) and their communication experiences in the outside community (the topic of this chapter) appeared to be choice. Whereas in the School they were, at least to some extent, thrust together in and around classes with New Zealand students, when their School day was over they were free to choose their interlocutors. While circumstances to some extent circumscribed the participants' intercultural communication experiences, their personal choices, based partly on their attitudes towards intercultural communication experiences, and partly on their personal character, were also influential factors. These factors and circumstances, although they appear to be interwoven, are in fact a product of each participant's thoughts about his or her own cultural identity, and the degree to which he or she desires to acculturate. Thus, in some respects this chapter is a prelude to the next two (Chapters seven and eight) which look more closely at self, understanding and accommodation of the host community, and cultural identity in relation to the cultural other, and the extent to which these perceptions of self accommodate difference and lead to a reconstruction or renegotiation of identity in this intercultural communication context.

6.1. Differences in interpersonal communication

As a prelude to exploring the participants' communication experiences in the community I provide the participants' comments about what they regarded as significant differences between the interpersonal communication styles of those from CHC cultures and New Zealanders. These perceptions were fundamental in revealing their attitudes towards communication with those from the host culture.

For the most part participants, although eager to explore relationships with New Zealanders, especially the students they were in the company of everyday, were often left in doubt about why certain interactions did or did not work, or were

unsure of what they needed to do in order to develop their communication further into meaningful friendships. From their discussions with me it became apparent that their uncertainties centred around differences in notions of friendship, communication styles, and disposition towards intercultural communication.

6.1.1 Differing notions of friendship

In order to understand the nature of the interpersonal relationships the participants had with others from their culture, it is important to understand how they viewed these relationships. This can best be understood in terms of their conception of *friend* and *friendship*. When participants talked about the people they knew from their own cultures, they were always careful to distinguish between these *friends* and how they were different to their close friends back in their country. The Chinese notion of friendship is based on trust, and is the result of a long process of interaction over a period of time. Hence, the value Chinese place on long-standing relationships is understandable. By comparison, New Zealanders, being open by nature, and of individualist rather than collectivist orientation (Hall, 1976), are quick to move to the level of friendship and the disclosure that is associated with friendship. Similarly, Perrucci and Hu (1995) noted that Americans preferred equality and informality in peer relationships, whereas Chinese tended to distinguish between levels of friendship, reserving open expression to intimates. LJ described this difference:

The friendship in New Zealand [is] not too close, not too far. You know. If in China, your friend, you must be very close and you will tell everything to each other. And if you are not friend you will be, the distance between you is very long. . . . In China, if we are friends and if I get some trouble and get some emergency need, I tell my friend, and my friend will support me and will try to help you to resolve the problem. Okay. Some problems are very deeply and very serious, and the dependence between the friend is very strong. But here, the friend means you just meet together and you like each other, each other's way, maybe the study way or the sports way, and they agree your idea and you agree with them. You get a same opinion and you can play together. That's the friend here. But in China the friends can get different opinion. Maybe the best of friends is the enemy, the competitor. (LJ)

LJ noticed that New Zealand students, as well as being independent of their parents, also placed little emphasis on networks and relationships, a very important concept in China. His parents had taught him that 'you have to find your friend after you know the details of your friend' (LJ). Thus, most of his friends were relatives or friends of relatives. In his experience, where possible, children were employed within their extended families. In fact, he was resisting

his uncle's offers of employment in Auckland as, in return for this employment, he would be beholden to the influence of his uncle in all aspects of his life. LJ wanted his independence and the opportunity to make his own way as he was watching his New Zealand peers do. His reluctance to accept work from his uncle stemmed from his desire as an intelligent and creative person to develop his abilities.

Thus, friendship did not come easily or quickly, but was based on a lifetime of gathered knowledge about the cultural other. This is demonstrated in WK's feelings about his Smithfield friends, whom he still did not regard as real friends. Instead, his personal feelings he devolved to his real friends back in Malaysia:

Even though I have my Smithfield friends, like we are not so really close yet. Basically three years ago I met them. I've got my rather closer friends back in Asia [Malaysia], so they solve the problem. (WK)

FX felt that New Zealanders were easily able to develop friendships and, thus, did not place such reliance on family and the relationships which extend from them. In fact, the extensive mobility of New Zealanders in general meant that they had to be resourceful in this respect. Chinese, by contrast, would remain in one place for many generations. FX described her contact with other Chinese here as *common friendship*, and not close like her very close friends in China. Like YR, she said it was difficult to develop close friendships with Chinese here because they were often in transit, moving to another job in another place. Topics of conversation were, thus, often restricted to living arrangements and employment. By contrast, LJ was fortunate to have a friend (according to the Chinese definition) with whom he had attended secondary school in China and who now lived in Auckland as a permanent resident. He had much contact with this person. YR spoke of having many friends here, but no special close friends. If she needed help she sometimes contacted Chinese friends whom she knew through the Chinese Society, but she preferred to ask her Church friends. Her life was very much circumscribed by family and study (like all the mature Chinese students), and she felt that, since other Chinese were similarly busy, she preferred not to disturb them. She regarded herself as an independent person.

Given this difference, it is understandable how these participants found it difficult to make friends. To them our notion of friendship is what they would consider acquaintanceship. Not surprisingly, LJ concluded that he did not have any good friends here.

SX also expressed a difficulty in making deep friendships with New Zealanders. He continually lacked confidence, even at the end of the study, with his language ('the language itself, I felt very embarrassed'), even though he regarded himself as outgoing towards others and having many interests. Going beyond basic questions proved a difficulty to him, and he concluded that it created a barrier for him in communication and in the development of meaningful relationships with New Zealanders. The Christians he socialised with enabled him to develop closer friendships. SX was open to these new experiences and was eager to discuss them on a rational and intellectual level. Hence, the value he placed on his Chinese friend here with whom he could express his ideas in Chinese, and his frustration at his limited English.

Another difference by which the notion of friendship is determined is in the use of names. Chinese call other Chinese by their family names, not their first names, unless they have passed the state of *common friendship* and become very close friends. Similarly, people must be addressed by their title. In New Zealand this distinction is not made; others are addressed by their first names, regardless of degree of acquaintance or position. Thus, for participants to reach the state of friendship with someone from another culture is an accomplishment. This cultural distinction perhaps explains their reluctance to claim that they have reached a state of friendship with New Zealanders, (discussed in the next section) which would also imply a disclosure to this friend of personal feelings and experiences. Close knit friendships did not happen quickly for them and were reserved for those they understood best. This Confucian characteristic might more readily explain their reticence in developing close friendships beyond their in-group. It might also affect their feelings about themselves as students here, and living in this society. (I explore these ideas further in Chapter eight.) New Zealanders, open by nature, might well have difficulty understanding why these participants, and others from CHCs, appear to be *closed*.

That the notion of friendship implied such intense and close relations for these participants explained why they felt that they did not have friendships with New Zealanders. Often, when the participants talked about a New Zealand friend, I would ask them to describe the friendship they shared. A typical response was a retraction to 'just normal friend', that is, someone with whom they could converse informally, but who did not fit the definition of friend expressed by LJ. In fact, the New Zealand notion of *friend* is much more general, in keeping with the looser social relationships that New Zealanders share, compared to the

intricately woven and complex relationships encountered among those from CHCs (Cheng and Clark, 1993).

6.1.2 Communication styles

Another factor which intervened in the intercultural communication process was the differences among communication styles. Of particular significance was the notion of directness and its different applications in CHC cultures and in the New Zealand culture. On the one hand, directness in expressing points of view or feelings, a feature of New Zealand communication styles, was inappropriate in CHC cultures. FX noted that it was important to nurture interpersonal relations with those in China, and care was taken with what was said to whom in order to be able to achieve an end; according to FX, in New Zealand this was simply not the case.

For example, HY commented that the communication style of New Zealanders was one of directness when presenting a point of view, compared with the circularity of expression used by those from CHCs:

New Zealanders express their feelings directly. The Chinese people aren't, [but] prefers to expressing it like . . . talking other things to refer these things. (HY)

PS put it another way:

They [those from CHCs] will talk about another things first, and then, and the things refer to your problem. Just went around, and then talk to the point. (PS)

This spiralling of expression to arrive eventually at the intended point in oriental thinking has already been documented in academic writing styles (Kaplan, 1966; 1990). PS became used to this style of address in his homestay mother who told him immediately if she did not like something. PS found that he was able to operate within the two systems. While he acknowledged that such directness would be considered offensive and impolite in his culture, he was accepting of it here. SX found that this directness between interlocutors suited his character. He himself had had occasion to be direct in China, over and above the level of acceptance, which came about due to a difference in opinion with the Dean of his department. However, the consequences were not good for him as he had offended this person. He conceded, though, that his behaviour had been out of

order and was a result of his lack of experience and youth. That he had caused the Dean to lose face was, he regarded, not courteous behaviour on his part. By contrast, he was pleased to observe that such directness here, that is, expressing differences of opinion, was both condoned and welcomed. He appreciated what he considered to be the simplicity of relationships here. By coming to this culture, SX had thus gained in that he was able to extract the best facets of each culture and combine them to fulfil his needs. FX, too, noticed that New Zealanders had a much more direct style of communication. As a result, FX felt unshackled here; she remarked, however, that the depth of her communication was inhibited by her limited English. Thus, these two participants' constructions of directness in communication facilitated their intercultural communication in this environment. Similarly, YR's directness to her teachers, discussed in Chapter 5.5.3 was indicative of this preference.

As a result of this difference in communication styles, where New Zealanders appeared to be more open and direct, participants generally found them, including the students, to be very 'expressive', 'friendly', and 'willing to talk'.

By contrast, the participants noted that directness of style among CHC interlocutors was very appropriate in CHC cultures among close friends. In fact, they saw communication among close Chinese friends as more direct than that of New Zealanders. PS expressed this difference well when he explained how the communication style was 'exactly different' (PS). For example, when New Zealand people greet one another, they frequently say, "How are you?" PS commented that if he greeted an Asian friend in this way 'they will say "Oh, you are very silly"!' (PS). PS described the contrasting directness of the Asian style, comparing it with the slowness of the New Zealand way:

Just get in [to] the point and talk, what you want to say, just go straight. Exactly different, so when others come here, look at the Kiwi, "How are you?", too slow! (PS)

A further reason for PS's position here could be due to his Hong Kong origins. Because the pace of life is fast there, people tend to be more direct. PS also felt that the New Zealand form of greeting was insincere. And yet, he admitted that he had started speaking like this himself sometimes, although with his close New Zealand friends he just began talking immediately. He found this communication practice particularly irritating in professional contexts, for example, when communicating with people in organisations who clearly did not know him. FX observed that her communication style had been influenced by these practices.

For example, if she sent somebody an email she would greet them first with “How about you? How are you today?”. And yet, ironically, the Chinese (from China) also have a similar perfunctory greeting: “Have you had your dinner?” Naturally, they do not want to know this information, at least, not in contemporary urban China. Rather, it is a residue from less affluent times when poverty was more prevalent and, thus, having eaten was an important issue; now it is merely a way of starting a conversation.

A third aspect of the New Zealanders’ communication style, according to participants, was a certain irony. WK described it as being ‘a bit sarcastic’, and ‘they like to poke around other people’. WK illustrated his point:

Somebody invites you for dinner, this friend of mine and like, he, oh, purposely say that, like, in Chinese culture, like WK’s culture, that all the women do all the work at home and they also do all the washing up. This is just to, like, make fun to the girls, and yeah, then they get irritated and everything. Then we just jump in [start arguing] and all these things. But I think in Malaysia we don’t need to make fun. Maybe there’s expectation that they do do it. (WK)

WK was describing a style of communication, a banter, or jocular style, whose purpose he saw as making the conversation lively, and including him in it by referring to the ways in which things were done in his culture. He thought it was also a way of training him about cultural practices which he could learn here and take back to Malaysia. He did not consider that it was intended to be offensive. So what, then, is WK’s style, the Malaysian style? WK called it *intentional gossip* where friends talk and share stories about others. It is this gossip that SY shunned, as did the Chinese participants, FX and YR. Gossip in the New Zealand context has a pejorative connotation, but to Malaysians, and to many others from CHCs, it is an acceptable communicative behaviour and is perhaps understandable as, characteristic of collectivist cultures, their focus is on building up complex webs of interpersonal relationships and communication channels which they can use to their advantage and which will help them to manoeuvre their way forward in society, as FX concluded earlier.

While the Chinese participants in particular were pleased to have left behind a communication style which focused on nurturing friends and building networks, only LJ expressed a desire to develop communication networks in New Zealand as a means of integration into New Zealand society. Further, LJ felt that developing friendships and contacts would serve to lessen cultural difference and that communication with New Zealanders was a crucial factor for successful

integration into New Zealand society. He consciously tried to develop and improve communication with others here, and create opportunities for developing relationships with New Zealanders, just as he had nurtured communication channels in China. He regarded these channels as important to his success here, too. He felt that his open character and resulting communication style which, as he had learned to his detriment, had been inappropriate in China, fitted with the New Zealand way. This desire to develop a network of relationships through communication, in the way that LJ had done in China, is interesting. While such networks are important in New Zealand, they are certainly not essential as a way forward, like they are in China and other Asian countries. YR, for example, deliberately avoided building networks among both Chinese and New Zealanders here. None of the other participants expressed this need so demonstrably.

Thus, the communication styles which the participants felt epitomised communication with New Zealanders, such as directness in expressing feelings or points of view, slowness in close interpersonal forms, punctuated by what they regarded as perfunctory expressions, and a type of jocular banter, were forms that the participants had to negotiate in their intercultural communication.

6.1.3 Slang and speech forms

New Zealand speech patterns, for example, rising intonation at the end of sentences and non standard vowels, proved a problem for the participants. Then there were the speech forms typified in the students' communication: shortened sentences, and slang terms (like "heaps" instead of "a lot of", "sweet" instead of "good", "yep" instead of "yes", "you know" added on to a sentence, and "I mean", and "sort of" and "like", placed in between phrases, and "eh" at the end of sentences.). The New Zealanders' tendency to mumble, often accompanied by a lowering of the head, in their self-effacing New Zealand style, made understanding more difficult. KZ's evaluation is apt: 'They talking too fast and too simple [ie, in abbreviated sentences], most time I can't understand what they are talking' (KZ). WK found that conversation was characterised by interruption, clipped sentences, and erratic turn taking, making communication difficult.

By the third semester FO felt he was getting used to the "slang" (as he called it) here. He was even saying "Yep" with the right intonation. YR also noticed that

she could understand the slang better. And SY, who had the greatest immersion of all the participants, was using slang competently and confidently in his communication patterns, for example, “yep” and “sweet” to show agreement.

The participants’ evaluation of their difficulties in this area concur with findings by Burns (1991) where overseas students were not used to the speed, slang, or accent of an Australian speaker, thus making intercultural communication problematic. Interestingly, while WK was able to say that by the third semester he was feeling more relaxed about talking to New Zealanders and confident in using his English, he noticed that he initiated conversations confidently as he did with his Smithfield friends, but then realised, halfway through, that New Zealanders started to have difficulty understanding, so he had to rephrase his sentences: ‘You start to think that you have to form a proper sentence before you speak’ (WK). Clearly, the Smithfield students had their own code which differed from New Zealand English.

6.1.4 Participants’ feelings about their English language ability

Towards the end of the research period participants were asked to comment on their language ability in communicating with New Zealanders in the community. Although, in my view, FO had the best communicative competence of all the participants, closely followed by WK, his assessment of his language ability was surprising. He described how he found language a barrier to communication, and how he had feelings of inferiority about speaking English. His interpretation is typical of the other participants’ experiences.

The main thing is still language. I would say that language is really, really important. I mean the barrier, I mean the most important barrier. I would say that if I can speak better English I would be able to communicate well, and I think I would be able to mix well, but because I’m, English only my second language . . . so I find that this is the, the main barrier that stops me from talking with them [New Zealand students]. Because it’s very hard to communicate with them, because especially they don’t understand you at all. You talk a few times just to make them understand, and during a conversation if you keep repeating yourself it doesn’t, doesn’t have, I mean, you don’t really talk at all. It’s not communicating any more. It’s just trying to understand each other. So I, I feel, I don’t feel very nice actually, inferior, actually, so in a way I try not to talk. (FO)

FO was used to being considered articulate and witty by those around him back in Malaysia, and was regarded as having a good level of English, but having to communicate solely in English in another culture was different:

Here you focus on English, whereas back home I can use my Mandarin, and also my Malay to talk, and my English. In terms [of] back home, I am quite good in my English already. . . . And they understand my joke[s] easily. (FO)

In fact, language inability was masking other issues, namely, that he felt he never had strong opinions to present to the New Zealand students in conversations: 'I don't really have a strong comment anyway' (FO), and that he was unable to put across his humour. Similarly, in the previous chapter, participants blamed their language for a variety of communicative functions which they had difficulty performing in the learning environment, a finding which concurred with the participants in Zhao's (1995) study.

Participants remarked how little practice they got in using social English. FX had little contact with New Zealanders, apart from the usual contexts where she would be required to use English, for example, shopping, or when at her son's school. She felt, too, that sometimes people had to spend too long trying to understand what she was saying, and her command of English was not good enough for discussion of complex issues. And KZ felt his social English had not improved very much as he had little opportunity to speak English. He spent most of his spare time with his girlfriend from Hong Kong and they spoke Mandarin together. The fact that KZ, along with some of the other participants, sought to spend his leisure time with those from his own or other CHC cultures, reduced his chances of improving his social English.

YR felt that her language was more appropriate for study than for social life. She felt that she needed much more practice with social English. She also felt that she needed to learn more about the culture. In spite of this *feeling*, she did not seem to actively pursue this goal.

The one participant who did feel that his social English was improving was SY. He did not feel the same way about his academic English, however. He felt confident when communicating with his New Zealand friends with whom he spent a lot of time. And yet, he also appreciated the ease with which he could communicate with his Taiwanese friend in Mandarin. By the third semester he felt very confident using English because, although he admitted that he could not speak perfect English, he could, more importantly, understand what others were talking about and, thus, could 'join in for their conversation, those kind of stuff, just make me feel part of New Zealand' (SY).

The importance of language was a topic which kept recurring in participants' conversations with me throughout the research period. Even by the end of the research period, participants still felt that their command of English was a barrier to communication with New Zealanders. This state of affairs largely concurs with that of Burns (1991) who also found that the overseas students in his study self reported an inadequacy in their English language in communication with those of the host culture.

6.1.5 Conclusions

This section addressed differences in interpersonal communication between New Zealanders and those from CHCs in terms of their different understandings of the terms *friend* and *friendship*, differing communication styles, differing speech forms and slang, and their impressions of their English language ability.

The Confucian understanding of the notions of friend and friendship are marked by feelings of trust and lengthy interaction. CHCs have differing levels of friendship and reserve open expression for intimates (Perrucci and Hu, 1995) whereas New Zealanders develop friendships rapidly, often precipitated by common circumstances. Thus, the participants concluded that their friendships with New Zealanders were very much on a common level, that is, they were perfunctory and did not extend much beyond acquaintanceship. Because participants had difficulty in reconstructing their meaning of friendship to fit with the New Zealand meaning, many of them failed to make lasting friendships with New Zealanders which served to further differentiate them from their hosts in the community.

Communication styles also contrasted. The communication styles which participants noted among New Zealanders were, in particular, ones of directness, especially in expressing points of view and feelings. Participants pointed out how they were used to a circular style (Kaplan, 1966), where little information is contained in the verbal transmission of the message, but in the receiver correctly interpreting the speaker's intent (Hall, 1976). SX and LJ found that their characters were suited to this direct and open style. Others were renegotiating their attitudes towards directness.

Another aspect of differing communication styles was what WK identified as a banter among New Zealanders, where interlocutors would make fun of one another. On the other hand, the Chinese style was that of *intentional gossip* which constituted talking and sharing stories about others. While most participants did not appear to have experience of banter, some were pleased to escape the gossip, a feature of communication within their culture.

Participants generally had difficulty in following the prosodic features of New Zealand speech which resulted in their feeling uncomfortable in maintaining conversations among New Zealanders. Their feelings of inadequacy in intercultural communication with New Zealanders stemmed from what they regarded as inadequate English. However, other factors, such as the need to develop trust before disclosing and moving the discussion beyond the perfunctory, and differing notions of what constituted friendship, also contributed towards these feelings. Many talked of the limited practice they received using social English in social contexts.

Thus, participants experienced a difficulty in reconstructing their communication strategies to accommodate New Zealand styles, and in developing a familiarity with the speech patterns and slang of New Zealanders in social contexts in order to abate the vicious circle of lack of confidence followed by withdrawal, which seemed to characterise much of the intercultural communication experiences of these participants. This situation was exacerbated by the limited social contact participants experienced with those from the host community, and by their reluctance to develop friendships beyond the level of acquaintanceship, given their cultural predisposition for friendships based on trust and lengthy interaction.

6.2 Communication with others from the same culture

Communication with others from the same culture appeared to be an important facet of the interpersonal communication experiences of participants beyond the School. The participants expressed a common ground and feeling of comfort when communicating with those from their own culture, even though some of them acknowledged the shortcomings of living in a microcosm of one's own culture. KZ told me that every international student who came here wanted to

find a friend. Not having recourse to the family, home, and close friends there, participants sought out potential friendships among, first, those from their own culture and, when that was not possible, with those from other CHCs (as indicated in Chapter five). In this section I discuss the importance of the interconnection between language and culture as a unifying force in interpersonal relationships, the dependence of the participants on their first culture, and the role of first culture clubs, for example, the Chinese Society and the Malaysian Students' Association, as significant facets in their communication experiences here with those from the same culture or from other CHCs.

6.2.1 The interconnection between language and culture

In any communication act participants are unified by language and culture. This interconnection between language and culture, manifest in preferences for communication with others from the same culture is exemplified in the following comments by two of the participants. FX spoke of another Chinese person from her province who singled her out so that they would be able to speak in their dialect together. FX relished this chance to express herself in her first language, a Chinese dialect of Szechuan Province. Through her dialect FX could revisit her cultural roots:

It's quite important because if your Mandarin is not very skilled, so sometimes you cannot express your idea very exactly, [and] sometimes you can keep the Chinese local custom. (FX).

Having a language and culture in common is also a useful way of sharing knowledge about and experiences within the host culture. SX explained the importance of his close Chinese friend here in New Zealand in this process. They enjoyed talking about western classical music and Chinese culture, and the differences between Chinese and western culture. In this friend he found a special relationship which enabled him to explore and better understand his own culture by comparing it with the western culture he was learning about and experiencing here. Through this friend he was able to enrich the intercultural experience offered to him by living in New Zealand. A few of the participants (for example, WK and FO) shared this perspective, although they had not articulated this interest in the same way.

To the other extreme there were also some who paid lip service to the idea of an intercultural experience or intercultural understanding, but for a range of reasons, did not seek it out (for example, FO and AS). Then there were those, somewhere in the middle, who wanted to have greater contact with New Zealanders and knowledge about New Zealand society and culture but, for a range of reasons, again, found it all too elusive (MC, ML).

Thus, communication with others from the same culture was important for participants, particularly as their first language was the most available means by which they could articulate their experiences and understanding of the host culture. Another important reason for participants' preferences for interpersonal communication with those from their first culture, although not articulated by the participants, is that personal problems are better discussed among fellow students than with outsiders, especially officially sanctioned agencies (Burns, 1991).

6.2.2 First culture dependency

Participants explained the importance of activities and interaction with those from their own culture. There was a marked contrast between the undergraduates, the Malaysians in particular, and the others regarding the extent to which they were dependent on those from their first culture.

Those who spoke most favourably about the role that others from their culture performed in their lives were the undergraduates from Malaysia. Unlike the married graduates from China, they did not come with their families; hence, the importance they attached to their compatriots, expressed most keenly by WK and FO, the two Smithfield students, and AS. WK encapsulated the value he placed on those from his own culture as a certain ease in same culture co-existence: that is, no explanations were required, and there was no pressure or awkwardness:

They are important most of all for motivation. Sometimes you get bored, you know, [with] what you are doing, just like don't know where you are going. I mean it's like, 'Oh, this work's terrible!' or something like that, and then you are a bit lost. Let's say you are studying something, and you just get fed up, so they are just there to, oh yeah for doing something else. Just to talk. (WK)

The participant who relied the most on those from his own culture was FO. He described his feelings at the beginning of his first semester here:

I feel very safe with my friends all around me. I think if I am the only one, then I will be afraid, I will be lonely, and I won't feel that confident any more. (FO)

He was delighted in the second semester when more *juniors* arrived from Smithfield College. These juniors had been his friends for three years. Their arrival improved his life here considerably:

I just feel more happy and I got more choice of friends to go out with. . . . We enjoy watching movie, we enjoy travelling. We always go to Auckland, . . . if we go down town we go shopping together. Sometimes we go [to a] disco as well. (FO)

They would sometimes be joined by other ethnic Chinese students from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and some Thai students, but not New Zealand students. FO explained that he would speak Mandarin with those, like himself, who were educated in a Chinese school in Malaysia, and English with those who were educated at an English school. It was noticeable that both the Smithfield Malaysians in this study and the other Smithfield Malaysians with whom they arrived at the University, who were all ethnic Chinese, had little contact with those Malaysians of Malay descent and who spoke Malay. Even in his Hall of Residence FO's friends were all from this same group: Smithfield first, and then other Asian international students. They tended not to attend the *floor* activities introduced by the warden to bring all the students (New Zealand and international) together. FO admitted that, for this reason, 'people may find it difficult to come to us' (FO). In his final year, and the third semester of this study, FO decided to rent the flat attached to his Hall of Residence with five other Smithfield students. His ethnic Chinese microcosm was now complete.

Like FO, AS's life was encircled by Malaysian friends, and also other international students. AS also lived in university housing, sharing a small university flat with other international students, apart from one female who was a New Zealander of Indian ancestry. However, AS's conversations with this flatmate focused around daily living; this appeared to be a relationship which constituted acquaintanceship or *common friendship*. AS rarely communicated with her about issues to do with New Zealand life. AS prepared her vegetarian food with another Malaysian male student and they shopped together. Her friends in her courses were all ethnic Chinese so she was speaking mainly Mandarin and Cantonese. She was also very active in the Malaysian Students' Club, international student sports teams, and had several circles of friends who

were international students. She was very concerned about not speaking English, especially with native speakers, as she knew that, this way, her English would not improve.

The other undergraduates showed less dependency. MC, as she became more established in New Zealand, began living again with Taiwanese. She shared her house with a Taiwanese family, so they all spoke Mandarin together. However, most of her time was spent at School or studying. She continued to speak English with her Thai boyfriend. At the same time she appreciated contact with those from other cultures and invited other Asian students, including me, to her house on Saturdays. Later, after moving to a different neighbourhood, she became more immersed in the community and invited her New Zealand neighbours to barbecues.

By contrast, some participants openly expressed feelings of hostility towards those from their culture. PS, for example, felt that too much contact with those from his own culture resulted in his being the subject of gossip. Similarly, SY and FX expressed this desire to escape from the gossip of others within their own culture, and also from other ethnic Chinese. PS, as a result of experiences in Auckland before coming to the School, avoided his Hong Kong compatriots and their circles of gossip and new arrivals from Hong Kong because they were a source of trouble to him. Being young adults, they found the life in New Zealand too quiet and wanted him to go out with them in the evenings. He preferred a peaceful and studious life, having had those experiences already in Auckland. SY, too, felt that he would perform better in his study if he were separated from his affluent ethnic Chinese friends in Auckland and Christchurch, friends who spent money freely on entertainment.

And FX spoke disparagingly of her Chinese neighbours in the block of flats where she lived, and with whom she did not get along. Although they shared the same language and country of origin, the similarity stopped there. She likened the situation to that in China when two families, living side by side, did not get on. It was acceptable to 'close the door' and not have a close relationship. Given the same circumstances but in another country, FX reconstructed her Chinese reality and detached herself from this situation.

Thus, the Malaysian undergraduates showed the most dependence on their first culture, reconstructing their social worlds in the host culture. Understandably, there was an ease and comfort in not having to explain anything or feel any

awkwardness or pressure brought about by language and culture difference. Others showed less dependency and were able to extend, to varying degrees, their social interaction beyond their first culture. Still a few others chose to shun the close networks of their compatriots to avoid the gossip, or being a subject of the gossip.

6.2.3 Same culture clubs

Within the community there is a Chinese Society, and the University has a very actively supported Malaysian Students' Association. Participants from these two cultures found these clubs a focal point of social interaction with others from their same culture.

The Chinese Society served as a centre for Chinese people to gather together once or twice a month for dinners, parties, lectures, sport, attendance at writing classes with their children on Saturday afternoons, or as a place to talk with other Chinese. New arrivals could get information about how to get settled and where to shop. In the absence of friendships, according to the Chinese notion expressed in the previous part, the Chinese Society seemed to fulfil the support network usually performed by family and close friends, especially for the participants from China, although there were also Taiwanese who belonged. One Chinese student who was not in this study told me that people helped one another a lot in this society, but the society was not central to their social life because many of the members were students and much of their time was preoccupied with study. Certainly, the Chinese participants were testimony to this. Apart from offering support to Chinese people in the community, it was also a source of cultural and social activity.

ML found the society an invaluable help in getting settled into New Zealand life, and relied on these contacts for her social life. Apart from when she came to the School for class, ML had little contact with others outside of this circle. In turn, she also helped newcomers from China. YR also valued the opportunity the Society gave her to meet other Chinese women and be comfortable among them, speaking her own language, Mandarin. As a result of attending the meetings of the Society, YR also began to notice that, since living in New Zealand, Chinese people had changed. She commented that they spoke less openly. It was no longer acceptable to ask people questions about their work and there was a need to respect one another's privacy more. YR felt that the explanation for this

closed behaviour lay in the existence of the Privacy Act. For her, the Privacy Act prohibited people from talking about their work. By comparison, she commented that in China conversation was more open and people “gossip” about their own and others’ personal lives more than they do here. As a result of these differences which emerged from living in another culture, YR found that it was ‘quite difficult to make really sincere friends’ (YR) among her Chinese compatriots. Another reason YR cited for this was that Chinese people preferred to seek contact with westerners, rather than other Chinese from their own culture. The behaviour of the participants from China in this study affirms her observation, especially where they feel there are some elements of their culture from which they would like to escape, namely, the custom of gossiping.

The Malaysian students also had their own club which is campus focused. Sunday afternoon sports meetings were popular and were frequented by FO, WK, and AS. SY never went (in keeping with his policy of eschewing Malaysian networks). PS, although from Hong Kong, also attended sometimes. Through this club the Malaysian students had contacts with other university clubs of Malaysian students in New Zealand. For example, AS attended sports meetings in Christchurch and Auckland. The Hong Kong and Taiwanese cultures did not have their own club in the community.

Thus, the Malaysian Students’ Association was an important focus of same culture contact for the Malaysian undergraduates. For the Chinese, their club provided more a focus for sharing information about living in New Zealand or helping new arrivals, as well as a chance to meet up with others from China. By contrast, Burns (1991) reported that the overseas students in his study did not participate in general campus activities because of the limited time they had due to the demands of their studies. It would seem, however, that in this study the undergraduates especially found time for leisure activities and sought out same culture contact in preference to intercultural contact during their leisure time. Similarly, the Chinese Society provided a network for maintaining certain cultural practices.

6.2.4 Conclusions

Because of the interconnection between language and culture, and the consequent ease of communication, it is understandable that participants would seek to communicate their experiences and understanding of life in the host community with their compatriots.

Aside from this fundamental basis for first culture relationships participants viewed contact with those from their first cultures diversely: some with caution, and others with an appreciation of the feeling of security and buffering it provided for them. The extent to which they pursued contact with others from their own culture was largely determined by their life styles and personalities. The mature participants (FX, YR, LJ, SX, ML and JX) tended to be very busy with family life and study. Undergraduates, who began their stay here in Halls of Residence, developed friendships with those from their own culture or with other international students, and perhaps had more time for leisure than those with families. The Malaysians, with the exception of SY, showed the most dependence on their own culture. Such a dependence is not surprising, given that, as KZ noted earlier, every international student who comes here wants to find a friend. Further factors were the size and character of the Malaysian population in the School, especially the Smithfield group, and the Malaysian Students' Association as a focus for socialising and playing sport. In any case, the relationships they had with other Malaysians here needs to be seen in the context of their understanding of the notion of friendship. Still others preferred to maintain a distance from those from their own culture in order to avoid what they regarded as gossip.

The Chinese Society also provided a point of social interaction and support for participants with other Chinese students and recently arrived immigrants.

Certainly, the role played by those from the same culture was important for participants. Through a common language and culture, they could share their knowledge and understanding of their experiences in the host community, thus facilitating intercultural understanding and acceptance. And yet, this same culture immersion could also contribute towards creating and maintaining cultural difference between participants and the host culture as differences are articulated in communication. In the case of the Malaysian participants, and ML from China, the breadth of immersion they sought within their same culture suggests

that this is so. However, from the Chinese participants' experiences there also appeared to be reconstruction of interpersonal communication among those in the same culture to accommodate differences in communication in the host community as noted by YR. This was also the case for SY and PS who sought to avoid the gossip which characterised the communication patterns of their CHC cultures.

6.3 Communication with other international students

Other international students appeared to play a significant role in the participants' social realities. The undergraduates demonstrated their desire to spend their leisure time with others, not having the recourse of family and home. As well as the close connections they developed with those from their own culture, they also generated friendships with those from other CHCs. Participants who lived in the Halls of Residence, and most did at the outset, had greater opportunity to communicate and develop interpersonal relationships with other international students. They also formed these friendships in the learning environment.

One major impression that came to me when these participants spoke about their time together with other international students was how much fun they had. This sense of enjoyment for life did not come through in their voices, in their expression, when they spoke of their encounters with New Zealand students. The participants tended to share friendships across the Asian cultures of Taiwan, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. However, shared Chinese ethnicity was an even greater unifying factor. From my fieldwork I noted that they tended not to extend communication with Malays or Indians, for example, especially the participants from Malaysia. I also noted that the dominant language used for communication was Mandarin, followed by English, and then Cantonese. Thus the Confucian link, which was manifest in language and culture, proved to be a strong bond for the participants when communicating with others beyond their first culture.

During the research period many of the undergraduate students found (or had already) boyfriend/girlfriend relationships with students from other CHCs, for example, AS, PS, MC, HY, KZ. Their choice of partner is evidence of the collective power of the CHC identity. For example, MC from Taiwan had an

ethnic Chinese boyfriend from Thailand, PS from Hong Kong had a girlfriend from Malaysia, and KZ's girlfriend came from Hong Kong. FO's life was intertwined with his Smithfield cohort. The fact that these relationships developed and were significant in the daily lives of these participants suggests that they needed to have, and preferred, close relationships with those from their own culture or from a CHC.

The participants in this study, along with other international students, are linked by the common experience of being students who is not from New Zealand and, thus, of having to learn to study in a different learning context. Outside of study they shared similar interests, such as: involvement in clubs (the Malaysian Students' Association, the Overseas Christian Fellowship, and sports activities); travel in New Zealand; and going into town to the movies, to cafes, restaurants and discos. Similarly, they shared a disinterest in frequenting the *pubs* where their New Zealand student counterparts went, although some male students (FO, KZ and SX) cited separate experiences where they and other Asian students had gone into a pub to drink beer just for the experience.

Many of the participants appreciated the opportunity that studying here gave them to meet students from other cultures. This was particularly so for those from China who had not had many, if any, intercultural communication encounters in China. For example, SX enjoyed discussing religion with Muslims from Malaysia while he lived briefly in a Hall of Residence. SX also explained that the first friends he made, who were also international students from Korea and Taiwan, were important in abating his feelings of loneliness when he first arrived in New Zealand. Both KZ and LJ enjoyed the opportunity to get to know students from other parts of Asia.

This friendship pattern is exemplified by AS's network of friends she had developed by the second semester, a network which did not include New Zealanders:

They are all Asian. I have one group is Taiwans friends, one group is netball/basketball/track friends, I have Hong Kong people, or Malaysian, I have one group [Hall of Residence] all Malaysian. . . . They know one another, but they don't go out together. Asian network! . . . We seldom, we never, no, we never go out with Kiwis. (AS)

After AS related this episode to me she suddenly realised, witnessed by an expression of surprise in her voice, that all her friends were international students from CHCs, and that she did not socialise with New Zealand students.

I asked her if this revelation seemed in any way startling to her. ‘Why not! I don’t know!’ (AS) was her reply. Ultimately, she seemed quite satisfied about this situation, isolating though it was in terms of establishing intercultural relations with New Zealanders.

The preference participants demonstrated for communication with those from their first culture was also extended to those from other CHCs. For example, PS preferred to speak with others from CHCs because they could share knowledge about other Asian countries and culture, whereas he found that New Zealanders knew little about these things. He summed up the difference:

If I talk with Asian[s] we have similar thinking about [things], if we talk this topic we will think in the same way, but if I talk with Kiwi, maybe we talk in a different way. (PS)

For PS underlying cultural perspectives of Asians and New Zealanders were at odds. Because of this, PS preferred to keep his Asian and New Zealand friendships separate. WK also felt that it was ‘easier to close the barriers’ when talking with other international students. Other participants expressed similar views.

6.3 Conclusions

The intercultural communication experiences that participants engaged in, some of which resulted in friendships according to the Confucian meaning, especially in the early period of their stay, were first and foremost with other international students from CHCs. Not only were they united by a common cultural heritage, by ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, by language, but they also shared a common experience: that of being an international student whose linguistic, cultural and educational background was different to that of the host culture. They also shared common values which facilitated communication and enabled richer interpersonal relationships with one another. These feelings of communicative and cultural competence were rarely felt in communicative interactions with those in the host culture, especially with New Zealand students.

As noted in Chapter 6.1.1, one of the key elements in any friendship or relationship among those from CHCs is trust which evolves over a period of time. Given the preferences that these participants cited for intra- and

intercultural communication, especially among others from CHCs, relationships with New Zealand students could not have developed easily. Their preferences are also indicative of the intra-cultural links among those from CHCs. These experiences then, along with the experiences of the participants described in the previous part, are testimony to the importance they placed in recreating their social worlds from their first cultures in the host environment. The reconstruction of these social worlds into these same culture communities through the maintenance of communication styles and socialisation patterns also served to manifest and maintain cultural difference.

The extent to which these preferences are a consequence of the factors surrounding the formation of satisfactory interpersonal relationships with those from the host culture will be explored next.

6.4 Communication with other New Zealand students

In this part the participants talk about their communication and interpersonal relationships with New Zealand students. The undergraduates had the most opportunities and, thus, the most experiences to relate about initiating and developing these contacts because they had more leisure time and they lived beside New Zealand students in the Halls of Residence. There was an observable change in the behaviour and feelings of these participants towards New Zealand students over the research period. The married graduates had less time or opportunity for contact because of the pressure of study and their commitment to family life. Furthermore, they did not live on campus, but in rented flats. The male graduates showed more interest than the females, but expressed complications for various reasons. First, I will discuss the undergraduates' experiences in intercultural communication with New Zealand students, and then those of the graduate participants who, for factors of gender and maturity, had different life experiences and, therefore, different attitudes and expectations which influenced their intercultural communication. Finally, I will consider how topics of conversation influenced their communication.

6.4.1 Undergraduates: Intercultural communication with New Zealand students

The undergraduate participants' first point of contact with New Zealand students beyond the School was in the Halls of Residence where all (except MC) began their student life in New Zealand. Many of their perceptions and experiences of communication with New Zealand students originate from that context. The participants' explanations of these perceptions help to clarify the difficulty they experienced in intercultural communication. While it was not uncommon for them to desire friendships with New Zealanders, as in FO's claim early on in this study: 'at least I can go back and tell my friends, "Oh, I got a friend in New Zealand"' (FO), achieving this aim was problematic, as their stories indicate.

Despite this claim FO revealed his situation at the end of the third semester. The only two people he felt he had made deeper contacts with were the warden and another female student from the previous semester. He would sit down and talk to these two before class if he saw them on campus, and yet he also expressed reservations about communicating with them: 'Language is one of my main concerns, in the way that they might not understand me, and sometimes I feel that with them I should talk more of my happy things, rather than sad thing' (FO). Again, FO used language as a reason for not communicating, but underlying this issue was his desire not to disclose his real feelings; personal feelings were better communicated to his other closer friends, that is, those among the Smithfield group.

He went on to explain what the issues were. In his Hall of Residence FO was surrounded mostly by New Zealand female students. He described them as friendly people, and yet he felt that his relationships with them were superficial. Together they would just talk about 'general issues, how was your day, and how's your boyfriend going on, nothing much really' (FO). He found that they avoided communication with him, for example, when he sometimes forgot to switch off his alarm clock they would leave a note saying 'please remember to switch off your alarm clock' on the door rather than tell him directly. He did not understand this behaviour and would have preferred that they approached him directly. He mentioned that his other Malaysian friends had had similar experiences. FO articulated the reasons why he thought these relationships were so superficial and distant:

I don't really intend to talk to them. That's why there's a gap there, or something like that. I don't really feel like talking, maybe because I think that my English is not that good. They might be impatient of my English or something like that. (FO)

Again, FO is presenting language as a reason for not talking when there is a deeper underlying issue: a lack of intention which manifests itself as a lack of interest. He went on to express how this lack of interest was mutual, and constituted the barrier to communication, rather than language:

Actually, I think I prefer [it] that way perhaps, that's why I didn't really got to know them better perhaps. Yeah, and they don't even, they don't really try to approach, I mean, try to communicate also. (FO)

WK related an episode at dinner time in the Halls which reflected a similar attitude to that of FO. Usually, he did not sit with New Zealand students, preferring the relaxed company of other international students:

I wouldn't really avoid [New Zealand students] . . . but if there are international students, some I know, I would sit with them. (WK)

He put himself in the same category as other Smithfield students: 'We don't take the initiative to talk to the Kiwis' (WK). He recalled one time when he did have to sit with New Zealand students: 'I just ate my dinner. Just get it back as fast as possible' (WK), and another time when he sat with a group of four:

I did talk one time, but they had their own group, keep talking like that, so they talk among them, so for me I just have a bit of a chat. . . . [They were] not really welcoming. (WK)

And PS described the difficulty he had in talking to his neighbour when he first lived in the Halls. He felt that she was not interested in talking to him, partly because of the language difference, and partly because (and he quoted her terms) he was from a "different country", he was "Asian", and "a foreigner". PS concluded that, if he were asked to describe New Zealand students to his friends back in his own country he would say: 'They don't have to study and they like sport. They always play sport, yeah. And always drinking' (PS).

AS was able to articulate what many of the participants experienced in trying to communicate with New Zealand students:

[I] just can tell in their face, in their face, they're not interested, yeah. Maybe it's their character, some people, even those international student[s], they don't like to listen to people much, or they don't like to socialise with people. . . . It's rational, understandable. But I found that some New

Zealanders, they are quite . . . unlike the international students, the way they talk, they way they socialise. If I speak English very well I think there's, there won't be any problem communicating, but just, sometimes I don't talk much because I don't want to wasting each other times.

This feeling was reiterated by KZ: 'I think they are not quite interested in other countries' people, you know, so it's not that easy to talking with them' (KZ).

KZ, FO and AS captured here the key to communication between these participants from CHCs and New Zealand students: each group was not really interested in the other because of a range of differences; language was posited as the key reason, but closer examination of participants' intercultural communication experiences over the research period refuted this. AS found this phenomenon both rational and understandable. Although she herself perceived that she was willing to mix with New Zealand students and open herself to them, she recognised how fundamental differences in the way they talk, and in how they like to socialise impinged upon the possibility or extent of their communication and resulting friendship. However, as a result of my observations and considering her disposition towards making friends with other students from CHCs, like FO she tended to gravitate towards the latter, perhaps for the reasons she gave: ease of communication, that is, no problems with English, and mutual interest in and acceptance of one another.

Although FO did talk enthusiastically of one exception, his New Zealand neighbour opposite his room in his Hall of Residence, he did not indicate that the relationship developed into a friendship beyond this friendly greeting:

She always start discuss, something to talk to, and I find her very easy to talk to. . . . Every time when she see me, and she will ask me how's my work, how's my day, and so on. (FO)

WK, too, made a good friend with one New Zealand student in his Hall of Residence: 'We just got on quite close and we can talk about things, so he call me to go over to his place, drinking or whatever' (WK). Unfortunately for WK, this student left during the second semester to go into the army.

WK spoke of an interesting reversal in perceptions towards the end of the research period, when he was a fourth year international student: he held a certain mystique to the first year New Zealand students on his floor. These students confided to him that they were afraid of initiating a conversation with him and did not know what he would think of them but, after getting to know

him, they related their thoughts: “Oh, you are not that bad” (WK). They were reliving the undergraduate participants’ experiences of not knowing what to talk about, or whether they should initiate a conversation. WK found this consoling. It would appear then that, in some instances, feelings of suspicion and doubt about the cultural other were present on both sides.

Ironically, FO had been encouraged to explore intercultural contacts here as a result of discussions he had had with his Malaysian friend who had been a student in the United States, and had made many friends among the North American students there. When this friend came to visit FO in New Zealand he commented that, compared with American students, New Zealand students were shy. FO, who had met some exchange students from the United States and Australia, also found that these students were friendly. FO thus hoped for closer contact with New Zealand students, but this never eventuated before he returned to Malaysia. Perhaps unconsciously he had prevented opportunity for such contact, especially since, as even he himself admitted, his life style was determined by the Smithfield *gang* he mixed with all the time. The difficulty he expressed in making it happen was understandable. On the other hand, the interpersonal communication styles of North Americans and New Zealanders are different, and expectations of similarities between the two, based on ethnic similarities, would be misleading, as FO found out. Furthermore, the United States has a longer tradition of cultural diversity which may result in some communities being more disposed towards cultural difference.

Of all the participants, SY was the only participant who tended to shun his national and international peers; he befriended solely the New Zealand students on his floor in his Hall of Residence. He was immensely proud of the close relationship he had established with them. By the first week he claimed to know ‘the whole floor’ (SY). He found them very ‘kind’ and ‘accepting’ (SY). He explained to me how they spoke slowly to him to make sure he understood them; he was even able to understand their jokes. By the third semester these friends, who had now become ‘old friends’ (SY), could understand him well, even though he was not convinced that his English had improved significantly:

They know what I’m gonna say already. . . . Maybe I improve my English, maybe they try to understand my English, and they used for my English already, what I said they can understand me, because we always together, every day together. (SY)

These close six or seven friends helped him in many ways: they lent him money when he had lost it; and, above all, they helped him with his studies. He described these friendships as being equivalent to the friendships he might have with other friends in his country (that is, according to the notions of friendship discussed in 6.1.1). They were even better than his Chinese friends here because, unlike his Chinese friends, who were even weaker than he in their studies, these New Zealand friends were able to give him much academic help. Among them there was mutual trust. He described the key to his success in becoming accepted. On arrival here his English was very poor so he sought ways in which he could befriend the other students, all of whom were first year New Zealand students, on his floor:

I just buy a lot of beer and organise the party all the time, like at least three times a week and go real hard, and everyone like me so much, so everyone just come to me, talk to me, just be very very good friends, those kind of stuff. (SY)

SY recounted how, in the New Zealand students' eyes, he did not fit with their constructions of CHC students:

They said, "You are totally different with other Chinese". They said [that] other Chinese always try to show off their car, and have a big stereo in their car and try to show off and feel proud all the time, walk past. They said, "You are different, you don't mix [with] Chinese, you come and mix with us". Yeah, so totally different, eh. They like me so much, so I learn everything from them. (SY)

SY's story is revealing in that he draws on the stereotype that New Zealand students hold towards CHC students. While LJ told me (in personal communication) that some of his Asian friends are aware of the values held by New Zealanders and deliberately hide their wealth, the issue of collectivity is more difficult to disguise. Perhaps the comments by the New Zealand students show their need for better understanding and acceptance of the cultural other.

Thus, for these undergraduates their perception that there was a lack of mutual interest between them and their New Zealand hosts constituted a serious barrier to intercultural communication. It also served to maintain cultural difference. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that they tended not to take the initiative in developing conversations, and by perceptions they believed the cultural other held of them, of being, as PS put it, 'Asian', 'a foreigner', and 'from a different country'. Such perceptions meant that participants had to deal with self-conscious feelings of being different which further caused anxiety about the communication event. Associated with these perceptions were the

constructions held by New Zealanders of Asians: of being unable to speak English properly, of always being together in groups and, often, of being rich. Over the research period participants intimated their knowledge of these stereotypes to me and they also emerged in some of their accounts, as the comments of SY's New Zealand friends indicated. As SY's accounts demonstrate he also succeeded in reconstructing and renegotiating his social reality to fit with that of his New Zealand peers. As a result, he was the only participant to totally immerse himself in the New Zealand student culture of the Halls. As an intercultural communicator he was very successful.

6.4.2 Graduates: Gender and maturity as factors in communication experiences

The graduates' accounts of intercultural communication experiences with New Zealand students beyond the School were quite different to the undergraduates' accounts. The female participants (ML, FX, and YR) were married and did not make friends readily with New Zealand students for various reasons. ML was very involved with the Chinese community through her husband and, since she was only taking one paper in the first semester, she spent little time on campus. YR and FX each had a child at school. YR's husband arrived from China half way through the research period. This put an added strain on her life. FX, too, had to care for her husband and child. Their lives were circumscribed by family, study, and survival in New Zealand, leaving little time or opportunity to engage in other activities where they could meet others, or cultivate friendships. YR, however, did have a number of people she relied on for support, but I discuss these relationships in Chapter seven.

The male participants were more outgoing and actively sought more interpersonal relationships with New Zealanders because they had more desire to integrate into and understand better New Zealand society than their female counterparts. LJ was pleased to have made contact with some other New Zealand students at the gym which he attended regularly. They invited him to play basketball, even though he said he did not know how to play. They also supported one another when exercising. He appreciated their friendliness and openness, and hoped that one day he would also find this friendship and support in the School, for example, New Zealand classmates who would invite him to share their assignments, test papers, references, and other resources. LJ and SX, outgoing by nature, welcomed communication with other New Zealanders. They were the

most eager to profit from their experience of living in New Zealand and were open to learning from it.

LJ developed a friendship with a mature student in Auckland whom he continued to visit. LJ believed that they found a common meeting point in age, marriage, and family orientation. He explained how this friendship started:

My classmate found a part-time job. He said, "Do you want to travel?" I said, "I enjoy travelling, but we need money". And, "Okay, I found a job. We do [it] together and go to the Bay of Islands together". [He's] a good friend. When I come [came] here they miss[ed] me. (LJ)

So why was it more difficult for LJ to reconstruct such friendships here, especially given his role as support person in the School? He attributed the difficulty to two factors: the first concerned cultural differences which may have impinged upon friendship; and the second, and more important he thought, was due to age differences (and the associated experiences) between himself and the New Zealand students. For example, some students did invite him to go to the pub together, but he refused because it did not fit with his family life.

SX had New Zealand friends who were students in other Schools at the University. As he had a very outgoing character and was eager to involve himself with other people and with other activities, he made much effort to join in with any activities they offered. Like the undergraduates, he admitted to having difficulty with the language, and used it as a reason for difficulty in establishing intercultural relationships with other New Zealand students. He was more successful in establishing relationships with those New Zealanders who were not students.

So, for the graduates, the females expressed little desire to form relationships with other New Zealand students because of their personal lives. The males, on the other hand, were much more desirous of developing friendships but, again, maturity factors seemed to create a gap between their experiences and those of the New Zealand students.

6.4.3 Topics of conversation

One of the difficulties participants cited when talking to New Zealand students was finding a common ground for initiating and maintaining a conversation, of

knowing what to talk about. All of the participants expressed some confusion over topics of conversation with New Zealand students.

For those participants who lived within the Halls of Residence, one place where they could meet New Zealand students and converse was in the TV room. For example, in KZ's first semester in a Hall of Residence, he tried to chat superficially to New Zealand students about the movies on television, and the actors he knew in them. However, his understanding of English permitted him to get only the general idea of the television programmes (invariably sport or a movie). In fact, he felt he got more information about New Zealand culture and society from books as his opportunities to talk with New Zealanders were limited. Even by the second semester, things had not got much easier for KZ: 'I can't find the same topic because we are, our interests is quite different so we can't find the same topic to talk about' (KZ). He described their interests as 'New Zealand interests', such as rugby, a view held by some of the other male participants. He summarised:

I think most of the young people in New Zealand, they don't care about the world, they just care about New Zealand. For example, when the Olympic Games started very few young people watched the Olympic Games, just some people maybe older people like to watch some of the games. But in China it's quite different. I think in most of world is quite different. (KZ)

KZ also felt that cultural difference was not a topic of interest for these young students as it was for older people.

WK, even by the third semester, noted that the absence of common ground created a risk in initiating communication. He felt the responsibility of taking the first step, a huge risk, if he were to go beyond the perfunctory level of communication:

You've got to take a risk and preferably, like, sometimes you get something to talk about first. It's not, yeah, it's not like you just talk, like "Hello", and then I just say a few things, and you just leave, yeah. But it slowly builds up, [and it] give you opportunity, [to] gets to know them. (WK)

When new students came into the Halls, he had difficulty in communicating with them and following what they were talking about because he was not familiar with their personal lives, their family histories, and their home town. There were still many topics which he had difficulty following with New Zealanders, for example, politics, even though he was interested in political issues, both in New Zealand and abroad.

He contrasted these conversations with those of his Smithfield cohort where he was unconscious of the communication process, and at ease. With them conversation was spontaneous. There was no need to think about a possible topic for conversation:

We just talk and talk and talk about anything. . . . We joke about anything. It's like very easy going and everything, like it's just normal. Then sometimes, if I go to a New Zealander probably, like, I must think, like, what they are doing, . . . the topics they are talking I haven't familiarised. Yeah, so, I do like make effort to understand, I mean like, sometimes I don't understand what they're talking about and I start laughing and everything at their jokes. I don't think it's humorous and everything. (WK)

FX observed that, on some topics, Chinese were much more explicit and forthcoming. She described how they liked to talk about money, and the cost of everything, including property, cars, and income. She noted that this feature of conversation was even more pronounced among those from Hong Kong and Taiwan. They also had no inhibitions about telling their age. FX noticed that these topics were shunned in New Zealand. She felt that New Zealanders preferred to talk about the weather! That FX had this impression suggests that she rarely got beyond this perfunctory level of communication. She had difficulty in extending the level of communication beyond very simple or practical things, partly because of her limited language, but also because she did not want to disclose too much of her personal self or life to others, preferring instead simple topics like 'Chinese food', or 'my husband is doing a PhD' (FX). Furthermore, like the other participants, there was the added difficulty of not knowing what to talk to New Zealanders about.

On a more positive note, PS gained friendship with the friends of his Homestay mother's son. As a result of this contact he learned much from them: 'They have all different opinions, different ideas, different experiences, so I can learn many things from that' (PS). For example, they talked about travel and places of interest in New Zealand, about sport, in particular the New Zealand cultural phenomenon of rugby and the All Blacks (knowledge PS regarded as compulsory if he wanted to converse with young New Zealanders). Initially, PS had no interest in sport or rugby, but with time and with the development of these friendships he became converted, even watching rugby matches on television. Similarly, SY, in sharing so much of the New Zealand students' lives in the Halls, had no difficulty in developing friendships and in conversing with New Zealand students. In fact, he found that the students, being usually

about five years younger than him, tended to be naive and had very limited experiences on which to base their topics of conversation.

From these participants' accounts it is apparent, then, that an intercultural communication event took effort, and was taxing on and risky for participants, unlike the informal, relaxed style of intracultural communication, where topics and humour were easily negotiated. Participants generally felt that the New Zealand students in particular were insular in their interests; as KZ described it, they had 'New Zealand interests'. This further increased the distance between their fields of knowledge. Cultural difference, while of interest to the participants, did not figure in the experiences or interests of the New Zealand students. Once communication had been initiated participants then had difficulty in knowing how to extend it, especially given that they did not share common life experiences with New Zealand students.

6.4.4 Conclusions

Despite the claim expressed by participants of wanting to develop friendships with New Zealand students, for the most part, such friendships, according to the Chinese notion, remained elusive. While participants were also keen to blame this situation on their poor English, a number of other factors emerged which impacted much more on their opportunities for intercultural communication. The most fundamental obstacle, at least among undergraduates, was a lack of interest in one another and, thus, neither party showed much initiative in going beyond *common friendship*. An awkwardness in managing conversation provided a further obstacle. Participants' constructions of New Zealand students saw differences in preferences for socialising, in topics of conversation, and even in interpersonal knowledge of the cultural other. Participants' accounts revealed that these feelings existed on both sides. There were, however, some positive experiences where these barriers were overcome, and where participants were able to establish friendships through familiarity, similar interests, or desire to develop relationships. Communication with New Zealand students especially was contrasted with the humour and ease with which communication was conducted among those from the same culture or from other CHCs.

The graduates' experiences were circumscribed more by their familial situations, thus giving them less time for leisure where intercultural contacts could be

pursued. Study and family took up much of their time. The male graduates appeared to be more enthusiastic about getting to know students but often had difficulty in finding a meeting point with the younger and unmarried New Zealand students. This finding is in contrast to that of Perrucci and Hu (1995) who noted that married students had more opportunities to become socially integrated into the local community and to feel satisfied with social relationships, that is, as students and as spouses. They concluded that, because married students had a greater network of available relationships, they therefore experienced greater satisfaction with their social life in the host environment. Of those participants who experienced intercultural contact with New Zealand students in my study (namely, SX and LJ), this was not the case.

Beyond contextual and social issues were issues related to the communication event. A constant problem for participants was how to either initiate or maintain a conversation; WK even considered it a risk taking exercise requiring much effort. KZ encapsulated this scenario when he expressed his difficulty in finding a topic of common interest. Male participants expressed the value placed on sport by New Zealand students, and the fact that they were not interested in cultural difference. KZ concluded that their interests were 'New Zealand interests', or they were about personal lives, family or home town, topics of which the participants had no knowledge. As noted earlier (6.1.1), self-disclosure is reserved for intimates in CHCs. Because participants had difficulty in establishing rapport with New Zealand students, resulting in conversation that rarely went beyond the perfunctory level, they never approached the level of friendship required for self-disclosure.

6.5 Communication with other New Zealanders (non-students)

Participants' interactions with New Zealand people beyond the University community varied, in much the same ways as their personalities and characters did. There were, however, some common threads among their experiences as well as some specific cultural differences which influenced their intercultural communication experiences. The most commonly expressed feeling among participants was that, similar to the preceding part (6.4), they were interested in

getting to know New Zealanders, but found it difficult to make contact and then develop a friendship beyond a level of superficiality.

In this part I address participants' communication experiences in the community, their place of residence as a factor in intercultural communication, and changing attitudes towards intercultural communication with New Zealanders over the research period.

6.5.1 Communication experiences in the community

Some participants related specific incidents which gave them the opportunity to have deeper insights into intercultural communication beyond the experiences offered within the context of the School, the campus, or their living arrangements. From their accounts it appeared that these experiences had a profound influence on them.

The only participant who had the experience of the work place to draw on was AS. She managed to find part-time temporary employment with the Chinese owner of a chocolate factory. Here, AS felt accepted, and was also a subject of interest to those around her. This was a completely different feeling for AS compared with her student life, both on campus and in her living environment. She told the story of working with them:

[There were] some Kiwis there. Normally they quit high school, they don't study much, but they are nice people too. . . . They always sing song, they always listen to video during work. . . . Sometimes they want us to teach them how to speak in Chinese, and they taught us how to speak Maori. . . . I think they just want to enjoy life now. They don't have longer plans for themselves. They just spend money, their wages, during Friday, Saturday night, in the bar, drinking, yeah, they drink a lot, they told us, they drink a lot, smoke a lot. . . . They're really brave in expressing themselves. If they want to talk they just talk, if yell, they just yell, and they sometimes dance during their work. I mean it won't [be] like this for us, I mean we [are] just not used to show people what we want to do. I mean this is not, this is the obvious thing. . . . This is a good way I think, if you good at expressing yourself, . . . a different way. (AS)

AS was overwhelmed by the vitality and frivolity of the workers she encountered in this social milieu. She had not seen it in the New Zealand students at the University, and she could never imagine such behaviour in the work place in her own country. The values of these people: having no educational goals, living for the day, spending their money on entertainment, and not saving for the future, represented a mentality which she had never seen before and nor had she

imagined. Nor was she used to others expressing their feelings (talking, yelling, dancing) so overtly. This behaviour is anathema to anyone educated according to CHC values where moderation, harmony and face must be shown at all times (Cheng and Clark, 1993), and where there is a deep reverence towards education (Lee, 1996). The behaviour of these New Zealand workers was a source of amusement and enlightenment to AS. Here she felt comfortable, accepted, on an equal footing, in spite of the differences in language, culture, values and behaviour between them. She compared this social context with that of the School where she felt the students were less friendly and less accepting:

Maybe they are more friendly than students, maybe we are working in the same factory, we are all working in one group. . . . Plenty of time to talk, and they don't have, they don't show that they don't like international [students]. (AS)

Clearly, AS felt accepted at this part-time job: she was a member of the group, she was included in the communication, and she was able to contribute as a group member. She did not share these feelings of belonging, of membership, as a student within the School. From this work experience she had found out about another side of New Zealand life which would have otherwise remained hidden to her. The question here is whether her novelty in this work situation created an interest for the workers, or whether the workers themselves, being Maori, and conversant in another culture and language, it would seem, were consequently more aware and accepting of difference. Both factors appear to be operating.

This feeling of being accepted in this social milieu serves to heighten the feelings of antipathy she perceives towards her on the part of New Zealand students. While, in general, participants never made such specific comments, the allusions to this point were there, and expressed in the difficulties they found in making friends with New Zealand students. This underlying feeling of exclusion from the student body of the School which AS alluded to was revealed by some of the other participants too. Similarly, JX felt accepted when he found a job as an engineer in a factory, after leaving the School. He talked with the workers there about issues in New Zealand life, something he was unable to do among New Zealand students within the School.¹

WK, as an active Christian, had his parish contacts. Here, he was able to meet other New Zealanders from whom he sought friendship and also advice. He did

¹ JX expressed this feeling to me in personal communication.

concede, though, that his Smithfield friends were ‘always there’ (WK). And YR, who went to church some Sundays, found friends there, people whom she could call if she needed help or advice in her daily life, although she also sought advice from the researcher sometimes.

LJ took conscious steps to become part of ordinary New Zealand society. For example, he joined the Cosmopolitan Club which, traditionally, has been a place for working people to gather and socialise after work. The only other Chinese there was a New Zealand born Chinese. He described the experience with great interest and enjoyment:

I play snooker with Kiwi and I drink beer with them, but I don't want to go to the pub. The Cosmopolitan Club is different from the pub, because there are too many young peoples and drunk peoples in the pub. At the Cosmopolitan Club there are many old people and working people and businessmen. There are a lot of business people there. When I played snooker with [name] (the New Zealand born Chinese), and another two Kiwi[s] ask me, "Are you Chinese outsider?" They said, "We just travel to China and we set up our export business in China. We found some problem there", and we discuss with them. . . . [My wife also] found this a very nice place. During the weekend they dancing, and there is singer, they sing very well. And they have some sport competition, bowls, the snooker, black ace, and they also have some slot machine here, and the week before, last week, my wife, she very lucky, she win the jackpot. She only paid two dollars and win three hundred. We both [have] the New Zealand luck here. (LJ)

LJ enjoyed this experience because in this New Zealand club he felt in contact with New Zealanders in everyday New Zealand society, just as AS had in her part-time work experience. He wanted to extend his intercultural understanding beyond what he felt were the limited horizons of university life. No other participant was this successful in finding this level of belonging. Being at the Cosmopolitan Club enabled LJ to step out from his Chineseness and feel a sense of belonging with the New Zealanders around him. He was sharing a New Zealand cultural experience with other New Zealanders. He felt at one with them. However, judging by the comments of the two New Zealand men LJ talked to, this feeling was not reciprocated. While the New Zealanders there accepted him and included him, they categorised him as a *Chinese outsider*. Presumably, they regarded LJ differently to the New Zealand born Chinese, a category with which they were more familiar, since New Zealand born Chinese have been part of New Zealand's ethnic composition for over a century.

AS and LJ were the only two participants who succeeded in achieving a sense of immersion into the host culture, albeit briefly for AS, an experience which left a profound impression on them. It is pleasing to note that the experience for both

of them was positive: they felt accepted and uninhibited in their intercultural contact. They were also able to experience life in New Zealand beyond the cultural context of the University. LJ saw this experience as a chance to integrate himself and his family into New Zealand society, whereas AS regarded her work experience more as an insight into an aspect of life in New Zealand beyond the School, an experience she could take back to Malaysia with her, but not one she chose to build on while a student in New Zealand.

6.5.2 Residence as a factor in intercultural communication

Some students expressed motivating factors like wanting to improve their English as a reason for getting to know New Zealanders. Homestays and flatting provided opportunities to speak English and experience social life beyond the University. About half the participants had had homestay experiences. By the end of the research period, only four participants (all undergraduates) remained in the Halls of Residence on campus. The others rented accommodation. Participants discussed how their living arrangements influenced their opportunities for communication with New Zealanders.

Renting

The married participants from China were all renting accommodation. ML wanted to have more communication with her neighbours but she felt that, although they were interested in talking to her, they were always busy with work and daily life so their communication never went beyond greeting one another. She concluded that her New Zealand flatmate was different from other New Zealanders, as he was not 'talkative', nor did he have 'friends'. She thought it 'strange' (ML) when his parents came to his house where she and her husband rented a room, that he never invited them in; nor did he introduce them to ML. She described with amusement how her notion of his strangeness manifested itself:

In front of his house he set up a board, some Maori culture I think, . . . a club, but another person (her New Zealand flatmate) say, "Oh, he's very very strange". His sign here, his club, but I ask him, "How many people in your club?" He said, "Just one". That's himself. (ML, laughing)

This sense of individuality, of being different, and of being alone, were a source of both interest and amusement to ML. These traits are the antithesis of her (and those from CHCs) understanding of social groups. And yet, such eccentricity is

accepted in New Zealand; but in China, there is the social expectation of conformity to the values of the group. ML is displaying her collectivist orientation here which conflicts with the individualist traits exhibited by her flatmate's behaviour.

The four graduates from China (FX, LJ, SX and YR), by renting flats, had the greatest opportunity to live as New Zealanders and interact with them in everyday life. Yet, in describing their relationships with these neighbours to me, they again seemed perfunctory or superficial. Exchanges took place as they passed each other, but they did not go into one another's homes. LJ described his communication with his neighbour: 'We say hello, and maybe talk about the weather or maybe talk about the newspaper news. That's all' (LJ). But LJ had developed a friendship with the father of the family where his cousin from Taiwan was living. The father was a teacher in a private secondary school, and LJ would go to his home and talk with him. This man also helped him shift his furniture from Auckland. When LJ's parents came to live with him, his wife and new baby, they found a larger flat, owned by a retired couple. The couple were very friendly and helpful and offered them their holiday house in Taupo while the carpet in the flat was being replaced. They also called often and asked how LJ and his family were getting on. LJ expressed pleasure at having developed this friendship with them and felt accepted into New Zealand society as a consequence.

The two graduate women (YR and FX) did not develop friendships with any of the mature students in their classes outside of the School. Nor did they develop close relationships with other women in the community, although YR had her church support group. FX had some contact, however, through her son's school. She became interested in home schooling and talked to some of the mothers, and the teacher, about it. She had a neighbour, a New Zealand student with whom she exchanged daily greetings. FX's initial renting experience had not been so positive, however. Her first landlord had been a Maori woman, very kind and helpful to FX, but always in debt, which FX regarded as a 'bad habit'. Eventually she and her family moved to avoid this situation.

Like the other graduates, YR also had only superficial contact with her neighbours. While she did have some contact with the parents of her daughter's friends, she always said that she had no time, after study and family, for making friendships like this. Perhaps her character, one of self-containment, had something to do with this. Initially, I was surprised that YR and FX did not

seek out closer relationships with other women in the community, especially since they were beginning to settle here and develop long-term intentions of staying, unlike the undergraduates who would return to their homes upon graduating. Prior to the study YR had boarded with a woman, also from another culture, who taught in the School and who had provided her with a lot of support in her life here in the early stages. I, however, felt in a privileged relationship with YR and FX as I enjoyed their company and felt at ease with them. They also confided in me about their personal difficulties in living here. Thus, I felt like I was their closest female friend at times.

In her third semester AS moved from her student flat on campus to share a flat with five other Malaysian students. She explained the difference: 'I think it's made me more clear about society things, I mean the real world. You have to buy your own furniture, your own bed, you have to go out and bargain the lower price' (AS). She discovered, however, that her Malaysian bargaining style was not well received by the shop manager here. Apart from having to set up and furnish the flat, her living conditions had not changed so much. Her focus was still on the Malaysian community, but off campus rather than on campus.

PS also shared a flat eventually for the same reasons as AS, partly to pursue his relationship with his girlfriend, and partly to enjoy the experience of sharing accommodation with others from CHCs. This situation worked much better for PS than his initial attempt to rent on his own.

Homestays

Many of the participants had had a homestay experience which they spoke of positively. PS liked the home atmosphere where events were ordered and he could study peacefully. Furthermore, in his homestay he had the opportunity to use English more, and to get to know others outside of the School. PS found that his homestay mother was a good source of information about general aspects of life in New Zealand. They would also watch a video on Friday nights together which he enjoyed. After PS's attempt at renting on his own, he returned to the same homestay. He appreciated more this homestay experience, and enjoyed the companionship that resulted from his getting to know his homestay brother better. He became included in the homestay brother's social life too, and got to know his friends. Although this life style was the exact opposite to his Hong Kong life, he felt happy here.

KZ, too, enjoyed the move from Hall of Residence to a homestay as he was able to experience family life and relationships: 'It's a different kind of cultural understanding'. After living in a homestay, KZ concluded that relationships within the family were quite distant compared to China.² KZ found that he had more opportunity to practise spoken English in his homestay, and also to join in the social life of the couple with whom he stayed. For example, he watched them playing charades with their friends, and he had the chance to meet all of the friends who constantly came to the house, namely, an older man who knew something about China and often engaged KZ in discussion. Apart from his homestay experience, KZ concluded that he had 'very limited contact' with the culture or society.

Thus, for those who had already experienced the Halls and then moved into a homestay situation, the experience was positive as they appreciated being part of a family situation compared to the anonymity in relationships that they experienced in the Halls. This orientation supports the general view of the importance of the family in CHCs, and the acknowledgement of familial relations. The participants all expressed an interest in the differences they observed between the family life they had left and that into which they had arrived.

By contrast, MC and YR had less positive experiences to relate, although they also cited some gains. MC, before the research period, spent six unhappy months in a homestay, communicating through writing with her homestay mother as she was unable to communicate competently in spoken English. Yet, she enjoyed experiencing family relationships in the homestay: 'Between mother and child, they are look [they act] like friend. But in Taiwan my family not have this relationship' (MC). She eventually extricated herself from this isolating existence and went to a boarding house which had other international students and a New Zealand accounting student who became a friend. Here, she found a meeting point with others: 'Every student come from different country. It's quite good to stay with them' (MC). Her feelings of acceptance fitted with the experiences participants presented earlier when interacting with other international and CHC students.

² Traditionally, in China children live with their parents, even after the children marry, due to the shortage in space and housing.

By contrast, YR, on first arrival, found this form of accommodation isolating as it did not facilitate entry into either student life or result in a better understanding of New Zealand life. YR explained the on-going difficulty of finding a meeting point with her homestay host, a woman of a similar age: 'Even until now we still have some connections . . . but maybe because of the different culture we just can't, we just can't . . . it's something, we just can't understand each other' (YR). AS felt that a homestay would be too restricting: 'I don't want those curfews. . . . I know my friends will come to my flat so I don't want to mix with them' (AS). That is, AS wanted to maintain her close connections with and entertain her Malaysian friends which she could not do in a homestay.

Halls of Residence

Others, such as FO and WK, preferred the Halls of Residence because they provided a stability and continuity to their student life on campus. Moreover, their Smithfield cohort all tended to remain in the Halls thus providing a focus. WK explained: 'Convenient is the most important thing for me. Food, everything, lodging, everything is very convenient, you don't need to worry about anything, just go back to sleep' (WK). WK also felt that he was more independent in the Halls. Initially, he had thought of a homestay in order to better experience New Zealand family life, but decided against it because he did not want to have to spend time socialising with the family. His studies were important and kept him busy, along with the activities he had developed for himself while here. FO, too, opined that a homestay would provide an opportunity to have 'an intercultural experience' (FO), a thought he expressed to me as a result of talking about the subject, but decided against it because he was happy with the routine he had and felt comfortable in it.

SY also found his niche in the Halls but, in contrast to all the other participants, among New Zealand students rather than international students. He noticed, when he was transferred to another part of the Hall during the first semester, how much he missed the support and companionship of those friends. He used to return there every night to be with them and get their help with his studies. Finally, much to SY's regret, he was dismissed from the Hall; he then rented shared accommodation with two other Malaysian students, but because relations remained distant among himself and the other two Malaysians (who were brother and sister), he was not happy there. He claimed they isolated themselves from him and did not share. His life became much quieter and he saw less of those

Hall friends. Not long after this period and at the end of the data collection period, he withdrew from the University and transferred to Auckland University.

In conclusion, the participants' preference for accommodation was directly related to their personal and academic needs. First and foremost, they needed to find a situation which would enable them to achieve their academic goals. Secondly, they needed a place where they could feel comfortable, a place which gave them stability, security, and the freedom to pursue their personal goals and friendships, and accommodate their own cultural values and expectations. Some of the undergraduates preferred homestay accommodation because they felt a part of a family, albeit New Zealand style. Others preferred the Halls for the convenience of daily living and for maintaining their already established friendships, usually among those from the same culture or among other international students. Others, namely the married participants, needed to rent a flat for their families. Homestays provided the most contact with New Zealand family life and yet proved the least common and most unpopular choice of accommodation among the participants. Only KZ and PS spoke positively about it. The other participants preferred situations which allowed them to be with those from their own culture, either as a family in a rented flat, in a shared renting situation, or in the Halls of Residence near their same culture or CHC friends. Again SY was an exception, preferring the Halls for his New Zealand contacts.

6.5.3 Attitudes to intercultural communication with New Zealanders

By the end of the research period participants had had time to evaluate the nature and quality of their intercultural communication experiences with New Zealanders, and the significance of these experiences in relation to their lives as students here in New Zealand. Participants' attitudes tended to range from a lack of interest and a focus on graduating (for example, FO and AS), to a desire to be like a New Zealander (LJ). For example, KZ encapsulated the meaning of living in this society: 'I'm interested in communicating with some New Zealand people because if you go to a different country, it's very natural you want to make some friends in a local [within the community], so you can incorporate it into their society' (KZ). He added that he did not want to always feel like a 'foreigner' here, and having a feeling of belonging made him feel better about himself and

about living here. This attitude was prevalent much more among the participants who eventually sought, or already had, permanent residence than among the Malaysian participants.

Towards the end of the data collection period some participants explained how their feelings about intercultural communication experiences with other New Zealanders had changed. For example, there were times in which FO tried hard to make contact with others, which is not surprising, given his jovial and amiable character. In one such incident he explained his frustration at trying to communicate with other New Zealanders. FO had tried to make a joke with a young Maori boy and a New Zealand girl whom he met in passing, but through misunderstandings of what each was saying to the other the conversation, which had started out amicably, went awry:

[The Maori boy is] trying to talk to us, talk to me, and the rest of my friends, and then, I tried to make some jokes but I think, he take it very seriously, and then the other girl, . . . I don't think she quite get my joke. . . and then she was helping the Maori boy and say something that, "Oh, I hope that you go back to your own country", or something like that, and I find it very uncomfortable. I think that maybe it's the way I try to talk and then they misunderstood me, because . . . all my friends managed to understand my joke and they realised that, but maybe it's the way I make it, or . . . my language or something like that. . . . It's just a simple conversation, but it turn out that, I don't understand where does it lead to. (FO)

This account resulted in FO concluding that he did not have the ability to communicate with New Zealanders. FO explained how he felt very frustrated and discouraged as a result of this episode. What was supposed to be a frivolous interaction on his part resulted in both parties feeling misunderstood through miscommunication. At issue were different values over sports shoes, and the inability to competently convey humour in another language. FO explained:

Actually, I think it was my fault also. The Maori kid say something about my friend's shoes, I find very old and very, not very nice, because it's a very old pair of sports shoes and it's very, really out of shape. Any of our three shoes are better than his. So I ask him, I must make a joke and saying, "Oh, is that really! Is that an insult [. . .]". And then, before I finish, "or a compliment", he take it very seriously and he say that, "Ah, mate, did you say that I'm insulting your friend!" And he take it very personally. . . . Actually, I wanted to say, "Is it an insult, or a compliment?" I just want to try to make some fun out of it. But the other, she misunderstood it. (FO)

The young New Zealanders responded by issuing racist taunts, and the Malaysian students felt misunderstood, victimised, and made to feel unwelcome as a result.

PS changed his view about having contact with other New Zealanders. He was interested initially but, in the course of the study he decided that, due to a number of incidents which he considered were discriminatory and racist attacks on him, he lost interest.³ However, he felt that New Zealanders, who were better educated, were more open minded: 'They are very helpful, and you can ask many questions, but the other New Zealander, on, no, I don't enjoy!' (PS). Other participants, especially undergraduates, had had similar experiences which contributed to their feelings of uncertainty and uneasiness when initiating communication with New Zealanders.

In another changing attitude towards intercultural communication with New Zealanders PS described his experience with his New Zealand *buddy*. Initially, this worked quite well for PS. He went to his buddy's house and they went out together. PS was able to talk to him about issues beyond university life, such as hobbies and emotions, and his buddy helped him to understand more about New Zealand culture and society, for example, contemporary social issues like the politics of the health system and attitudes towards Asian immigration. Later on this relationship waned. PS's attempts to contact him were rebuffed. He did not know the reason for this, except that his feelings about this buddy were confirmed when he heard other Malaysian students say that he (the buddy) was "a little bit strange" (PS). Given his positive experiences discussed earlier, perhaps the failure of the buddy system here can be attributed to a mismatch in interpersonal relations. By contrast, Westwood and Barker (1990) noted that increased contact with host nationals positively correlated with academic success and lowered the probability of dropping out of academic programmes. The experiences of the majority of undergraduates seemed to refute this. For example, the Smithfield participants, whose social lives focused on their Smithfield microcosm, succeeded well academically. Ironically, SY had much contact with his host peers, but eventually dropped out of university.

Initially WK was led to conclude that some New Zealand students appeared 'quite stuck up', and talking to them 'they look like it's a bore, so troublesome, something like that' (WK). By the third semester, he concluded that life had reached a sense of normality in his day to day interactions, 'it's just like normal, like in Malaysia' (WK). He did not need to think about whether or not he should approach someone, or what he should talk about; rather, it was a question of making an effort and looking approachable. In personal communication he had

³ I discuss these issues in relation to racism in Chapter seven.

explained to me how some of his Smithfield cohort did not share this view and eschewed contact with New Zealand students. For all of them, intercultural communication did not necessarily come naturally:

We have to take the initiative, to talk to them too. Yeah. If you don't, we just sit down in our own place, talk to our friends, I mean they are just probably the same. They won't talk to you unless you talk to them. . . We have to look approachable . . . try to make effort somehow. (WK)

LJ found that, compared with six months earlier, he had 'less desire to understand the Kiwis' (LJ). He concluded that there was a similarity between Chinese people and New Zealanders in that some are friendly and some are not:

It depend on what group, what level, and what kind of person you are. Some Chinese they find the Kiwi is very friendly, and some they [are] not so nice. And before I thought maybe this is a cultural problem. But now I can say, even if you try and talk, there's still some people are friendly, some are not. I can realise this difference, and I can realise this similarity between the two cultures. . . . But if you from, intercultural point of view, you say it's a cultural problem, but when you think about it, probably it is not a cultural problem. It can happens in your own culture as well. (LJ)

The fact that LJ is able to arrive at this level of analysis and understanding indicated that he was well immersed into New Zealand culture and society, and was coming to know and better understand New Zealanders and their behaviour as a result of his working part-time in the School, and his experiences of living in New Zealand.

By contrast, SX desired intercultural contact but struggled to establish satisfactory friendships. He had found towards the end of the study that it was easy enough to make friends with New Zealanders, superficially, but deeper relationships were more difficult. He reflected on the reason why he thought this was so:

How do you make a deep relationship? Usually you must exchange your ideas [with] each other and, oh, so maybe there is a problem with each other not only due to the language, but also the ideas, the thoughts, and even the behaviour, it's a little different. (SX)

Unlike some of the other participants, although SX lacked confidence when communicating in English, he realised that there were factors other than language at play. For example, he had observed how Asians would become passive when New Zealanders talked about topics such as sports. Moreover, he was interested in classical music, whereas he found that most young New Zealanders were not. SX enjoyed the Christians because they talked about topics other than sport, and

he found that they were interested in arguing philosophically about religion. Like KZ, he also made the point that it was easier to talk with older people, not only because of language, but also because of interest in topics which extended beyond the personal self:

Language is one problem, is the one thing, old people maybe they, I mean, they can understand the foreigners from their point of view, from the foreigners' point of view, so they will use the kind of language which the foreigners can understand, but the students, maybe they don't care about that, they just talk everything they are interested in. (SX)

This feeling SX had about the differences between the New Zealand students and those New Zealanders beyond the campus epitomised the difficulty these participants had in finding meaningful friendships with the New Zealand students. It explains why they preferred the more complex relationships they enjoyed with those who shared a similar social reality and, to a lesser extent, with older New Zealand people whose range of experiences were already much wider than those of the New Zealand students.

6.5.4 Conclusions

The majority of the participants experienced limited intercultural interaction with New Zealanders in the community. Only AS and LJ experienced sustained interaction. While AS gained insight into the working experiences of New Zealand women of her age through brief part-time work, the experience did not result in her further immersion into New Zealand society; rather, differences in values heightened her sense of distance from these women. LJ sought sustained intercultural contact in his socialising beyond the School through his membership of the Cosmopolitan Club. For YR and WK their church interests provided a meeting point with New Zealanders. However, as with New Zealand students, the participants generally were unsuccessful in developing intercultural friendships. Accommodation in the community, especially homestays, provided the most contact with New Zealand families. About half of the participants had generally benefited from this experience. Renting provided further contact, albeit limited. Halls of Residence appeared to distance the participants the most from those in the community.

Participants' attitudes to intercultural contact ranged from a focus on graduation and return to the first culture and thus less motivation for interaction with hosts,

to a desire to enjoy interpersonal relationships with New Zealanders. The former attitude was displayed by the Malaysian participants who intended to return to Malaysia upon graduation; the latter attitude was exhibited by those participants who either had permanent residence or were seeking it.

Intercultural communication was a developing and emergent process which, as participants' comments suggest, required effort and was to some extent threatening. First, participants had to negotiate the initiation stage. Then, within the exchange there was room for misunderstanding and, thus, potential conflict (as in the scenario presented by FO). Further, communication was complicated because the participants, as outsiders, held limited knowledge of how the culture of the group is socially constructed. Establishing intercultural friendships appeared haphazard as LJ concluded that certain types of people are found in every culture. On the other hand, initiation could seem problematic when the sender receives unfavourable nonverbal communication from the receiver (as in WK's impression that New Zealand students appeared to be bored when he talked with them). In addition, personality factors are subject to change with closer intimacy and could also lead to rebuttals in further efforts to continue a friendship (as in PS's experience with his buddy).

All of these factors appeared to militate against participants feeling successful and positive in their interactions as they negotiated the intercultural communication experience. And, as their experiences indicate, many of the participants had difficulty in reconstructing and renegotiating their social realities to accommodate differences in interpersonal communication styles. For example, FO was left feeling bewildered and at a loss as to how to construct successful intercultural interaction and, similarly, many of the other participants experienced some degree of confusion at how to negotiate friendships. The result was, as the findings in this chapter suggest, the manifestation of a preference for communication with those from the same culture or with other international students rather than with those from the host community. Thus, for the majority of participants, such behaviour served to reinforce and maintain cultural difference in the community. And yet, the favourable experiences and efforts of some of the participants must not be underestimated as they strived to renegotiate their communication styles to find a meeting point with those in the host culture.

Zhao (1995), in his study of Chinese students, expressed this difficulty in intercultural communication in terms of under-using the English language in the outside community. He claimed that there were three reasons for doing this.

The first concerned ethnocentrism, where members of a culture show a preference for their own customs, practices, and culture which they see as truths (Harris and Moran, 1987). Thus, in blocking out that which is contrary to or conflicts with their own beliefs, members of a group can develop notions of prejudice when their own beliefs are challenged. A balance is important because abandoning one's own beliefs can lead to a social identity crisis in a multicultural context. While none of the participants in this study appeared to manifest such a crisis, aspects of ethnocentrism were clearly identifiable in their communication preferences and orientation. The second factor concerned socialisation, where notions of preserving face, moderation, and harmony are important in interpersonal communication. This communication style, as already noted, is at odds with New Zealand communication styles. Participants' experiences were indicative of these differences. The third factor is the stereotypical ideas of CHC students and local students towards each other, resulting in feelings of the one not liking the other. Zhao attributed this antipathy to anti-Chinese sentiment resulting from Chinese migration in the 1880s during the gold rush. In fact, anti-Chinese sentiment is much more recent, due to shifts in immigration policies which have resulted in a rapid increase in migrants from Asia, particularly business migrants. Leading up to the data collection period these migrants had received negatively biased media attention due to their number and to their show of wealth, especially in Auckland, which resulted in anti-Asian feelings on the part of New Zealanders. As the participants' experiences in this study revealed, these three factors identified by Zhao also coincide with issues of intercultural communication identified by these participants.

Thus, contact with other New Zealanders beyond the School and University was very important because, for those who were able to make these contacts, a new society was opened up to them beyond the student experiences they were living in the School, on campus, and in the Halls of Residence. However, making these contacts and friendships was very difficult for participants. On the one hand, they did not have much opportunity to make contacts or develop friendships. On the other, the process was stressful because they had to negotiate language and cultural differences, and it also distracted them from their studies. The much easier option was to continue to circulate among those to whom they did not have to explain or justify themselves: there was empathy, and they were understood and accepted.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the intra- and intercultural communication issues for participants beyond the learning environment and in the community of the host institution. First, participants' interpersonal communication preferences as constructed in their first cultures was presented, followed by communication with international and other CHC students. In the fourth and fifth parts participants experiences of communication with New Zealanders (both students and non students) were explored.

Participants' were generally unable to reconstruct their Confucian notions of *friend* and *friendship* to develop friendships with those in the host community, especially with New Zealanders. Differing communication styles and speech patterns also made intercultural communication problematic thus further differentiating them from the host community.

For some participants sharing a culture and language enabled them to share their constructions of the host community. Others realised that this same culture immersion contributed towards creating and maintaining differences. They also preferred to shun the circles of *gossip* which were a feature of same culture relationships. Some participants demonstrated a renegotiation of their interpersonal communication styles to accommodate differences in communication in the host community. However, the Malaysians constituted a significant group who recreated their social worlds from their first cultures in the host environments, thus both creating and maintaining cultural difference.

Where New Zealand students were concerned, participants expressed how a mutual lack of interest in the cultural other, and an awkwardness in managing communication diminished intercultural contact. Participants were largely unsuccessful in establishing rapport with this group resulting in conversation which rarely went beyond the perfunctory level, and friendships which they described as merely *common* and which excluded self-disclosure. For the most part participants also experienced limited intercultural contact with New Zealanders (non-students) in the community. Homestays provided insights into the New Zealand way of life as well as opportunities for reconstructing and renegotiating communication patterns, whereas renting or sharing

accommodation among same culture friends and families was less conducive to host interaction.

Zhao (1995) noted that the resultant under-use of English in the outside community stemmed from three important reasons: ethnocentrism, manifested in participants' desire for intracultural communication; preferences for their own socialisation patterns; and stereotypical ideas about the cultural other. These factors also impinged upon intercultural contact. While these reasons for underuse of English can also be attributed to participants in this study, other factors such as personality, and motivation to understand and belong through interpersonal relationships with the hosts were influential in either fostering or diminishing intercultural contact.

Chapter 7

Understanding and accommodating culture and society

It's difficult to follow another cultural way. Maybe it disadvantages [you]. But from another point of view you get another cultural experience when you get into Kiwi culture. Maybe you have a clear understanding. . . . If you [have] never been to the other culture's environment you only get one cultural experience. You don't know what's the unique feature of your culture. If you go to the other culture, 'Oh, it's this culture', and you come back and, 'Oh, my culture is that'. (LJ)

Maybe I use the experience here to complement my own value[s], but not change it [them]. . . . I didn't change my own values, but I absorb some new ideas and the new values. . . . That's the point. (KZ)

In the previous chapter, issues of intra- and intercultural communication were explored for participants within the environment of the host culture. The role of people from the participants' first culture, and from other CHCs was considered, and then intercultural communication experiences with New Zealand students and people from the host culture.

This chapter and the next are concerned with how participants' experiences influenced their understanding, acknowledgement and acceptance of another culture -- as LJ put it, 'another cultural way' -- and, consequently, how their constructions of these experiences impacted upon their social realities. As with Schutz's (1971, 1973) stranger, such an intercultural experience enables individuals to better understand their own culture and reflect on the values, beliefs, and attitudes they live by (as KZ claimed above). This chapter focuses on the ways in which participants, through their intercultural communication experiences, sought to understand and accommodate another cultural way, and how they reconstructed (resulting in some reinforcement of existing practices) and renegotiated (or questioned and therefore adjusted) their Confucian values, beliefs, and attitudes.

To adjust successfully to another culture requires a combination of three factors: good personal adjustment, good interpersonal relationships, and task effectiveness, thus enabling an accomplishment of goals (Barker, 1990; Brislin,

1981; Ruben and Kealy, 1979). International students, and CHC students among them, must learn a wide range of culturally defined and typically unfamiliar roles in a short time within conditions of considerable stress. Failure to learn these new roles may result in confusion about their own identity and create conflicts (Pedersen, 1991). This process of understanding and accommodation provides a grounding for the final focus of this study, understanding cultural identity, addressed in Chapter eight.

This chapter begins by establishing the foundations of Confucian society, focusing on the values, beliefs, and attitudes that guide social interaction. Such an awareness is important in order to describe and interpret the participants' reconstructions and renegotiations of these values, beliefs, and attitudes as they experience the host culture and society. The chapter then addresses the participants' knowledge and interpretations of the culture and society in which they are living and studying, and how these interpretations impact upon their lives in the host culture and cause them to reflect on their own social realities. Third, participants discuss their sense of belonging in this culture and, finally, the significance and consequence of their gaining permanent residence status, particularly with reference to their families, employment prospects, and future lives.

7.1 The cultural foundations of Confucian societies

At the outset to this discussion it is useful to review the nature of social interaction within CHCs as determined by their philosophical beliefs. While the philosophical beliefs of the participants differed from person to person, the communicative behaviour of these participants in the host culture is underpinned within a Confucian system of cultural and religious beliefs and practices by which they have been educated in their first culture.

Present day Confucianism draws upon and incorporates some of the beliefs found in the Buddhist and Taoist religions. For example, a fundamental belief of the Buddhist religion is the idea of reincarnation and acceptance of fate (Cheng and Clark, 1993), where people are taught to be passive and to accept what happens to them, resulting in a preferred style of interaction which is nonassertive or nonaggressive. Taoists believe in a total acceptance of the

determined course of nature or 'the way' (Porter, 1983; Tom, 1989; cited in Cheng and Clark, 1993, p. 123). Drawing on these and other beliefs, Confucianism provides a blueprint for appropriate behaviour. The Confucian virtues of persistence and perseverance, establishing and respecting hierarchical relationships (especially within the family), valuing close personal relationships and connections (*guangxi*), understanding human feelings (*renqing*), protection of face (*mian-zi*), respect for tradition, and reciprocation of gifts and favours, represent behaviours that are widely practised in contemporary China and Chinese Asia (Irwin 1996). Triandis, Brislin and Hui (1988, cited in Cheng and Clark, 1993) labelled these Confucian behaviours as a collectivist orientation. Within such collectivist cultures harmony is the key to existence: harmony with self, others, and nature, obtained by observing the rules of propriety and respect for others. Other collectivist values include: face saving, filial piety, modesty, moderation, thrift, equality in the distribution of rewards among peers, and fulfilment of others' needs. The contrasting orientation is individualism (practised in New Zealand) which values freedom, honesty, social recognition, comfort, hedonism, and equity (McLaren, 1998).

The hierarchical nature of Confucian societies means that the individual is seen as a part of the natural human order (Hofstede, 1984). At the heart of this natural human order are the relationships people form within society which must be governed by the proper attitude, and which involve obligations. These relationships are: loyalty between ruler and subject; filial piety between father and son; obedience between husband and wife; respect between elder and younger; and trust between friends (McLaren, 1998). Gatfield and Gatfield (1994) noted that the family and ancestors are the basic building block and forming agent where roles, norms and social mores are not just learnt but maintained and enforced through life. Redding (1993) stated:

... the crucial stabilising feature is filial piety. If that is established, other relationships begin to fall naturally into their important but secondary places, for instance, that of husband and wife, that between brothers and sisters. . . . It was always in the family context that the cardinal lessons were learned. (p. 49)

Thus, these disciplinary teachings reinforce societal values and maintain Confucian ethics which subordinate the role of individual needs to societal needs. These teachings also provide a code of conduct and communicative behaviour which form a guide for social interaction in daily life. The result is a social behaviour, conduct and communication style very different from that in the West and in New Zealand in particular. It is against these philosophical

foundations that I will explore participants' understanding and accommodation of New Zealand culture and society.

7.2 (Re)constructing values, beliefs, and attitudes in intercultural communication

Participants, through their intercultural communication experiences and interpersonal relationships with New Zealanders in the host culture, were able to explore and interpret their own cultural values beliefs and attitudes. Three major themes emerged. First, values that promote harmony and obedience, such as conservatism and acceptance, and preserving and giving face, are juxtaposed with the communication styles of New Zealanders, that is, openness and directness, and confrontation. Second, participants commented on the Chinese notion of gossip compared to the New Zealand predisposition for indifference. And third, the values that guided the participants' choices for living are addressed. Participants acknowledged the place of their own values beside those in this host culture, for example, values such as thriftiness, attitudes to the family, questions of morality and independence, food, and the influence of classical Chinese culture.

7.2.1 Values which characterised interpersonal relations

Conservatism and acceptance versus openness and directness

As mentioned in Chapter six participants had noticed very early an openness and directness in the communication styles of New Zealanders. SY, the participant most fully immersed into New Zealand student culture, reasoned that those from collectivist cultures could penetrate individualist cultures quite easily. He commented that if you were Chinese, then understanding a European culture like that of New Zealand's was an easy task. Whereas Chinese culture was 'complex' and 'strict', New Zealand culture was 'open minded' and 'easy to get into' or understand (SY). While this may have been the case for SY, it was not so for the other participants.

Why, then, was SY able to transcend the structure of his own culture and 'get into' this one while the other participants appeared to have much more difficulty? The answer may lay in the notion of acceptance which FO called 'conservatism', a Confucian orientation where individuals do not question the natural order, instead seeking to maintain harmony. FO related how he thought this state of mind inhibited the progress of CHC students in this culture:

Perhaps we [are] conservative. . . . in the sense that we seldom approach people. . . . We always accept what's given to us, you know. . . . Although we are dissatisfied, we are unhappy, but we won't express it in front of you. Only talk behind [your back]. . . . We just don't really take action. This is what I feel Malaysian culture is. So when we come here, actually, it stops us from moving ahead, you know. (FO)

Becker (1986) noted that such behaviour is due to the prizing of social harmony over correctness. For example, when giving apologies or explanations it is far preferable to lie or equivocate than to directly refuse a request (Becker, 1986).

Preserving and giving face versus confrontation

Underlying the CHC students' reluctance to engage in intercultural communication, manifest in such behaviours as questioning or challenging, is that one may be challenged, or proven wrong, which would result in losing face, and thus one's position in relation to others. Young (1994) explained the importance of moderation and face in Chinese society. Those from CHCs emphasise modesty, restraint, and co-operation. Parents discourage children from expressions of competition, overt conflict, and direct confrontation. Reticence and constraint are important behaviours in maintaining smooth relationships with others. Children are also taught to feel a sense of shame, and to avoid causing embarrassment or discomfort to others with whom they are talking.

For these participants this cultural difference manifested itself most noticeably in the classroom, resulting in behaviours which lecturers and other New Zealand students might construe as indicating lack of an opinion about or engagement in the course content. However, as the participants themselves indicated and as their academic success showed, this was certainly not the case.

SY pointed out that the Malaysian (and other CHC) students gave a 'face' which was polite and humble in class and to the lecturers. By contrast, in their 'real life' behaviour he claimed that they 'act like they are very smart' (SY). SY explained to me how he, himself, was the subject of gossip among his CHC

peers because he did not share their Confucian values. For example, he noted that in talking with a Malaysian girl, her friend drew her away from him indicating a disapproval of the communication encounter. SY disliked the way in which his peers appeared to give 'face', and yet were capable of acting insincerely. Instead, he preferred the overt and direct behaviour that he experienced among his New Zealand peers.

This giving of face also extended to me in the research process. As researcher, I saw only the public face from a few of the participants, where I was treated with respect and kindness. Often I felt that some of the participants, namely those few with whom I was unable to establish a deep rapport, were holding back and showing an unwillingness to be involved in the research. For example, interviews and discussions were marked by a distance and an apparent lack of confidence in topics of discussion. Possible reasons for this may have been a lack of time, an uncertainty about how they could help, or a lack of interest, all factors which inhibited the development of a rapport of openness and trust. They only described their feelings when I pressed them. In my position as an older student, undertaking a higher degree, and having my own office, participants saw symbols of my superiority and authority, thus requiring them to defer to me.

Instead, openness came from those with whom I had established a relationship of trust over time. From the way that they confided in me it appeared that they valued this openness in close, equal relationships. This was especially noticeable with the married graduates. It was also articulated by WK when he commented that I should not put too much emphasis on what he told me in the early stages of the fieldwork as he had not yet established a relationship of trust and openness with me. This relationship of openness and trust, which I had with the graduates and some of the undergraduates, was what I, as a western researcher, had expected from the outset. On the contrary, for them, according to their Confucian attitudes, such a relationship could only evolve over time, and it did.

Gossip versus indifference

Embedded in this evasive and nonconfrontational behaviour of face saving and face giving are the roots of gossip. Gossip within and among in-groups (such as FO's Smithfield friends, or AS's circles of CHC students) was the foundation of a very elaborate grapevine which, as I mentioned in Chapter five, was

preferred by the Malaysian participants especially as a source of information for survival in the School. In fact, SY's rejection of those from his own culture here, and to some extent his own cultural values, is derived from his dislike of the CHC tendency to group together and gossip about others, especially other CHC students. As a result of his preference for the attitudes exhibited by the New Zealand students, for example, their openness and friendliness and what he regarded as their 'indifference' to others, the other CHC students gossiped about him. He claimed that they regarded him as 'proud', and that he did not want to mix with them. For example, SY even observed another Malaysian student berating a female Malaysian student because she had sat next to him at lunch one day.

The fact that SY's separation from those from his own culture is interpreted by that group as a 'pride' is indicative of the strong ties among the group and the pressure to identify with others in the group. SY's aberrant behaviour in going over to 'the other side' was not tolerated by the group.

Thus, the retention of Confucian values of conservatism and acceptance, and the preserving and giving of face, especially among the undergraduate participants, in interpersonal communication contexts within the host community appears to be a significant feature of their behaviours, and a basis for the reconstruction of their social worlds here. These values also served to differentiate the participants from those in the host community in intercultural communication contexts. The features which appeared to be particularly relevant to the lives of the participants here were the need to retain harmony by demonstrating conservative and accepting behaviours, and to preserve and give face. Among the undergraduates, SY was the only participant to renegotiate his values in order to accommodate those of the host culture, and consequently, gain acceptance by members of the host culture (while simultaneously experiencing rejection from his Malaysian peers). Gossip, a feature which the Malaysian undergraduates and their CHC peers maintained among themselves, appeared to be an important way of regulating behaviour according to the Confucian principles within the in-group.

7.2.2 Values which guided choices for living

In this section I discuss the processes the participants underwent in interpreting and evaluating their own values in relation to those of the host culture, and the extent to which these values determined the participants' actions in daily life. The values which emerged in discussion with them were thriftiness, family values, morality and independence, attitudes to food, and the role of classical Chinese culture.

Attitudes to money and spending

Exposure to the attitudes of New Zealanders towards money and spending resulted, in some cases, in participants reconstructing their Confucian attitudes. The Chinese participants, especially, lived by the Confucian value of thriftiness. FX, in discovering that her New Zealand neighbour had a relaxed attitude towards money (as she spent every week all the money she received through income support and part time work), felt that New Zealanders were more concerned with spending their money to enjoy life daily rather than saving for the future (a Confucian value). SX observed this phenomenon, too, yet constructed it as consistent with the Confucian emphasis on balancing work and leisure. He appreciated the more peaceful and relaxed life style that this New Zealand attitude created, compared to the stressful life that the Chinese created for themselves in China, in spite of their Confucian orientations. FX, too, concluded that the Chinese (in China) worried too much about the future because life in China was much harder, whereas New Zealanders had more time to enjoy their lives because they showed much less concern for the future. The preference for such values over their own may well have contributed to the desire by those participants from China who did not yet have permanent residence to seek it. The comments by SX and FX suggest that the Confucian value of seeking a balance between work and the desire for profit has been lost in China as families compete for a place in society through education and work. Thus, to some extent, they were both able to reconstruct this Confucian value, a value that they cherished, in New Zealand.

In spite of the appeal of the New Zealand emphasis on leisure, all of the participants lived their lives in New Zealand by the Confucian value of thriftiness. At the time of these discussions there had been considerable attention given in the media to the ways in which the children of wealthy CHC families flaunted their wealth, for example, arriving at secondary school in what New

Zealanders regarded as an expensive car. Such displays of wealth are generally disliked among the New Zealand population. In Taiwan or Hong Kong such behaviour might be considered the norm, whereas in New Zealand it would be considered a signal of excessive pride or showing off. In keeping with his value system, LJ expressed his abhorrence of this display of wealth:

Most families from Asian [Taiwan and Hong Kong] are very rich and buy a very good car for their kids. . . . If you come to New Zealand you have to follow some New Zealand way. New Zealand family, even they are very rich, after 18 years old they hope their children can support themselves. They [the children] also find some part-time job and get some money for their education. Why don't we!

He applauded, however, the insistence by one rich family from Taiwan whom he knew in Auckland, who made their daughter work in a restaurant once a week to earn some money to support her education:

A friend of mine from Taiwan, [her] family is very rich, but she has to do a part-time job during the weekend in take-away restaurant. Their family require her, 'you have to work'. (LJ)

Such a value fits with the New Zealand attitude of parents towards their children, that is, that the children should take some responsibility for their future lives and develop a sense of independence from their parents. Such independence is measured in financial terms, for example, by a child contributing towards his or her own education. LJ felt this was a positive New Zealand value which this Chinese family had adopted. While children would not be expected to pay for or contribute towards their own education in China, the fact that LJ saw this family's actions positively suggests that he approved of this New Zealand value.

Family values

As participants became more aware of how families lived in New Zealand, their Confucian values regarding family relationships were brought into focus. As noted in the first part of this chapter, CHCs emphasise close family ties, where the first responsibility and loyalty is to the family, and the need to respect familial piety. For example, FX was reminded of her Confucian traditions upon returning to her home town after studying in New Zealand for two years. She noted how she was expected to account for her actions to her parents. She found this constraining and preferred the freedom she had experienced and come to appreciate in New Zealand, where she was able to make her own decisions and be independent of her extended family.

Many of the participants commented on the independent relationships between parents and their children here. Compared to the interdependence displayed among family members within their Confucian cultures, they found that New Zealanders tended to be much less bound by relationships, and free to make their own decisions about what they did and where they went. For example, SY, who had close contacts with New Zealand students and was thus in a good position to judge, could not condone the attitudes of his New Zealand peers towards their parents. He felt that they did not 'respect their parents much, just leave their parents and do what they want' (SY). Furthermore, SY thought that they were irresponsible in that they did not need to think about the importance of finding a good job so that they could support their parents when they retired, or their younger siblings in their education. (The need to support parents in retirement and younger siblings' education was also expressed by FO and AS). SY also noticed the lack of cohesion and difficult domestic circumstances which some of his New Zealand friends' families were in. Not only did he notice that some of his floor mates' parents were divorced, living in de facto relationships, or alcoholics (and SY was surprised by these situations), but he also noticed the lack of filial obligation between parents and children, an observation which may have helped him to value the ties he had with his own family. All the undergraduates had made reference to these Confucian familial expectations, and these obligations went unquestioned.

With regard to the independence of their New Zealand student peers, AS was surprised to discover after questioning me that many teenagers left home at the age of 18, and that this was the age at which they considered themselves outside of the control of their parents. She was equally surprised to hear that young people over the age of 18, still the children of their parents in her mind, might not listen to or expect to receive advice from their parents. She intimated how she was still firmly under the control of her parents, partly through regular telephone calls back to Malaysia to them, where they reiterated their expectations of her, (to do well in her studies, and, from her father, to always go out with a group of friends). AS explained to me how afraid her father was that she might marry someone from outside of her culture and how he constantly discouraged her from having any close relationship with non-Chinese males. In her choices for her life style here, her parents' wishes provided a foundation for her decisions. Thus, her construction of her relationship with her parents, as one of filial piety and obligation, was reconstructed in the host culture and, to some extent, sharpened by her awareness of an alternative which she was unable to accommodate.

Many of the participants, especially the undergraduates, could not imagine being self-supporting and independent of their parents at the age of 18. MC was surprised that her homestay sister had to pay a 'fee' to her parents even though she lived at home. She asked me if parents would have to pay board if they came to live with their children. Again, she did not realise that parents rarely lived with their children. Although she, like many of her friends, had had a part time job in Taiwan, she would still not be expected to support herself through university, even if she had studied in Taiwan. None of the undergraduate participants renegotiated their understanding of financial dependence on their parents towards the independence demonstrated by the New Zealand students.

To some extent participants adopted the freedom they encountered here among their New Zealand peers. Participants had the opportunity to live away from their parents and make decisions about their living arrangements and how they spent their leisure time. They all commented that such opportunities would not have existed had they remained in their own cultures. Yet they were also very much aware of the need to retain and live by their CHC values, partly because of their ethnocentric belief that their own values were better and also because they were firmly embedded in their education, and partly because of the influence of their cultural peers who acted as a regulatory force through their gossip networks. Thus, all of the participants reconstructed to some extent their relationships with their families, retaining their Confucian obligations to their families. However, to varying degrees they renegotiated their attitudes to leisure in light of what they encountered in the host community.

Issues of morality and openness

The participants, in living side by side with New Zealand students, were made aware of New Zealanders' attitudes towards morality.

Participants commented on what they saw as the openness of New Zealand society with regard to moral values. FX renegotiated her attitudes towards moral education. Although surprised, she approved that sex education was taught in schools and that the New Zealand government took responsibility to educate its people over these issues. FX felt that sex issues should be discussed openly, that they should be part of the education system, and she did not approve of the 'secretive' attitude to sexual conduct in Chinese society, on the part of both the citizens and the government.

Some of the participants came face to face with the differences in attitudes to relationships and marriage here. For example, MC was surprised that her New Zealand friend (a fourth year accounting student) had a girlfriend who was, first, seven years older than him and, second, was Thai, and thus of a different culture. When she asked him if he worried about family, age, or cultural problems, his reply was: "When you're in love everything is fine" (MC). These differences were of paramount concern to her. Fortunately, from her point of view, her boyfriend, although Thai by nationality, was ethnic Chinese.

LJ could not understand the idea of partnership without marriage, although he recognised that it was common enough here: 'I can't imagine without a legal document how do[es] a marriage survive, according to Chinese way' (LJ). He related his shock at a conversation he held at a party with some young New Zealand students:

They [the students] also ask me, 'Why are you married? If you love your girlfriend you can stay with her. And when you divorce you get no [problems], very tidy and everything will get very easy to deal with'. And I said, 'Oh, it's terrible'. . . . And they also said, 'I think if you marry you have to support your family' [that is, your responsibilities increase]. (LJ)

In recounting this episode to me the shocked LJ reiterated the values he was raised by: in China, and in Asia, the male always plays the key role in the family, he has to earn the money and support the whole (extended) family, and without a legal document the female is not protected and her domestic responsibilities (care of children, parents and the home) are not acknowledged. LJ concluded:

Not all the things I found in New Zealand are nice, [or] are better than in China. The majority of them are better, but depend on my own proper value. . . . In my opinion the Kiwi are not very responsible for their relationships. Especially some single mother. I don't think this social position is nice. And the other things is the sexual code is too loose. (LJ)

Such constructions, based on first culture values, were not uncommon among the participants.

YR and FX were unable to renegotiate their values regarding the legal institution of marriage. Both commented on the informality of relationships between men and women in New Zealand, and the facility with which couples divorced. Divorce in China at that time was both difficult and uncommon. YR was concerned that couples could live together outside of marriage, and even change their partner. In China, if such things happened, they were hidden and not

talked about by the perpetrators. Furthermore, in China, the government does not recognise de facto marriages. There is no income support for solo mothers, and no chance of a successful career. YR found government support for such situations very strange. FX noticed that the Chinese couples living here, away from their parents, became closer and more dependent on one another. She opined that although Chinese couples may have been unhappy together here, the absence of extended familial support meant a greater obligation to stay together and support one another.

As a result of all these observations YR concluded that she valued greatly the Confucian attitudes of morality in family life. By comparison, the western version of family life seemed to her to be too distant. Similarly, SX appreciated the family values of Confucian heritage cultures, where extended family work together to support one another in all aspects of life. By comparison, New Zealanders (and those in western cultures in general) appeared to him to resolve their difficulties on their own. His economist leanings led him to conclude that such autonomy was neither socially nor economically productive for society as a whole.

Participants showed little renegotiation of their moral values in light of their exposure to the values of New Zealanders. All of the participants' relationships were conducted according to their Confucian orientations. None appeared to approve of the 'openness' they observed here. From these experiences it would appear then that the participants preferred to live by their Confucian code, evidence of the ties they retained with their first culture, rather than adopt some of the practices of their New Zealand peers whose behaviour did not fit with the values they held. Such practices as de facto marriages, a lack of responsibility and deference towards one's parents, and a causal attitude towards education were values which the participants were unable to renegotiate. Such awareness, as apparent in FX's comment about the commitment of Chinese couples living in New Zealand to each other, suggests that these Confucian values were strengthened by their New Zealand experiences.

Attitudes to food

Some participants commented on the differences in social conventions surrounding the serving and sharing of food, differences which they found contradicted their Confucian values in that they showed a lack of hospitality and respect towards guests. The way of preparing, cooking, eating, and

presentation of food was different. MC noticed that at a special dinner she attended here the atmosphere was very 'romantic', the 'plates are beautiful', and they 'arrange the table very beautiful' (MC), but in Taiwan the focus is not on the presentation, but on the quality of the food: there should be an abundance of it, it should be good quality food, and there should be many different dishes. This emphasis on quantity and quality of food, and not on the presentation and the setting, is a mark of respect that the host wishes to endow upon the guests and, in return, guests are expected to eat as much as possible as a mark of appreciation and respect for the host. MC explained her disappointment at the behaviour of some New Zealand guests whom she had invited to dinner:

We prepared a lot of food, but they just eat one dish. Fish! In my culture if you, when you eating you have to finish all dish[es], but here I find, if they don't like it they will leave it, so the dish[es] look like [they] still have a lot of food. (MC)

New Zealanders, unfamiliar with CHC customs regarding food, were clearly overwhelmed by this abundance, just as Chinese find the standard New Zealand family practice of serving one's meal onto a single plate lacking in generosity. By contrast, New Zealanders endow upon the gathering a chance for the guests to socialise together; the food might merely be the conduit. MC had difficulty renegotiating her attitudes towards these social conventions.

YR described the confusion she experienced over customs surrounding the eating of lunch in the first few days of her arrival in New Zealand and in her homestay accommodation:

The lady, she just had her own lunch, even I stayed and I sit in my room, I didn't know when she had her lunch. She didn't ask me. So you know, I didn't know how to say it, 'When do you have lunch?' I don't know. (YR)

This was made more difficult for YR by the fact that, in China, lunch and the evening meal are times that the family gathers around the table to eat and talk together.

YR observed another dinner practice which she remarked was, on first experience, 'strange' to her and would be considered unsociable in her culture. As there were many guests, they all took a plate and their knives and forks and ate away from the table, talking very quietly. She remarked that in China, everyone would sit around a big table and eat together, with much joviality. For her, this led to feelings of awkwardness and what she regarded as a lack of hospitality.

As the experiences of these two participants indicate, renegotiation of the rituals surrounding food was difficult. They felt discomfort in the formality associated with eating practices as demonstrated by their New Zealand hosts. Instead, they preferred their CHC practices of conviviality around a table and an abundance of dishes. And yet MC showed a renegotiation of one eating practice: the New Zealand barbecue. I was invited to her house to participate in a large neighbourhood barbecue (albeit vegetarian) which resembled a New Zealand barbecue in that guests brought 'a plate' and drinks to supplement MC's offerings. MC acknowledged that she liked to adopt this practice, inviting both her Asian friends and New Zealanders. Thus, except for this one instance, their experiences primarily reinforced (or made them aware of) their preferences for their first culture norms.

Acknowledging classical Chinese culture

All the participants appeared to be renegotiating their intercultural communication experiences in light of their Confucian orientations which enabled them to appreciate the two different cultures to which they had been exposed. SX, however, articulated this process of renegotiation in terms of his knowledge of classical Chinese culture. SX found that, as a result of living in New Zealand, he was able to appreciate the richness of his culture much more. He had another good Chinese friend with whom he had philosophical discussions about the differences between Chinese and western cultures. As they discussed in Chinese he had difficulty expressing these ideas to me. He explained to me how he appreciated the sense of harmony and balance inherent in the philosophy of Chinese life, that is, that each individual must strive to attain a balance, not work too hard and not become too stressed for the sake of profit, because in the end we all died. SX noticed here that, because of the focus on the individual, many people resorted to drugs, or materialistic goals. He acknowledged that in China the desire for material goods was also common (a view iterated by other participants from China), but it needed to be balanced with a recognition of spiritual values. He felt that many Chinese had forgotten the special relationship between human beings and nature, and that people must live in harmony with nature and not exploit it. Some people in China he felt were now striving towards these materialistic goals at the expense of spiritual values, and he saw this as an imitation of the West. The philosophy he tried to live by here was that, even though he had to study hard, he should still ensure that he enjoyed life and found time to explore and experience other things.

Thus, by applying his knowledge of the philosophical foundations of his first culture (outlined at the outset to this chapter) to his experiences here, SX was able to interpret his experiences here through his understanding of his own culture, just as LJ and KZ (as quoted at the outset to this chapter) were able to interpret their culture and cultural values in light of their experiences in the host community. In some instances these interpretations resulted in reconstructions (or rebuilding) of the first culture, and in other instances a renegotiation (or some degree of change towards the ways of the host culture).

Conclusions to 7.2

Throughout the research period participants used their experiences here, in their observations of and social interaction with New Zealanders, to reconstruct and renegotiate their values, beliefs and attitudes from their first culture. In some instances, this resulted in an understanding and accommodation of New Zealand society and a renegotiation of values, beliefs, and attitudes. In other instances, participants preferred to preserve and reconstruct within the host culture their Confucian values which served to further differentiate them from those in the host culture.

Participants were disadvantaged in their social interaction by what FO described as a 'conservatism' resulting from the Confucian need to preserve social correctness and harmony. This conservative behaviour manifested itself in a reluctance to equivocate or express a view, acts which participants considered may have been face threatening and therefore disturbing to harmonious relationships. That the undergraduate participants reconstructed these values in the host culture rendered intercultural communication with hosts more difficult, and thus served to differentiate them further from the host community.

The undergraduate participants in particular maintained their Confucian constructions of acceptance, filial piety and obligation, and the need to preserve harmony and face. The Malaysian participants maintained the practice of 'gossip' and the giving of 'face', in some instances even to me as researcher. These participants accepted and felt constrained by it and thus tempered their choices for living accordingly. Three of the participants chose to extricate themselves from this network of gossip, for example, SY and the Chinese female graduates (YR and FX), and were critical of its transfer to this culture.

Among the undergraduates, SY was the only participant to show substantial renegotiation of his values, beliefs and attitudes as he sought intercultural contact with his New Zealand peers: by understanding and accommodating them he was able to be accepted as a friend. And yet, he was unable to accommodate such values as lack of filial respect and openness in male/female relationships.

The majority of participants did not substantially renegotiate their values regarding thriftiness, filial responsibility and deference and relationships with the opposite sex in light of their experiences in the host culture. In fact, exposure to New Zealand values pertaining to openness in male/female relationships, and lack of filial respect served to further strengthen their Confucian constructions, especially among the graduates (YR, FX, and LJ). However, most, both graduates and undergraduates, appreciated the freedom to make choices about their daily actions and not have to be accountable to their parents. As a result of their experiences in the host culture, all the participants appeared to be acknowledging some renegotiation (through questioning) or reconstruction (through reinforcement) of their Confucian values as they sought to understand and accommodate the host culture.

7.3 Belonging in this culture

A sense of belonging, underpinned by an acceptance and possible enjoyment in living among the host culture (Oberg, 1960), is the eventual stage reached in the process of adaptation and adjustment to a culture. Nonetheless, it is also possible to have a sense of belonging in some ways and not in others, as participants' experiences indicated. Their sense of belonging changed, depending on the circumstances that they encountered at the time. Feelings of loneliness, exposure to racist taunts, negotiating encounters in religious contexts, understanding New Zealand society through the media, and dealing with humour provided situations and experiences where participants were required to reconstruct and renegotiate their social worlds.

7.3.1 Constructing a sense of belonging

For all participants (with the exception of SY) the place where they belonged first was with those from their own culture or from other CHCs. Fundamental to this sense of belonging were the personal relationships they enjoyed. For example, the married students from China all had their families with them by the end of the study. I have already discussed the partnerships formed by other participants with either those from their own culture, or from another CHC. SY, the only exception, seemed to rely more on his in-group of New Zealand students in his Hall of Residence, rather than on those from his own culture, although he certainly had significant friendships with those from CHCs.

Graduates

The graduates reconstructed their social realities around their families. Familial life and study provided a purpose for being in New Zealand, and the prospect of a future here.

YR's sense of belonging was eventually enhanced by the arrival of her daughter after one year, followed by her husband. With the responsibility of settling her family and caring for them, YR had little time left for other interests, although at this stage she began to make contact with people at church on Sundays. By the end of the study her comments to me suggested that she still felt like an outsider:

As long as I'm still living on the outside of the culture and I try to get into the culture a bit, in my view a very difficult thing.

First, she attributed her difficulty to belonging in the culture to her lack of language. But with time she imparted to me other internal struggles which were affecting her social reality. Her daughter much preferred the schooling here to China. In addition YR had to choose between pursuing her own career back in China, a promotion to Associate Professor and a good salary by Chinese standards, or staying here and feeling like an outsider with no status and, possibly, unemployment. She decided to sacrifice her own future for that of her daughter's and, to some extent, her husband's. Enrolled in a technology masterate he would have a better chance than YR of finding a job.

Having friendships with those in the host culture was also an important factor in having a sense of belonging. For example, FX, although she had her husband and five year old son, still felt she did not belong because she had no friends

here: 'I've got many good friends in China, but not many good friends in New Zealand' (FX), neither Chinese nor New Zealand friends. Among the Chinese community, for example, because people were here predominantly for study and were therefore very busy, it was difficult to establish friendships. Like YR, FX had little time to pursue contact with New Zealanders. She also attributed language as a drawback to her communication with others and her understanding of New Zealand society. She gave an example of a Chinese friend who had worked in a New Zealand company in Auckland. Even after two years there he still found it difficult to have a deep conversation, to go beyond the level of politeness, and extend topics of conversation beyond Chinese cooking and culture. FX, too, found the same difficulty. Although FX was happy living in New Zealand she felt that her sense of belonging was tied to her husband's study and future, either here or in another country. Like YR, she also considered returning to China to pursue her career; there, she could at least feel a part of the society.¹

LJ had more opportunity to feel as if he belonged because of his part time job in the School. He was in contact with both staff and students, and socialised with his New Zealand-born Malaysian colleague. He manifest his desire to belong to New Zealand society by joining the Cosmopolitan Club, a place where he could take his wife. Even through his research he hoped to make contacts with companies with the eventual aim of seeking employment. (In fact, LJ was reconstructing his CHC way of valuing connections as a conduit to employment, a value which both FX and YR told me they did not practise here.) LJ was motivated to participate in New Zealand society. His open character and self-confidence enabled him to have a greater range of intercultural communication experiences and, as a result, feel a greater sense of belonging. But like FX and YR, he too was constrained by his studies, and the responsibility he had to show towards his extended family here. He concluded that he had little time for friends.

SX confided in a letter to his father on first arriving that he wanted his experiences here to extend beyond the three things constitutive of study in China: library, classroom, and bedroom. Since he was interested in his own classical Chinese culture, he was eager to compare. In order to do this he made himself

¹ Beyond the data collection period both YR and FX felt that their study here had not equipped them with the necessary skills for obtaining a job in New Zealand. They considered courses in office technology and computing in the hope that this training might give them access to the job market. Both their husbands were studying science here, courses of study which they felt would enabled their husbands to find jobs and thus provide an income for their families.

open to join in with many groups. The Christians he met opened up one aspect of life in New Zealand; he played bridge with me once and was keen to continue, but I had little time. (Unfortunately, he never joined the bridge club.) He joined the badminton club, and sometimes attended the weekly lunchtime music concerts. Although his wife eventually reunited with him and they had a baby, he still did not give up his quest for involving himself in the society here and learning about the culture. However, towards the end of the research period SX acknowledged the difficulty he had in trying to break through:

I really want to [feel a part of the New Zealand community], I think, but I don't know how to. (SX)

KZ felt that the key to belonging was to improve his knowledge of the culture and history of the New Zealand people. Homestay experiences enabled him to better understand and have more contact with New Zealanders outside of the anonymity of the Halls. They also gave him an opportunity to improve his English, as he believed that language was also a key to belonging. However, after three semesters KZ still felt that he understood little about New Zealand culture and society:

[I] still [have a] different way of thinking and . . . because the culture is the very general things and it's inherit from the history and from a lot of things . . . and it's very difficulty to change this kind of things. . . . Maybe I can understand more here in New Zealand people's thinking . . . compare with when I first come here. But I still not really understand the whole culture. . . . If I study the history of here, maybe I understand more. (KZ)

Undergraduates

For the undergraduates such as WK, FO, AS, and to a lesser extent, PS, the desire to belong was not such an issue as it had been for the graduates. They were here to study primarily and, secondly, to enjoy themselves in the little spare time that they had in a foreign country.

Because FO's life focused on the campus and socialising with his Smithfield friends, he confessed to knowing very little about daily life in New Zealand because of his limited contact with New Zealanders. He expressed an interest in knowing more about Maori culture, having read about Maori carving in the Reader's Digest. I offered him some reading materials but, as he never took up my offer, I suspect he did not pursue this interest. I was surprised to hear that mine was the only New Zealand home FO had been into in the three semesters of his stay. In spite of this FO still felt that he had accumulated a lot of knowledge

about how people behave here, through travel, going into town, and going up to Auckland. He cynically concluded that life in New Zealand was a bit like Malaysia because New Zealanders, like ethnic Malays, swore at him in the streets.²

WK was able to observe a considerable shift in his sense of belonging once under way in his studies here. Initially, like all the participants, he was oriented towards success at university. Through his experiences of talking with others here, of reading a range of publications like *Nexus*, the student magazine on campus, magazines about contemporary life in New Zealand, and the newspapers and, of course, in communicating with New Zealand students, he began to realise that there were many ways in which he could develop his interests and experiences. By joining clubs he would be able to meet a range of different people which, on the one hand, would avoid what he regarded as social isolation and, on the other, would expand his knowledge of living in New Zealand. Thus, on a student level, he felt a need to familiarise himself with student interests, such as rugby. He was having immense difficulty with the rugby culture, however:

I think it's crazy. They get really hyped up, then the people after that, they start commenting (barracking, and criticising players). And then you must know the players, Lomu, or whatever. (WK)

WK did admit to going to a pub, but usually only after a long assignment or exam, and with his Smithfield friends. On occasions, they might meet up with New Zealand students there. As a result of these experiences WK concluded that rugby, and going to drink beer at pubs on a Friday night were 'the two major events' (WK, second semester) in New Zealand students' lives. He, like many of the male participants, acknowledged these interests, but was unable to accommodate them in the construction of his social world here. By contrast, the female participants chose largely to ignore the existence of such pursuits. For example, MC could not tolerate the New Zealand students' attitudes to drinking: 'Me and my friends always say this group of students [is] too crazy' (MC). These interests displayed by the New Zealand students did not help to advance the undergraduate participants' sense of belonging.

WK also had feelings of not belonging in some social situations within his Hall of Residence. For example, if the New Zealand students had a *block* party, he

² I discuss the reasons for this conclusion in the section on racism in Chapter 7.3.3.

still felt a bit afraid of going, or he would go for a short time only and then return to his room, or go and talk to his Smithfield friends. However, he was left feeling concerned: 'What will they [the New Zealand students] think of me' (WK). He explained that many of his Smithfield friends were also afraid of joining in with these activities, including the Hall ball and rugby matches:

It's quite hard. . . . Sometimes I don't know what they are doing, what they are talking about. If I just start suddenly talk, it's like you're alone. . . . And then they carry on, do the other thing[s], because they cannot be bothered with me so long. I mean, [they] can't entertain me all the time. (WK, second semester)

With such different interests from the New Zealand students, reconstructing their social worlds to accommodate these interests and, thus, feel a sense of belonging was difficult for most of the undergraduate participants.

PS's sense of belonging changed along with his domestic situation. While he was in the Halls he tended to mix more with international students, and was also travelling to Auckland to see his girlfriend in the weekends. He did not spend much time here in the first year. He began to feel bored with study and life here, he had no interest in campus or student life, and confided that he would like to return to Hong Kong, or even transfer his studies to Auckland. However, his move to a homestay in the second semester gave him the opportunity to meet some New Zealanders and get to know them as friends, as well as share the social life and leisure activities of his homestay brother. He seemed to feel more settled, however, in the third semester, which coincided with his girlfriend joining him and his going flatting with a group of CHC students. But, like the other undergraduates, PS's intention was to return to Hong Kong to work. To that end, he was not so interested in belonging here or seeking out friendships with New Zealanders. Part of the reason for this he attributed to the racist taunts he had endured.

MC, in spite of her desire to make friends with New Zealanders, found it difficult because she explained that she did not know how to go about it. She felt that inviting New Zealanders to her home was a way:

Two weeks ago I invited a Kiwi friend to my house for dinner. But I didn't told them too much, because, I don't know why, I just wanted to invite and come to my house. . . . I just want to make friends with Kiwi. Just want to more understand what they think, what their behaviour.

Like LJ, she took initiatives to include others in her social life. But unlike LJ, she possessed neither the contacts he had, nor the self confidence. Thus, her attempts to belong were all the more admirable.³

SY's immersion into a life with the sub-culture of other mainly first year New Zealand students in the Halls of Residence secured his sense of belonging. He found these first year students very simple and naive in their outlook:

They are slow, very very slow, so what they are thinking is easy and simple. They got perfect thinking. Always think that the world is perfect. I tell them, 'No, the world is not perfect. It's worse!'. (SY)

From his accounts he shared with them a similar focus: a social life first, and studying second. This was SY's life, albeit limited in its context. He felt he was able to fit in because he was open and joined in with them, listened, and tried to talk to them with his limited English. He explained why he thought he fitted in compared to his Malaysian counterparts:

Maybe attitude! . . . I don't mind about everything, so I just try to like, I easy like, get into the other culture, learn their culture. (SY, third semester)

However, on a broader scale he admitted that his stay in New Zealand was temporary: as an international student he felt neither a sense of belonging nor acceptance.

In conclusion, participants struggled with a sense of belonging as they constructed their realities around those to whom they were closest in the host environment: in the case of the graduates, their families; and in the case of the undergraduates, their close CHC friends. Other influential factors were their personalities and attitudes, their desire to feel a part of society (often determined by whether or not they intended to remain in New Zealand), and their living environment.

For the most part, participants felt they did not belong in New Zealand. All participants were constrained by their studies which received first priority. The married participants were to some extent constrained by familial responsibilities. These constraints left YR feeling like an outsider by the end of the study, and FX feeling as if she did not have many good friends here. KZ, who did not

³ After the data collection period of this study, MC's boyfriend returned temporarily to Thailand for a semester due to the Asian economic crisis. She felt that she would need to make more of an effort to make friends since his departure would leave a gap in her life.

have the constraints of family, acknowledged some accommodation. He was perhaps more honest and insightful in his appraisal of his situation which he attributed to a difference in thinking and understanding. SX and LJ sought affiliations with social groups in order to develop a sense of belonging. Of all the participants, LJ was the most successful at developing this sense of belonging through his employment in the School, and through membership of such clubs as the Cosmopolitan Club.

The undergraduates varied in their sense of belonging. Like LJ and SX, WK sought contact with New Zealanders through his interests and memberships. However, like the other undergraduates, his inability to renegotiate his interests to accommodate the New Zealand students' interests in social and sporting activities made his sense of belonging all the more difficult. FO and AS showed the least sense of belonging both in their attitudes, and in their socialisation. Again, SY was the undergraduate who sought the most involvement with his New Zealand student peers in accordance with his strong desire to belong. For the most part he was successful in constructing a sense of belonging among this group.

Although the research period covered one and a half years some participants had been in New Zealand longer and yet, as their experiences and accounts indicated, none of them felt they had an extensive understanding of what it was to be a New Zealander and thus enhance their feelings of belonging. Perhaps the situations they described above explain why participants such as YR and ML still felt Chinese here, and why LJ was perhaps the most successful of all the participants in constructing a sense of belonging in the host culture.

7.3.2 Feelings of loneliness

Most participants experienced some form of loneliness, especially upon arrival, as they did not know the patterns of daily life and they were not used to using English as a medium of communication. For example, MC explained how she sat in her room, unable to communicate in English with her homestay mother. She did not know what to do in this house. YR felt total loss and isolation as a result of leaving her husband and, especially, her eight year old daughter. She was fortunate to have stayed for some months with an Indian woman who was also a lecturer in the School and who thus understood her difficulties and needs

(both emotional and academic). This friend was always there for YR; even during work hours YR would sometimes go to her office. In comparison with the liveliness and bustle of Guangzhou, YR found the life here very quiet with few people.

Homesickness was also experienced by AS in the early stages. She described her feelings of homesickness in the first semester, especially upon receiving letters from her family and friends and after telephoning her parents. In her optimism, she explained that she did not want to let these feelings influence her goal which was her study here. One of the reasons she cited for her loneliness, especially early in the study, was that she did not have people she could talk to, accept about 'normal things, common things. . . Here is different. Everybody seems very busy' (AS, first semester). This reference (alluded to in earlier chapters) to communication on the level of 'common things' suggested that AS had not yet developed close friendships according to the Confucian notion where trust is important in disclosing feelings.

By contrast, the Chinese males appeared much more robust, perhaps due to gender difference within CHCs. This gender difference is highlighted in LJ's explanation for his strength of feeling which he described as being characteristic of his Chinese male socialisation:

According to my philosophy you have to face the problem by yourself if you are man. You have to decide what you have to do and you have to resolve trouble by yourself. And the trouble of the problem coming to you is also the chance or opportunity for you, and [I] use this method to relax my loneliness. It's another opportunity for me to improve my skills, my ability. . . . When I were a child then my parents tell me, 'You're a boy. You are not a girl. You're a good boy with the high power. You won't ever feel loneliness. You have to face every trouble by yourself'. This education [I] studied when I am a child. Big difference between the boy and girl's education in Chinese culture. (LJ)

Similarly, SX did not appear to find loneliness a big problem which may perhaps be attributed to his sharing the same Chinese socialisation as LJ. Initially he abated his feelings of loneliness by mixing with some other international students from Korea and Taiwan.

However, those males not from China appeared less resilient than LJ and SX. FO explained his feelings:

Sometimes I just feel that I need some support and they [my parents] are not there for me. And I wouldn't dare to phone home because it will make them worried. So I tend to just talk to the pillow, you know, those sorts of things. (FO)

He did not like to always bother his Smithfield friends when he felt depressed, and he believed that he had to sort out his own problems. WK, too, felt periods of isolation but, rather than go to the other Smithfield students, he tended to remain alone. Floor parties or group gatherings among New Zealand students also made him feel isolated because he had difficulty feeling that he belonged or was accepted.

For SY, by comparison, separation from home and family was the norm for him, both for study and work. He was pleased to come away to New Zealand: 'That's good for a short moment, let people forget me' (SY). -

In conclusion, unfamiliarity with daily life and not knowing how to act or what to say in certain situations, especially at the outset, resulted in participants feeling lonely and isolated, thus dispelling any sense of belonging. Personality was also a factor, for example, SY felt comfortable among the New Zealand students in his Hall whereas WK did not. A further factor appears to be gender difference: whereas males are socialised to be resilient and engage in self-struggle, females are taught to defer to the control of their parents, albeit from a distance.

7.3.3 Experiencing racism

All the participants were aware of issues of racism in New Zealand. Some had had direct experience, others had had friends who had been victims of racial attacks, and still others had been informed of racial attacks through the news or by word of mouth. Around the time of the research period there had been a strong anti-Asian movement, especially against Asian immigration into New Zealand, fomented by one politician (Winston Peters) in particular, who had gained support from the conservative public. Interestingly, from the undergraduates' experiences in particular, racist acts were delivered by young white teenagers, rather than the conservative older generation to whom Winston Peters was appealing at the time. The graduates had had less direct experience of

racism, perhaps because they did not lead such public lives and were not out on the streets in the evenings like the young undergraduates.

Some of the participants expressed an understanding of these government initiatives. For example, LJ felt that there was a need to recognise the effects of Asian immigration on the economy, especially its impact on social services and benefits. He felt that neither the New Zealand government nor the immigrants themselves gained if they came into this country and could not find a job. Similarly, PS supported controlling Asian immigration: 'I don't like many Asian here because here is foreign country. It's not in Asia' (PS). FO expressed a tolerance for certain amount of racism in society because of the racial difference which characterised his society. He had experienced gang fights between Chinese and Indians at his Chinese secondary school but he suggested, with education, these attitudes were changing in Malaysia. Thus, FO felt that he had some understanding, and acceptance, of racial issues and, as a result, was interested in learning more about Maori culture in New Zealand society.

Beyond the community

Some participants experienced most racist abuse in Auckland. They felt this was understandable since there were many more Asians there than in the local community here. For example, PS experienced bad treatment in the immigration office in Auckland, whereas in the local community, in carrying out exactly the same task, he found the officers very helpful and friendly.

Again in Auckland, FO related a situation where the car he was in, occupied by Malaysians, pulled up at traffic lights, and beside them a group of teenagers started abusing them. FO used his wiles to outwit them:

They were doing some action and keep on swearing and so on to us, and the girl in the car, in my car, she was quite afraid, she almost cried, because it was really offensive. And then, you know what I did? I smiled to them. I just pretend that I don't understand what they are saying. I want to make them even [more] angry actually. Because if I get angry they will get it [angry], so I don't want to aspire to them, and [so I] pretend that I don't understand what they are trying to say. (FO, second semester)

By the third semester PS had had many experiences with racist taunts which had served as a turning point for him. (Up until this point he had been willing to be open minded.) He had often been sworn at while driving his car, always by young people, both locally and in other cities nearby. In one incident he related, he stopped his car to go into a restroom at a nearby tourist city. When he

returned some young people in another car had parked beside his and then asked him for cigarettes and money. PS replied that he had none and told them to go away. At this point they cut his car tyres. He reported the incident to the police immediately, but the police were 'very useless. They don't do anything' (PS). In another unpleasant event, he saw young people from inside a car pour water over a young Asian female outside a sushi bar in the local community. However, for him, the final straw was when the warden of a youth hostel, in this same city, accused him of stealing a picture from the bathroom of the hostel where he had stayed the night. Upon leaving, the manager asked them outright if they had stolen the picture, and threatened to call the police if he was able to trace the theft with his surveillance cameras. PS was very upset and very embarrassed about this incident. As a result of all these episodes he concluded that he was no longer interested in getting to know New Zealanders.

In the local community

Participants generally applauded the attitudes that those in the local community displayed towards them. They cited older people, especially, as being friendly. However, racist incidents were again promulgated by young adults. For example, one of FO's female friends had a fire cracker thrown at her by teenagers when she was walking home from town and these youths shouted at her to 'go home'. FO noted that, if they were talking in a group in Mandarin, usually with raised voices (as was their custom), then they 'might get some stares, or some comments like, "go back"' (FO). He had not experienced this on campus. If people did stare, then he felt it was more out of interest than out of intent to victimise.

One of AS's female friends had been shouted at by some young New Zealand males who were drunk. 'Go home, go home' they said. She put this down to drunkenness. Some young teenagers also shouted 'go home', to MC when she had stopped at a traffic light. MC was saddened by this act because she felt it was undeserved.

On a less positive note, YR had noticed, and it was commonly accepted among her Chinese friends, that it seemed to be much more difficult for a Chinese to get a driver's licence than a New Zealander, and that the 'test official discriminated [against] immigrants' (YR). YR did concede that this could be due to 'imperfect skills' on the part of the Chinese drivers.

On campus

Generally, participants did not express any feelings of racial hostility towards them on campus. FO felt that the physical presence of a significant number of international students spread over the campus made New Zealand students feel more tolerant towards them. Furthermore, education played a key part. He felt that New Zealand university students were more understanding of issues about race than uneducated young teenagers described earlier.

However, while PS was living in a Hall of Residence in the first semester he was victimised by a New Zealand student whom he felt hated Asians. This student came up to him and swore at him. PS could not understand this behaviour because he and his friends had continually tried to foster friendly relations with the other students in the Hall. PS wanted to move out after the first week, but the warden was unhelpful. He believed that the warden, too, was not interested in helping Asians because when his friend had to change his living area twice in that Hall due to the noise, PS recalled that the warden's response was: "You shouldn't stay here" (PS). PS was also not happy there because many Maori students were living there, and he had heard, through word of mouth, that Maori were responsible for the criminal acts which occurred in that Hall: 'More criminal is from the Maori' (PS). Obviously, PS himself was displaying a lack of racial tolerance here. SY had a similar experience on the road outside a Hall of Residence. He was abused, with obscene language and gestures, and told to go back to 'his China' by a car full of young males and females whom he described as 'young skinheads' (SY).

The participants were all aware of, and extremely upset about a letter written by a New Zealand student to the University student magazine which criticised the presence of Asians on the university campus. FO found it 'very offensive' and felt that it was written out of ignorance. He explained his reason for not writing a reply because, in doing so:

You may write something that is offensive to the other race, and then you might cause [an]other type of matter. You know, you may cause other people to misunderstand, . . . although at the time most of us are unhappy about it, but none of us want to write. . . . If we attack him in some ways we are acting the same way as they are. . . . Actually, we are very happy that a lot of Kiwis write us and defend for us. And I'm very proud of it, I think that not all people are not that bad. (FO)

LJ was also pleased that many New Zealand students wrote replies attacking the author of the letter, but he also felt that Asians should stand up for themselves,

not just over this issue, but over other issues where they were being victimised, especially in the media.

SX concluded that some racism in a society was 'usual'. Debates about racism were also going on in China.⁴ Generally, participants found the university students in class were helpful and friendly towards them. Where participants such as LJ and WK experienced a distancing on the part of New Zealanders, they rationalised these actions as being indicative of unfriendly personalities, just as Malaysians or Chinese might also behave. PS, perhaps resulting from his racist experiences, was less generous and believed that some students 'hated Asians' (PS) and that their unwillingness to communicate was racist. Perhaps as a result of all the other positive expressions they had received from other New Zealanders, all of the participants, with the exception of PS, were not excessively disconcerted by these racist attacks. They seemed to be able to understand the reason for them, attributing them to the ignorant behaviour of uneducated and unaware teenagers rather than to the society as a whole.

7.3.4 Religion

For some participants (WK, YR, SX, and JX), religion provided a way of understanding and accommodating the host culture, and for constructing feelings of belonging and acceptance into the community. The only Christian among the participants was WK; some participants found other reasons for attending church, especially the opportunity it provided to them to practise their English.

WK belonged to the Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF) on campus, which was also aligned with a local church. In the third semester, he even stopped attending the Malaysian Students' Club and gave preference to the OCF because the activities they were doing (visiting host families, or going to the house of the church adviser he had been allocated) better enabled him to experience New Zealand society. WK became well acquainted with New Zealand families through the OCF. The adults performed the role of a 'possible mentor', or 'they are just there, support or whatever. . . They just say you can come anytime if you need anything, need any help in New Zealand' (WK). These people would

⁴ While in China I experienced many incidents of racial abuse (in the form of stone throwing and verbal abuse) perpetrated by Chinese students against black students from African countries in particular. Some of these incidents even involved the Chinese police and were covered by the media in Beijing.

represent a point of return for him should he come back to New Zealand in the future.

YR began to go to church every Sunday in the third semester. She made good friends among some of the parishioners. Initially, she started going to church to meet people, many of whom were Chinese and Malaysian, as well as New Zealanders. She found the congregation very friendly, and relied on them for support at times, for example, if she needed someone to pick up her daughter. She preferred not to ask her Chinese friends as they were busy with their studies. Although she had not been a Christian in China, she felt that she was one here: 'I now believe in God' (YR). She explained how this attachment to church developed:

The first day when I came here I have some, make some friends who were from the Church and were very nice to me and always take care of me and came to my place and visited me. So I feel they are really good people, and they show me what the Bible, they show me that kindness of the Bible and talk about Christ, Jesus Christ. I know it's good, so at that time I was here I know I didn't have many friends. . . . Some of them [are] Christians, some of them Malaysian Chinese, so they can speak Chinese, and also some of them are Kiwis, so they are really good people and when I came with them, I find there's some different from those that are not Christian. . . . So, [at] that time I decided to believe in God. And I think one thing is I need fellowship in a church, another thing is by accompanying them, by being . . . together with them, I have had more chance to practice English. So I went there and have been there since a few years. . . . They invite me to their homes, for dinners and sometimes just a family get together, and also sometimes they have some activities such as camp, . . . and tourism, . . . and sightseeing. (YR)

Thus, through the church, YR found a place where she was accepted and welcomed. She cited the benefits: 'By talking with them my English ability's improved and [I] know something about New Zealand culture, how to talk with people, how to behave when you contact the Kiwis' (YR).

SX's reasons for joining up with the Christian community were twofold: first, he was able to engage in many interesting outdoor activities with them, such as rafting and barbeques; second, he found the interaction which evolved from their Christian practices and beliefs both stimulating and touching. He explained that he had heard about Christianity in China, but had never seen it being practised. He was interested in its manifestations here, more from an intellectual perspective than as a convert. However, he had been quite impressed with the way they cared for one another through prayer. For example, they said a prayer to welcome his wife to his new flat just before she arrived: 'That's I think give me a deep impression' (SX). Instead of attending church on Sundays he joined

with these Christian friends in their *cell* groups on Tuesday evenings. They would discuss some issue and sing songs and talk to each other. SX also enjoyed discussing Islam with his Moslem floor mates when he first settled into a Hall of Residence on arrival. He enjoyed arguing with them over the virtues of Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. He felt that religion should be balanced with every day life, so the religious friends he met provided him with a conduit for this discussion.

JX's reasons for an interest in religion appeared to be more frivolous. He was interested in going to church to listen to the English of those who spoke. He also found that those associated with the church were very friendly and kind. He seemed to have quite a sophisticated appreciation of the religious believers he met and showed his cynicism. He found their belief in God as provider of everything quite foolish. He enjoyed debating their religious beliefs with them and to some extent taunted them:

Sometimes I argue, argue with the Kiwi people. I say, "If you are very hungry, and today God give you food?" And they say, "Oh, no, no, not that. And the God give me eyes, give me ear, give me brain. If I am hungry I can think, I can look for the look the food. That's for [why] the God give me hands". . . . I don't agree with it, so I discuss, I argue, argue with them.
(JX)

JX gained a pleasure from these interactions with the New Zealand parishioners, as well as an opportunity to practise his English.

Of those who shared with me their experiences with religion, only FX expressed an antipathy towards the church. She made a comparison between the way communism had been foisted on the people in China and the way in which religious zealots proselytised their religion to the people in China. Although she had been to the Chinese Christian church in the community and recognised that, as it was a western religion she might learn something of western culture from it, she did not like the pressure she felt from these religious people and concluded that she was no longer interested in the church.

Thus, for the five participants who became involved in religious activities, whether for religious reasons, personal reasons, or out of curiosity, they all managed to find friendship and social activities which better enabled them to understand and accommodate New Zealand society and culture. They were able to renegotiate their constructions of religion from their first culture based on

what they observed. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to communicate in English.

7.3.5 Constructing society through the media

In Chapter five participants talked about the challenge of dealing with New Zealand current events in their studies. An interest on the part of these participants in the news media might then have been a useful way for students to spend their time. Not only would they then be familiar with the examples discussed in class, but they might also gain insights into the behaviour and values of New Zealanders (notwithstanding an acknowledgement of the shortcomings of the media in their attempts to reconstruct reality). To what extent, then, did participants use television, radio, and print media to assist them in their constructions of New Zealand society and the social realities of New Zealanders within it?

Those who took little interest at all in the news media were AS, SY and FO. FO had shown some interest initially, but this declined when he concluded that newspaper stories tended to be trivialised and focused on human interest stories rather than international issues. He also found business news coverage shallow. He preferred the newspapers in Malaysia. AS, although she had flicked through the local paper on occasions, was unable to recall its name. Her familiarity with the news issues of the day was second hand, passed on to her by a Malaysian friend. She explained to me that she preferred to read magazines about fashion and pop stars.

SY felt that New Zealand was a peaceful country and had no news worth hearing or reading about. He, too, was not familiar with the news issues of the day, although he identified one news item at the time of my inquiry that had reported the operations of a Hong Kong Triad that was running a drugs operation from Hong Kong into New Zealand. However, at times he watched the BBC news on television at midnight.

Those who took a marginal interest and watched the television news were FX, YR, JX MC. MC listened to a local commercial radio station consisting mainly of music, and the news every half hour she recalled. FX followed her husband's interest in reading the advertisements in the newspaper, particularly

the property and car sections. They were both interested in the language used in these sections of the newspaper. FX felt that she could understand something of New Zealand society from the advertisements, for example, differences in values and focus in daily life, and also differences in the cost of living between her society and New Zealand. She was neither explicit nor critical of their value in this respect, however. YR had taken a course on media in the School and so took a moderate interest in media events, such as the leaders' reviews of their party's manifesto prior to the general election (a topical issue at the time of this discussion). However, she found that she had little time to watch television and, as her reading time was taken up with assignments, there was no time to read the newspaper. JX watched the news on television and read the newspapers and tried his best to understand the political issues (for example, the introduction of the voting system, Mixed Member Proportional Representation) and business issues (for example, the collapse of Kiwi Airlines) of the day.

PS read the newspapers a couple of times a week, but felt that the stories in the news were largely not very interesting to him. He followed events mainly for a marginal interest, rather than to be informed for his courses in the School.

FX enjoyed the television news because there was freedom to comment on the style of government and leadership, and on the behaviour of politicians. The range of topics covered was far wider than in China. She also felt that she could improve her English comprehension by listening.

KZ and ML were interested in talkback radio as it enabled them to practice their listening comprehension and the speech patterns of idiomatic New Zealand English. ML felt that the media were helpful in improving her knowledge and understanding of New Zealand society. For example, she had learned a little about Maori people and culture. KZ enjoyed the variety of topics covered compared with China, where the topic for discussion (for example, dating or a specified video programme) was set. Although KZ concluded that the media was different, he was not able to pinpoint what he felt these differences were. His knowledge of the controversial issues at the time appeared to be scant. He had little discussion with others, including New Zealanders, about political issues in New Zealand because he felt that very few New Zealand people were interested in political issues. However, his conclusion may be unfounded due to his limited opportunity to carry out such discussions. As his courses in the School were international and Asian in their focus, he did not feel that he needed to keep abreast of news events in New Zealand for his study.

The most avid followers of the media were WK, SX, and LJ. WK read both the local newspaper and *The New Zealand Herald*. He liked to be conversant with current New Zealand political and economic issues as they were often discussed in class. (As mentioned earlier, his Smithfield group relied on him as a source of information for current affairs in New Zealand.) WK felt that keeping up to date with events going on in New Zealand was important if he was living here. No other participant expressed this concern or interest. He confessed to finding 'a large majority' of his friends as being quite lazy when it came to reading the New Zealand papers. WK, SX and LJ all read the international papers. SX always watched the New Zealand television news, the BBC news at midnight, and listened to the BBC news on the radio (as he enjoyed listening to the concert programme which broadcast this news). LJ appreciated the accessibility the media and internet provided him to international and Asian political events. His attention was focused on the internet where he was able to access much news about East and South East Asia, information he could not receive in China as the private internet in China is illegal and news is censored. He particularly appreciated being able to read the well reputed Chinese language newspaper from Hong Kong, *Ming Bao*. He also accessed much other information in both English and Chinese, for example, news bulletins from China and Taiwan.

To conclude, most of the participants, perhaps with the exception of FO, SY, and AS, acknowledged that something was to be gained by following the media. For example, they could improve their listening comprehension, better understand New Zealand speech patterns, become more aware of issues of topical interest in the political and economic arenas for purposes of their studies, and access information about their own countries which they were not party to living there. However, largely, participants were not interested in gaining deeper insights into New Zealand culture and society through the media, although news, especially television news, served to keep them informed of their immediate world. However, FO, SY, and PS felt that the stories in the New Zealand media were trivialised. Only SX, LJ and WK seemed to extend their interest in news to the international arena. FO did not report to me his involvement in the international media, and nor did KZ. I suspect that these two would have taken an interest in international newspapers. Finally, being an eclectic reader of the news media takes both time and organisation. For many of the participants, the reading required of them in their studies already occupied much of their time.

In personal communication with LJ after the research period I was told that there exists a gender difference among Chinese with regard to media interest. He remarked that women were interested in popular culture as depicted in the media, and the *gossip* aspects of political life, rather than issues which might generate public, political, or philosophical debate, or issues of politics, economics, and society. Perhaps the comments of the women participants in this section reflect this gender bias.

7.3.6 Managing humour

International students experience difficulty in understanding humour in the host society (Burns, 1991), and these participants appeared to be no exception. Those who considered themselves humorous in their own cultures felt that here their humour was not understood. None of the participants could explain to me what New Zealand humour was. LJ was left to conclude: 'Not very [funny] humour is humour' (LJ). And PS felt that the comedy programmes on television were 'just for New Zealanders' (PS).

An understanding of the humour in a culture requires cultural and linguistic competence. For the most part, none of the participants appeared to have reached this level. The only possible exception was SY, due to his close contact with his New Zealand friends in the Hall of Residence. Although this social milieu was limited within the context of New Zealand society, it at least enabled him to develop competence in understanding.

The undergraduate, HY and AS felt bored (HY) and a little awkward (AS) during lectures if a lecturer made a joke. AS explained she 'couldn't pretend that [she] was laughing because [she did not] know what they say' (AS). ML and PS could sometimes catch their tutor's jokes in tutorials. SX sometimes managed to understand the jokes of his New Zealand friends when he was with them.

If understanding humour was a problem, then, it would seem from participants' comments that being humorous was even more problematic. FO, who was considered to be quite humorous in his own culture, and enjoyed making jokes, explained how the New Zealand students responded to his attempts at humour:

I try to crack some joke in front of Kiwi but they don't understand. . . Even though I use English, but my friends even Elsie, (an English as a first language Malaysian from Smithfield) she understand my joke, but I mean, when I use the same thing to a Kiwi or another group, they don't understand and they don't find it funny at all because they don't get my joke. (FO, third semester)

FO was looking forward to returning to his own culture so that his jokes could again be appreciated by a wider audience than his Smithfield cohort. LJ, too, had enjoyed being humorous with his students while he was a tutor in China. He found it difficult to make jokes here, especially when giving presentations, because, like FO, New Zealanders did not find him funny. He noted that most of his jokes when translated into English did not work.

Given that humour is culture specific it is not surprising that these participants would have difficulty understanding New Zealand humour, and that New Zealanders would also fail to find their attempts at humour funny. Inevitably, participants suffered awkwardness in social situations and in the learning environment when humour was used. Among the participants, only LJ and FO expressed some disappointment that their ability with humour could not be included within their communication repertoire.

Conclusions to 7.3

For all of the participants, a sense of belonging appeared to be constructed around those to whom they were closest in the host culture. Among the graduates who were married with families (FX, YR, LJ, SX) there was a constant tension between commitment to study and to family. These commitments impinged upon their daily reality and provided their central focus for being in the host society. The undergraduates focused their lives beyond their studies on others from their same culture, or other CHC and international students. Among the graduates, LJ was most successful in constructing a sense of belonging through his employment at the university, and through his social affiliations. And among the undergraduates, SY successfully constructed his social world around his New Zealand peers in the Halls even though he felt like an outsider at times. As the other participants' accounts suggest, their feelings of distance from the New Zealand way of life made their sense of belonging all the more elusive.

Participants were always willing to use language as a scapegoat for feeling isolated. However, their further accounts suggested that unfamiliarity with daily life and difficulty in establishing and developing friendships were also constraining factors. There were also personal differences among participants which affected the degree of comfort they felt in communicating with New Zealanders. For example, WK felt uncomfortable communicating with his New Zealand student peers in the Halls, whereas SY did not. This discomfort did not promote a sense of belonging.

The gender difference between males and females, as a result of their first culture socialisation, appeared to account for the greater resilience among the male participants in dealing with loneliness. LJ and SX were not afflicted by a sense of loneliness, and the undergraduate males had their own personal ways of dealing with it, whereas the female participants required contact with those back in their first cultures to abate these feelings. Loneliness was less of a problem for the female married participants once their husbands arrived from China. Similarly, the unmarried females experienced less loneliness once they had established romantic relationships with other CHC males.

All of the participants were able to recount stories of racism experienced either by themselves or their friends. Most racist experiences took place in the outside community rather than in the learning environment or among New Zealand students. Racism typically took the form of racial abuse or gestures in the public domain, and usually from youths rather than older generations. All were affected by a letter from a New Zealand student which appeared in the University student newspaper criticising the presence of Asians on campus. However, they were encouraged by the negative responses this letter received from other New Zealand students. Rather than take offence, participants such as FO, KZ, SY, AS, and MC were magnanimous and attributed racist behaviour to an ignorant minority in the community rather than to society as a whole.

The religious community appeared to provide a means of better understanding and accommodating the host society for five of the participants. Although WK was the only Christian among the participants and partook in church activities for religious reasons, like YR, SX, and JX, he also sought and found friendship and social interaction among those in these religious communities. Such interaction gave these participants a further insight into aspects of New Zealand society and culture, and the opportunity to communicate in English.

While the media may have been useful in facilitating participants' constructions of New Zealand society and culture, and access to communication styles, participants generally showed little interest in the media in New Zealand. In particular, the male participants FO, SY, and PS found that the media addressed issues which they regarded as trivial and that news coverage was shallow. Some participants cited listening to the radio or watching television to better their English (FX, KZ, ML, MC); others took a genuine interest in political, social and economic happenings (WK, LJ, and SX). This media interest among the participants was clearly differentiated by the gender bias which LJ described to me, namely, that Chinese females are interested in popular culture whereas males are more concerned with issues of public, political or philosophical debate.

Finally, participants generally had difficulty in understanding and accommodating New Zealand humour which resulted in their feeling awkward. FO and LJ, who were used to exercising humour in their own cultures, could not rely on this repertoire here. KZ concluded that New Zealand humour was specific to this culture and was humour which he did not find humorous.

While participants' initial experiences may have shared some of the features of Oberg's (1960) *honeymoon* phase, the outset of sojourner adjustment, where everything is new and exciting, their subsequent experiences suggested that they soon moved on from that stage. The range of variables noted by Furnham and Bochner (1986) in the adjustment process, variables such as depression, loneliness, homesickness, and other attitudes, were displayed by the participants, but to varying degrees and at different stages. The degree of difference in understanding and accommodation that resulted from the participants' experiences was supported by what Pedersen (1991) noted in the literature on sojourner adjustment where sojourners experience different levels of adjustment in the first place, followed by changes at different rates and in different directions.

The conclusions drawn from the findings in this study, and those of Pedersen from the literature on adjustment, provide a challenge to Oberg's hypothesis of a 'U' shaped pattern in the adaptation process as being too simplistic.

Finally, Westward and Barker (1990) found that cultural adjustment is dependent on the level and nature of contact which the overseas student has with the host country. For example, in this study AS and FO, who had little contact with the host community, appeared to be less able to reconstruct their social

realities to accommodate the host culture, instead preferring the social milieu of their first culture microcosm. By contrast, LJ and SY, who enjoyed the greatest contact, showed the greatest ability to accommodate those in the host culture.

The participants' processes of renegotiation and reconstruction of their social worlds in these contexts was not always smooth or satisfying, but more a process of trial and error, experiences which served to either enhance or frustrate their sense of understanding and accommodation of the host society.

7.4 Gaining permanent residence status and finding a job

Many participants were attracted to the idea of permanent residence in New Zealand since it offered to them opportunities which they might not otherwise encounter. This view was held not just by those from China, but also by MC from Taiwan, PS from Hong Kong, and SY from Malaysia. At the beginning of this study those who already had permanent residence were LJ, JX, HY and ML. Those who obtained it during the study were FX and YR. Both SX and KZ were seeking it at the end of the study, and MC, PS and SY planned to apply for it when they graduated. Thus, of all the participants in this study, only AS, FO, and WK had no intention of obtaining permanent residence.

7.4.1 Advantages in obtaining permanent residence

The participants' reasons for wanting permanent residence varied, but mostly addressed the needs of their (extended) families. The graduates from China either had permanent residence or were seeking it during their study here. In some respects they shared similar reasons for wanting to stay on rather than return to China. Both FX and YR preferred the New Zealand way of life and, along with that, living in a western culture, where they could enjoy a more affluent and flexible life style. For example, in China, it is more difficult to own a car, to travel outside of China, and to afford what the Chinese call luxury goods (televisions, refrigerators, etc.). Apart from materialistic reasons, there were other aspects of the culture that they appreciated. While FX admitted that

language posed problems for her sometimes, especially in making herself understood, she enjoyed the natural environment and the lack of emphasis on money. Although she had little money here, it was enough for her needs. Permanent residence would provide a better future for their children in that they could escape the pressures of the academic system in China. The participants themselves could enjoy cheaper education, compared to the cost of being an international student, as they would have access to government provisions.⁵ Above all, FX felt that being based outside of China held many opportunities for her future and for her family. These sentiments were shared by other participants from China.

Those other than the graduates from China (MC, PS, and SY) saw permanent residence primarily as an opportunity to provide a better standard of living for their parents, especially upon retirement. These three participants felt that they would have better opportunities for employment (better jobs which were higher paid) back in their own countries, at least initially, but they did not rule out the possibility of returning to New Zealand some day after they had gained some employment experience. Above all, their parents would have access to living in New Zealand upon retirement which would provide them with, they opined, a better and more peaceful life style.

On the other hand, FO, WK, and AS had no intention of staying on in New Zealand. Their focus was always to return to Malaysia, find a job, and be with friends and family. For this reason WK did not develop friendships in a way that he might otherwise have.

7.4.2 Employment issues associated with obtaining permanent residence

According to FX a constant topic of conversation among Chinese in the community concerned the difficulty of finding a job. The biggest obstacle they faced seemed to be a reluctance on the part of New Zealand employers to employ someone from another culture. KZ explained how this obstacle in the thinking of employers worked, an attitude which he felt was not a good thing for New

⁵ In the case of the graduates from China who had international student status, they had scholarships from the Chinese government. However, upon completion of their studies they received no more income and were thus obliged to return unless they could find some other means of supporting themselves. All the international students from China sought out this other means until they gained permanent residence.

Zealand's development: 'I won't say it's racism, but it's a kind of thinking' (KZ). He felt that New Zealand employers tended to look at the short term issues around employing a Chinese. While the Chinese employee may not start out with a level of English equal to that of a New Zealander, he pointed out that they have other attributes, such as diligence and a hard working attitude, different ways of thinking and operating, which would bring different perspectives to the workplace. He opined that New Zealand companies had not yet begun to acknowledge and recognise that these differences could be used to their advantage in the business arena. However, FX was more sympathetic to this perception. She had already observed in China the inappropriacy of having a foreigner (in this case, from the United States) managing a joint venture hotel. Eventually, that foreigner lost his job because his management style did not fit the culture. She reasoned that, being Chinese, New Zealanders might also take the same approach. Why should they employ her when there might already be a New Zealander who could do the job?

The second reason for a lack of interest in employing those from CHCs appeared to be related to language. KZ noted, ironically, that because of the language problem, employers could not possibly know the real ability and strengths of these Chinese if they were never given a chance to perform. FX felt that her English would disadvantage her in getting employment in an English language context, and she knew little of the New Zealand culture. Participants had better opportunities for employment in jobs which required them to deal with other Chinese, that is, where a knowledge of a Chinese language and interpersonal communication styles were required, but such jobs were difficult to gain. Both FX and YR had interviews for these types of jobs but were unsuccessful. YR did manage to get a job, commission based, selling a product which her employer hoped she would target to the Chinese in the community. YR explained how her New Zealand church friends thought that the job was not suitable for her, partly because her personality and qualifications did not fit the job, and also because the product was not worth marketing. After three unsuccessful weeks of struggle in trying to find clients to buy the product, YR was very happy to give this job up.

Participants were generally reluctant to accept manual labour as a substitute for a professional job, especially the Chinese participants who had all been

professionals in China.⁶ KZ, however, in desperation to stay on in New Zealand (subsequent to the study), worked part time both as a painter and then as a cleaner to pay his board at his homestay.

LJ also began to look for a job after graduating. He explained, also, how he had to consider his wife's role and employment in the family. As a professional doctor in China she had had to take up employment below her status (first, as a caregiver in a hospital for the elderly, and then as a secretary after they moved to Auckland at the end of the research period). Her parents in China were not pleased with this situation. He also had the responsibility of providing for his parents who had come to live with them in New Zealand. He had been expected to work in his Taiwanese uncle's very successful business based in Auckland, but being under the guidance and influence of his uncle, he would not have been free to move or shape the company according to his own ideas. Instead, he took the much harder road of being unemployed temporarily. The other married participants from China to some extent shared these expectations of finding a job which reflected the qualifications they had obtained in New Zealand, and the position they had left behind in China. YR, for example, had difficulty reconciling the fact that she could return to her previous job in China as Associate Professor, whereas here she might have to resort to a manual job. This difference was, understandably, very hard for her (as it was for others) to accept.

KZ and ML even changed their courses of study in order to have more opportunity to find a job. KZ completed a Diploma in Marketing and International Management and then enrolled in a one year Diploma in Accounting.⁷ ML decided not to continue her Diploma in Marketing and eventually returned to the School two semesters later to pursue accounting papers. Both she and FX considered returning to China if they could not find a job. Similarly, YR enrolled in an accounting diploma after completing her masters degree, but withdrew soon after as she had been advised by other

⁶ AS's acceptance of her non-skilled job (see Chapter six) was temporary and seen as a means of obtaining some pocket money.

⁷ In his third year here, and beyond this study, KZ thought he would study computers, his real interest, if he succeeded in getting permanent residence. After waiting a year he received permanent residence and was able to enrol in this course of study.

Chinese friends that such a diploma would not greatly enhance her job prospects.⁸

While participants strongly desired permanent residence and could see its advantages, the status also created difficulties for the participants, especially in finding a job appropriate to the qualifications they had achieved in New Zealand as students, and also in having to address the prejudices held by employers here. Additionally, there was the loss in status that they suffered, the graduates especially, in giving up their social and professional status in China.

Conclusions to 7.4

At the outset only LJ, JX, HY and ML were permanent residents; six participants (YR, FX, SX, MC, PS, and SY) either sought it, or considered seeking it, during the course of the research period and beyond. In the case of the participants from China, their construction of permanent residence in New Zealand represented greater affluence and choices for their own and their families' futures. For the other three participants (MC, PS, and SY), permanent residence represented a better quality of lifestyle for them and their parents, although not necessarily a more affluent one. They did not rule out an intermediary period of work experience in their own cultures, acknowledging the difficulty those from CHCs faced in obtaining work experience here.

The remaining participants, AS, FO, and WK, who held international student status, had retained throughout the data collection period their mentality they arrived with of *going back*.

Associated with the obtaining of permanent residence was the employment factor. While the Chinese participants eagerly sought work and were willing to accommodate the New Zealand way, they felt that this accommodation was not reciprocated on the part of New Zealand employers. Nor did employers appear to place any value on the contributions that may result from employing the cultural other. For example, KZ astutely pointed out that Confucian attributes such as diligence and hard work, and differences in ways of thinking about and

⁸ In fact, beyond the study, YR, in a conversation with me, began to question what she had learned at University. She noted that SX, who had skills in economics, computing and mathematics was much more employable. He got a job comparatively easily after graduating from his masters course.

approaching a problem, which might complement the status quo of the workplace, were ignored by prospective employers. Thus, participants faced enormous hurdles in gaining employment in New Zealand. Such attitudes on the part of New Zealand employers further served to heighten the sense of cultural difference that the participants experienced in trying to understand and accommodate New Zealand society and culture.

Summary

This chapter focused on how participants' experiences influenced their understanding and accommodation of another cultural way, and how their constructions of these experiences impacted upon their social realities. The chapter began with a reflection on the cultural foundations of Confucian societies and its notions of appropriate social interaction.

The second part explored participants' reconstructions and renegotiations of these values, beliefs, and attitudes in light of their social interactions with and observations of New Zealand people. Generally, participants were disadvantaged in their social interaction by a conservatism resulting from their Confucian need to preserve social correctness and harmony. Their reluctance to express face-threatening acts in intercultural communication served to differentiate them further from the host community. Gossip networks acted as regulators of social interaction both intra- and interculturally. The majority of participants did not renegotiate their Confucian values regarding thriftiness, family responsibilities and deference, and personal relationships. Exposure to New Zealand values such as male/female relationships and attitudes to the family served to strengthen their Confucian values, especially among the graduates. However, both graduates and undergraduates appreciated the freedom to make choices in their daily lives, and found that their Confucian values were either reinforced or questioned as they sought to understand and accommodate the host culture.

In the third part, participants discussed their constructions of belonging in the host culture. For the graduates, their sense of belonging was constructed around the family and study. The undergraduates focused their lives beyond their studies on others from the same culture or other CHC and international students.

Participants recounted a range of episodes that impacted upon feelings of belonging, for example: the degree of comfort experienced in intercultural communication; gender differences in dealing with loneliness; experiences of racial taunts; contact with those in the host culture through encounters over religion; focus on the media; and the ability to manage humour.

It was concluded that participants experienced differences in understanding and accommodation, and these differences occurred at differing levels. Similarly, Pedersen (1991) noted that the literature on adjustment provided a challenge to Oberg's hypothesis of a 'U' shaped pattern in the adaptation process as being too simplistic. And, as Westward and Barker (1990) found, accommodation of the host culture was influenced by the level and nature of contact experienced by the participants with those from the host culture. Only LJ and SY appeared to be competent in renegotiating their social lives to accommodate and understand the host community and, thus, experience a greater sense of belonging. LJ achieved this through his employment in the School, and SY through his friendships with New Zealand students in the Halls of Residence.

Finally, having permanent residence was important for participants in determining their future lives which, in turn, necessitated finding a job to support themselves and their families. At the outset to the study, only four participants had permanent residence. By the end of the study six more were either actively seeking or considering seeking it. Of the three Chinese participants who sought permanent residence, their constructions of life in New Zealand focused around greater affluence and choices for their own and their families' futures; the other three participants (MC, PS, and SY) sought permanent residence for a better quality of lifestyle for themselves and their parents. However, participants acknowledged the obstacles to employment, caused by what some participants felt was an unwillingness on the part of employers to accommodate difference in the workplace or acknowledge the value of the Confucian attributes of diligence and hard work. Participants felt that these attitudes heightened the sense of cultural difference. For the remaining three participants from Malaysia (FO, WK, and AS), any sense of belonging was subordinated by their goal of *going back*.

The next and final substantive chapter explores participants' reconstructions and renegotiations of their cultural identity in light of their communication encounters in the host culture.

Chapter 8

Understanding cultural identity

You have to involve to this Kiwi social [society], so you have to find your channel, and you have to find your position. You can't always keep your[self] alone from Kiwi, far from Kiwi, yeah, you only stay in Chinese group. It's not good for you, and maybe give Kiwi another image, not good image. You come to New Zealand, you become to the New Zealand citizen, but [if] you still stay with Chinese, you think yourself is not a Kiwi. (LJ)

8.1 Introduction

Chapters five, six, and seven addressed the ways in which cultural difference was created and/or maintained as a result of participants' communication experiences. In this chapter I explore how, and to what extent these participants personally (re)construct and (re)negotiate their cultural identity in the host environment as a result of their intercultural communication experiences, and the extent to which this reconstruction and renegotiation leads to the formation of a third culture. Before beginning the exploration, it is necessary to review and expand upon the conceptualisations and features of cultural identity and third culture building that underpin this study.

Cultural identity is defined as a person's understanding of and identification with the culture system of a particular group (Collier and Thomas, 1988). First, cultural identity, like communication, is contextual, processual, and dynamic, and is played out in the (intercultural) encounters between and among individuals and groups. Adherence to, or recognition of, a particular cultural identity presupposes the sharing of cultural knowledge, or living tradition, with others from the same cultural group, as is the case with Confucian heritage cultures. Cultural identity emerges in a given context, and is negotiated by persons everywhere (Collier and Thomas, 1988). It is the relationship among communication, context, culture, and cultural identity in the intercultural communication encounter which will be examined in this chapter.

Second, an awareness of cultural identity is formed and managed through intercultural communication and through intercultural contact (Collier and

Thomas, 1988). This theme was substantiated by LJ when he concluded: ‘If you [have] never been to the other culture’s environment you only get one cultural experience. You don’t know what’s the unique feature of your culture’. Through discourse identities are formed, negotiated, modified, confirmed, and challenged. In identifying with and recognising the symbols, typifications, and social recipes -- the living traditions of a culture -- individuals are able to give meaning to these forms, and the boundaries that they render.

A third component of cultural identity is cultural identification which develops through a process of contrast of self to others, and one’s group to other groups. For example, cultural identity is inscribed within individuals’ sense of belonging to a particular community within the host culture, and the extent to which they are prepared to cross the boundary from one community to another (Cohen, 1985). And through communication interlocutors are able to identify commonalities with others that differentiate them from members of other groups and communities. As individuals negotiate the boundaries among these groups and communities they begin to question their cultural identity.

Finally, cultural identity includes the cultural practices, beliefs and values which individuals have been educated by and which guide interaction and (intercultural) communication. That is, these are the defining features of culture with which individuals identify. In the case of Confucian cultures such practices as the need to maintain social harmony among peers, and the need to foster and preserve relationships are manifestations of these processes.

Thus, as a prelude to this discussion, it is important to consider how Confucian notions of identity have been articulated. It was argued in Chapter two that western notions of personhood, as firmly bounded and highly individuated (Geertz, 1979; Sampson, 1989), are inappropriate in the study of people from other cultures. Instead, an understanding of Confucian values, cultural practices, and beliefs that underpin Chinese culture are important in interpreting a Confucian conceptualisation of cultural identity. For example, Wang (1991) described Chinese identity in historical terms, as ever-changing but rooted in an awareness of its own past. By focusing on the distinctive features of Confucian civilisation, Schwarz (1985) provided a more complex description that incorporated the cultural aspects of identity:

[Identity includes] the “religious quality” of Chinese family life, the theme of universal kinship, the familial model of the Chinese social order, the unity of ruling and teaching, the “primacy” and “sacred” quality of the political order, and a sense of total order. (Cited in Irwin, 1996, p. 111)

Both approaches signal the importance of the historical features of Confucian culture as a means to understanding how ethnic Chinese perceive their cultural identity. More importantly, the second approach includes cultural and anthropological aspects of Confucian culture, the *living tradition* of the culture with its underlying Confucian values of obedience to and respect for the social order, and to family and state; and notions of harmony and moderation, values which permeate daily life, in short, cultural values which have been articulated earlier in this report. A final aspect of Chinese thinking about *self* derives from Confucian principles that locate Chinese individuals as part of a network and not as separate entities capable of bearing rights. Hence, Chinese people emphasise networks of close personal relationships (Irwin, 1996).

A final theme addressed in this chapter is third culture building (Casmir, 1993; Starosta, 1991). As individuals respond to the experiences they encounter during the intercultural communication process, they begin to reconstruct and renegotiate their values, cultural practices, and beliefs that underpin their cultural identity, to resemble those of the cultural other. And, similarly, members of the host culture may undergo this same process to develop ‘mutually accepted ways of benefiting from human relationships’ (Casmir, 1993, p. 407). This accommodation of differences in cultural knowledge suggests the construction of a third realm (Starosta, 1991) and, eventually, a third culture (Casmir, 1993; Starosta, 1991). It also suggests the reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity which may result in the existence of a multiplicity of identities (Belay, 1993) arising from different intercultural communication contexts.

In summation, this chapter explores the themes of cultural identity in relation to community, identity change and the existence of multiple identities, reconstruction and renegotiation of values, cultural practices, and beliefs, and the possibility of third culture building. I address the participants’ feelings about their cultural identity, their place of belonging both in their own culture and in the host culture as they move between these different communities, and how changing identities impacted upon the formation of a third culture.

8.2 Cultural identity: The place of the first culture community

In this part the participants discuss the importance of their own culture and community in relation to the other cultures or communities with which they interact, and how these groups influence their personal construction of cultural identity. The two communities which played an important role in terms of participants' cultural identity were the Malaysian and the Chinese communities. The Malaysian community had its networks firmly based within the University campus, while the Chinese community was based more in the city, although the students from China had informal links with one another on campus. The participants from Taiwan and Hong Kong, being undergraduates, tended to associate with the Malaysian student community since there was no formal organisation to represent these two cultural groups

8.2.1 The Malaysian community

The Malaysian undergraduates showed the greatest affiliation with their own community, especially FO and WK. These two students arrived in the School with 20 other Smithfield students from Malaysia. FO explained the strength of this community and the peer group pressure to identify with the in-group:

[The] Malaysian community here is very small and you know sometimes there are the people that talk behind your back and . . . news gets around very fast. So sometimes if you mix with Kiwis and so on, and you ignore your friends, they will like talking that you, you're ignoring them, . . . because if you come as a group people expect you to stay with them. . . . If suddenly, you walk out, they will think that, "What have I done? Did I do something awful, or did you despise us?" or something like that, and then they will start talking again. (FO)

The presence of the Smithfield group, and the larger Malaysian international student group, had a profound impact on both FO's and WK's cultural identity here. FO insightfully outlined how difficult his stay here would have been without his Smithfield friends and, yet, how the pressure to belong to the group, to retain his cultural identity, was also restricting:

If I come here alone it would definitely be different from if I come with a whole group. . . . I believe that if I come here alone I might have the opportunity to experience more. (FO)

Similarly, WK noted how the protection provided by the group insulated him:

If you come on your own you will either adapt quickly, or faster, you will get to know more Kiwis faster because you will have to, I mean, take the initiative and move out because you need friends and all these things. (WK)

FO outlined the power of the group in creating for its members a Malaysian identity within the New Zealand culture:

When I come here I don't feel that there's anything different. There's no difference at all. Because I mean in terms of culture there are always that group of people that support, that support me. Although I experience more culture, I mean at the time there are a lot of things that shock me when I first come, like food, the life, their [the New Zealand students'] attitude. But now I'm getting used to it, so I don't really care about New Zealander culture in that sense. I don't feel shocked or anything any more. So, and then there is the culture there, the Malaysian culture there. There are actually students to support me, so there's not much difference for me. I don't think I give up anything to come here. (FO)

FO had a strong group from which he could seek security within the new culture, a group which served as a buffer to the differences he might otherwise have encountered. However, even within the protection of this group, FO was still forced into social interactions which led him to question his cultural values and identity (for example, his experiences concerning racism discussed in Chapter seven). FO did not regard as unnatural his immersion within and total commitment to the group, whereas New Zealand students might interpret this in-group behaviour as racist and separatist.

Similar to FO, AS's cultural identity remained firmly embedded within the CHC and Malaysian social and academic world. By the third semester, her experiences indicated that she had consolidated her cultural identity: she was a Malaysian student, living among and studying with Malaysians, including some other CHC students, in a foreign country, New Zealand. In the third semester of this study, having established her relationship with her Malaysian boyfriend, she articulated her place:

Last time I told you I [would] like to know more about New Zealand culture and those things, but when I get a boyfriend I think my focus is just on him and studies. I just don't have time, very hard to do it. (AS)

FO pointed out that being Chinese educated in Malaysia, rather than Malay or English educated, also made a difference. For example, collectivist notions within the Chinese culture were preserved among those who were Chinese educated, whereas those who were English educated were permitted to display more western type traits of individualism. Thus, from the group's perspective, it was permissible for those like WK, who were English educated, to seek out relationships with other English speaking people, even New Zealanders; they thought that it was somehow more natural. However, although WK enacted their expectations to some extent, his communication with other New Zealanders did cause him to question his place among those from his own culture to the extent that he felt a need to reaffirm it:

I don't know whether they [the Smithfield students] see me differently or not now. For me, my relationship with them is not as close as last time [about six months ago]. It's a bit cold. I mean we are still friends, so when we come [together] we still talk [about] everything. . . . For me there's [still] something there. . . . And sometimes I think, "Oh, I better mix with them", or if I keep mixing with Kiwis they might think that I'm something else.
(WK)

While he felt that he was not expected to stay completely within the group, he did feel a need to show loyalty to them. Part of WK's identity thus remained with his cohort, although he did develop intercultural relationships outside of this group. Thus, he was constantly having to renegotiate his cultural identity as a result of his communication experiences among those from his first culture, and among those from the host culture. In short, he was displaying a multiplicity of identities across this range of intercultural communication contexts.

SY proved to be the one exception among the undergraduate participants in terms of the group with whom he chose to identify. His daily life was bound up with the New Zealand students on his floor in his Hall of Residence. He explained:

I like to join with New Zealand friends rather than Chinese friends. . . . [I can] improve my English. And their attitude, their culture, I like, like their culture. No gossip! . . . Around Chinese they got heaps of gossip . . . because this Chinese one [group] is very small and they like to talking each other's stuff, like this, that's their attitude, so I hate that. SY)

SY showed a strong reconstruction of cultural identity to immerse himself in the community of New Zealand students within the Halls, shunning the values of his first cultural group and taking on those of his host peers.

To conclude, the communities established by these Malaysian undergraduates suggest that they largely maintained their cultural identity from their first culture within the host culture. For example, they brought with them their first culture values, practices, and beliefs and constructed their own community around these values through communication and interaction with other Malaysians, and also with other CHC students. In some instances the presence of such a community, which inscribed the cultural practices and values from the first culture, inhibited a renegotiation of cultural identity for these participants in light of their intercultural communication experiences (as in the cases of FO and AS), and reinforced their Malaysian cultural identity within the host culture. And for WK, the construction of a first culture community within the host culture provoked a dilemma for him in his need to reaffirm his identity with those from the first culture, yet also to enrich his cultural identity through contact with those in the host culture. SY proved the exception.

8.2.2 The Chinese community

The participants from China appeared to form a much weaker community than the Malaysian and other CHC undergraduate participants. Generally, there was less reliance on the community for learning needs, intracultural communication and social interaction. However, LJ's accounts of other Chinese students' behaviour, as a result of his experiences as international support person in the School, suggested some similarity between the experiences of the Malaysian undergraduates and the students from mainland China. They, too, preferred to remain within their group rather than make contact with those outside, especially for academic support. The actions of these Chinese students illustrate their preference for informal channels of communication within their community to achieve their needs rather than resorting to the more formal channels offered by the School and University.

The Chinese graduate participants in this study sought help (through other Chinese students and from within the Chinese Society) mainly for survival in their daily life. Academically, they had to be much more independent than the Malaysian students since there was not such an extensive Chinese network within the School as had been established by the Malaysian community. Monthly meetings with the city's Chinese Society provided a place to reaffirm their cultural identity, through language, communication, and cultural events.

This particular reconstruction of a first culture community within the host culture, manifested in the role and function of the Chinese Society, shows similarities with that of the community of Malaysian students.

The role of community was important in enabling some participants to realise that their cultural identity was undergoing change. For example, some participants felt that their cultural identity was changing in the way they experienced intracultural communication within their Chinese community. YR felt that she and her peers had changed their behavioural patterns and practices as a result of living and studying in New Zealand. Topics of conversation which characterised intracultural communication in China were considered to be of a personal or private nature within the context of the New Zealand culture. YR perceived that this was a consequence of the Privacy Act in New Zealand:

I should say all of the Chinese, almost all the Chinese, we have changed the characteristics, some of their characteristics. We don't talk like we used to be in China, don't ask each other questions. You know, in China, if you were quite familiar with your friends, you can ask whatever you like, it doesn't matter, but here in New Zealand, you have the Privacy Act. Even between friends you don't, you ask some questions, [if they] are too personally, people feel unhappy or discomfort to answer you. . . . Somebody who ask some questions, "Oh, where do you work?", or "How is your work?" or something, in China it is quite natural to ask these kind of questions, but here, if you ask, people might sense this is privacy. . . . You better not ask these sort of questions. . . . It make a difference, big difference. Whenever I think, "Oh, can I ask?" I have to think. (YR)

As a result of such communication encounters, YR felt that conversation was less personal here within the Chinese community than in China. She concluded that she found it 'quite difficult to make really sincere [Chinese] friends' (YR). And yet, YR expressed a preference later on in the study for seeking out contacts with Westerners in order to better experience western culture and thus avoid certain aspects of her own culture. Unlike the Malaysian undergraduates, she had no close peer pressure which obliged her to maintain relationships with others in the Chinese community. Such differences in behaviour and cultural values resulted in YR analysing and, thus, reassessing the values that underpinned her Confucian cultural identity when communicating with those in the host culture.

Similarly, differences in intracultural communication styles also led FX to distance herself from other Chinese within the Chinese community here:

Sometimes I keep the distance with the Chinese people. I don't want close relationship with the Chinese people. . . . I hate the gossip. Yes, because I'm very direct, but Chinese communication is very, rarely so. No! For example, if I will [want to] refuse you I will [go] round and round and round still, explain my idea. But I'm not very [really] this [sort of] person. So sometimes [I] talk very direct. . . . But I just keep my distance [from the Chinese community]. (FX)

A further defining feature of Chinese cultural identity is the importance of relationships within the culture. For example, FX observed that, in China, relationships were much more complicated in that people talked about their 'secrets' with one another, personal issues which also resulted in conflict in relationships. She preferred the more distant and, by comparison, what she perceived as more superficial relationships people held with one another here. Furthermore, there was no competition between people here like there was in China: competition for jobs, or friendships which would lead to access to power and wealth. These relationships were further complicated by the political system there, leaving FX to conclude that in China 'we should be more careful when you talk about somebody else' (FX).

Thus, it would appear that for these participants differences in intracultural communication patterns within the Chinese community in the host culture resulted in reconstruction of a Chinese community which exhibited looser relationships and less complex interpersonal communication patterns than those found in the first culture. As a result, these Chinese participants were obliged to renegotiate their cultural values and communication patterns that underpinned their cultural identity in this context.

Yet, in some instances, the absence of a strong Chinese community served to heighten a sense of cultural identity for undergraduate participants. For example, MC felt that her Taiwanese friends here were most important to her because 'we always help each other, something about study, or you're homesick, just your personal problems' (MC). And similarly, KZ found that his two homestay experiences reaffirmed his cultural identity. Neither homestay experience provided him with a source of friendship among New Zealanders in the way that PS's homestay experiences had. They did, however, offer him many insights into New Zealand culture which enabled him to conclude that the values he lived by in the host community were Chinese. The homestay experience thus served to affirm the foundations of his Chinese cultural identity in relation to the host culture.

8.2.3 The CHC community

Because of the shared social and cultural practices and value systems found in CHCs, the community of international students, especially those from CHCs, served as an extension of the relationships participants had with those from their first cultures. These relationships were most notable among the undergraduate participants. For example, AS naturally found an empathy with those who belonged to what she called the *Asian* community. She explained that it was not her who chose to interact with international students, but rather ‘it’s the environment choose for me. I just can mix with them. I don’t choose friend. It just happen’ (AS). That these students from CHCs should congregate was completely natural to AS. This pattern was indicative of the preferences the undergraduate participants tended to show in their social groupings, that is, those from the same culture first, followed by those from CHCs.

SY expressed the interdependent friendships he held with some Taiwanese students: ‘I always [went] to their house or shop to watch video’ (SY). And in return he recognised the irony in their seeking help from him as he did not consider himself equipped academically to provide this help:

They want me to help [them] for their courses as well. Strange, eh! I try to look for someone to help with my course, and they come and look for me and for help, and I say, ‘Oh, God bless you!’ (SY)

These CHC students shared common difficulties as students living here. The inaccessibility of the host culture, in terms of meaningful interpersonal interactions and relations experienced by both the participants and other international students, resulted in KZ, PS, and SX seeking friendships with other CHC students, particularly in the Halls of Residence, at the outset of this study. Such friendships provided support, information, and friendship initially, until they became more settled in their own communities. KZ and SX had a further reason for seeking contacts with other CHC students, and other international students: they were interested in exploring other ways of viewing the world. For example, SX was interested in the religious practices of Muslim Malaysians he met in his Hall of Residence, and KZ found friendships with CHC students from Malaysia and Indonesia (with whom he could speak in Mandarin), particularly once his Hong Kong Chinese girlfriend returned to Hong Kong temporarily. Thus, their desire to expand their life experiences in a new culture, resulted in a mutually beneficial intercultural contact.

Thus, shared Confucian cultural identity appeared to be a powerful influence on participants' choices for and facility in communication and social interaction. Many of the participants had friends who shared a common CHC background but not necessarily a common nationality. Their sharing of common values, cultural practices and beliefs facilitated communication. Participants were thus able to share friendship and pursue social, leisure, and tourist activities with other international students. They were also able to discuss and compare their experiences in the host culture, and thus reconstruct their social worlds. The CHC community created and maintained cultural difference from the host community, this community also provided a basis from which the participants could interpret the culture of the host community.

Conclusions to 8.2

The existence of same culture communities clearly played an important role in the participants' construction of cultural identity in the host culture. The undergraduates, belonging predominantly to the Malaysian community, retained strong ties with their community for most aspects of their daily life, both on and off campus. Participants saw the existence of the on-campus Malaysian community as positive because they could retain their culture within this in-group and were not required to go outside of it in order to fulfil their needs. They had established a community of CHC international students within the host culture. The Malaysian community, which extended its sphere to include those from other CHCs (PS for example), to a large extent enabled them to cocoon themselves, thus diminishing their need to partake in intercultural interactions with those outside of this group, namely, those in the host culture. Their boundary with the host culture was marked by their shared Confucian values, practices and beliefs. Such a strong in-group bonding proved detrimental to the Malaysian participants' development of a relationship formation with people in the host culture and, thus, a reconstruction of their cultural identity to accommodate the host culture. It also marked the creation and maintenance of cultural difference between them and people in the host culture.

There is also evidence of the existence of yet another community, that of the Smithfield students (which included FO, WK, AS, and SY), a subgroup of the Malaysian group. For some of these participants, such as FO and WK, identification with their cohort was even stronger. For those who wanted to

experience intercultural interactions beyond this group, such as WK in his interactions with his Christian friends, care had to be taken in balancing this identity with that of the in-group. For WK, this was not always easy. This movement among communities suggests the need for these participants to demonstrate fluidity in their identity. In short, it suggests the existence of multiple identities across a variety of contexts.

This display of fluid identity and the existence of multiple identities was most noticeable in SY. On the one hand he focused his social life on his New Zealand student friends and limited his contact with the larger Malaysian community. Yet, he still relied on a few CHC friends for some academic needs and for some social interaction.

The graduates and diploma participants, all from China, underwent a different experience. The role of the Chinese community was less important for the Chinese participants than the Malaysian community was for the Malaysian (and some of the other undergraduate) participants. As they remained longer in New Zealand, they began to question their own place in their first culture which, in turn, affected the relationships they had with others around them who were also from China. Unlike the Malaysian students, YR, LJ, SX, and FX expressed an interest in exploring further what they regarded as the western aspects of this culture, to exploit an opportunity that most people in China could never have. Therefore, for these Chinese participants, their community here was a resource, a place to find help for survival in daily life, rather than a place for social interaction. Its manifestation, the Chinese Society, enabled participants to pursue cultural practices and maintain parts of their culture and, yet, also to realise that, through their intra- and intercultural communication experiences, they were also reassessing the values, practices, and beliefs that underpinned their cultural identity. Being community based rather than campus based meant that Chinese participants did not feel the pressure to belong to their group as the Malaysian students did.

However, while participants acknowledged the existence of the social recipes which comprise Chinese culture within this community, they also distanced themselves from the community if they chose to, demonstrating more independence in their academic and daily life than did those from Malaysia. All the participants from China expressed a desire to escape from what they considered to be the less appealing symbolic forms of their culture: relationships, networks, and gossip, which in part explains why they preferred

to have more contact with the New Zealand culture than their Malaysian counterparts did. Thus, in addressing these differing symbolic forms, participants had to reconstruct their cultural values to accommodate the values inscribed in the host culture. All of these changes are indicative of some renegotiation of values and cultural practices and, hence, reconstruction of cultural identity, as they crossed the boundary into the host culture.

Overall, the presence of participants' first culture (or, in some cases, CHC) communities enabled participants to retain some aspects of their cultural identities. The Chinese participants showed more willingness to tolerate some movement towards the social recipes of the host culture. Having some degree of contact with others from their own culture reinforced the participants' feelings about themselves and their place in their own culture, for better or worse. Some, like ML, could not escape their Chineseness here, resulting in the feeling of being a foreigner. All acknowledged to varying degrees the important role of their first culture identity in the learning environment and beyond. Malaysians sought out other Malaysians, and then, those from other CHCs. And, to some extent, some of the Chinese participants also sought this linkage with others from CHCs. Within the community of CHCs participants were linked by shared ethnicity, religion, cultural values and practices and, frequently, languages, the symbolic forms of their shared cultural identity. As they moved among different cultural contexts, and experienced a variety of intra- and intercultural communication exchanges, and as they sought identification with a range of communities, they were enacting what Belay (1993) described as a multiplicity of identities.

8.3 A changing cultural identity

While the previous part focused on the role of same culture communities as a manifestation of participants' cultural identity, this part addresses the tensions which emerged for participants as they considered their relationship with the host culture, and how this impinged upon their cultural identities. Two themes emerged: the *going back* mentality, subscribed to by the undergraduates who intended to return to their first cultures upon graduation, and the *desire to acculturate* which was expressed by those who already had, or were considering applying for, permanent residence in New Zealand. These themes are discussed

first. Second, participants consider their place in the host culture and its impact upon their cultural identity. Third, participants discuss the aspects of their culture that they wanted to safeguard and retain. Finally, changes in Confucian behaviour and values are considered more closely, and their impact on changing cultural identity.

8.3.1 Returning to the first culture or acculturating to the host culture

For some participants, the decision to return to their first culture had been made before they came to New Zealand. These participants held fast to that decision during their time in New Zealand. They demonstrated a *going back* mentality. For others, their goals underwent changes as their study here progressed. Their goals moved from gaining a better qualification with which to return to their country to the possibility of settling in New Zealand. This decision had implications for their acculturation to the host community. Acculturation meant the reconstruction and renegotiation of their own values, cultural practices, and beliefs towards those of the host culture with the purpose of developing an acceptance and belonging within it. Participants commented on their position in relation to these two themes.

Going back

Going back was a theme that permeated the consciousness of the undergraduates especially. (SY and PS were more ambivalent, and MC, with her PR status, sought acculturation.) These participants all shared the common goal of re-entering their culture in order to seek employment and to reinscribe their lives within their first culture of family and friends. This mentality resulted, in the long run, in their making little effort to acculturate, or to better understand New Zealanders and their way of life and society. AS's position reflects the underlying attitude in going back. She felt that since she had always intended to return to her culture, then there was little reason to know much about the New Zealand culture:

I just come and study, and I'm going back to my home country very soon, yeah, I just feel like . . . don't have to become part of, know about the New Zealand culture. Not really important. I won't have to live here a long time.
(AS)

AS felt that her reason to return to New Zealand in the future would be for sight seeing, to return to the campus and recall her time here. She concluded that acculturation was made difficult for her by differences in the way of communication, the life style, and the cold weather. However, her experiences and attitudes revealed in earlier chapters also give strength to the position she has taken here.

WK, acknowledged the influence of the going back mentality:

My mentality was always going back, going back. If I knew I was going to stay longer then I was probably going to like have to take more initiative to developing friends, yeah, because I think friends are important, I mean like the people who makes a big portion of your life. (WK)

In spite of this, WK was the participant among the undergraduates who tried the most to accept the New Zealand way. Unlike some of the other undergraduate participants, he took the broader view that they were here to ‘learn other things’ (WK) which required a certain daring and risk taking. However, the acculturation process was never all embracing for him: ‘It’s like adaptation, getting to know better, and also like building friendship and relationship, but not that I need to totally convert. There’s no need to totally convert’ (WK).

Some participants (PS, KZ, YR) also acknowledged that, no matter what, because they were here, inevitably and unconsciously they learned something about the country and its people. PS concluded:

If I living here I will know the culture, even I don’t want to know. I have to know. It force [itself upon] me. (PS)

These participants’ comments indicate how the going back mentality was, on the one hand, detrimental to their relationship with those in the host culture and, concomitantly, to their intercultural communication and cultural identity reconstruction. Instead, it appeared to reinforce their identification with their first culture as will be seen in the next section (8.3.2).

Desire to acculturate

By contrast, the Chinese participants, and SY and MC, were more open to the notion of acculturation because their goals were different. The going back mentality did not prevail. KZ saw his experience here as a process of acculturation and adaptation, and a process of learning the language and the culture. He expressed his feelings about living here:

I want to know more about New Zealand culture. I think the more the better, so there's no limit for this process. And I think learning the language is a process to understand the different culture. . . . Also I try to, I try to not just concentrate on the academic culture, so I try to read some other books, like some novels and also some magazines and newspapers, so I can understand more, the developing culture in New Zealand, because you cannot just talk about the study and things. You also need to talk about the society. (KZ)

Similarly, SX was eager to enter more into the society, but found that, as a student, the range of experiences he could hope for limited his involvement:

I think I'm a little isolated, I mean, with the New Zealand culture. . . . I just study here. If I have a chance or I have opportunity to work here I think, yeah, I will know much much better. (SX)

The participant who showed the greatest shift with regard to these to themes, from her arrival to the end of the data collection period, was YR. Initially, she focused entirely on her studies and showed little interest in the host culture; her focus was on returning to her family and career. However, her decision to stay and apply for permanent residence resulted in her wanting to know the culture and belong to the society much more in order to better understand the people, the life, the politics, and the laws and regulations. Her decision to stay altered her perception of how she should live here: self imposed isolation changed to openness to new and different ways of doing things.

Conclusions to 8.3.1

The difference between a *going back* mentality and a desire to acculturate strongly influenced the extent to which the participants chose to acquire the living traditions of the host culture, that is, the typifications and social recipes inscribed within the New Zealand cultural identity. Those who focused on going back knew that, no matter what, they would resume their lives in their first culture and their New Zealand experiences would be subjugated by the much more important responsibilities they faced there. As such, their identity constructions adhere to the notion of *sojourner* (Ady, 1994; Pedersen, 1991). They remained firm in their intentions to return to their first cultures upon graduation as a successful graduate, and to bring kudos and wealth to their families through professional employment. This construction of identity as *sojourner* also contributed to the creation and maintenance of cultural difference between the Malaysian undergraduates and the host people.

By contrast, the Chinese participants, some of whose goals changed as they experienced more of their international student life here, found that their initial thoughts of returning to China had given way to a desire to belong. In seeking permanent residence participants needed to understand and acquire the cultural knowledge of the host group, an important step in being accepted. Taking on aspects of this living tradition would require some reconstruction and renegotiation of their cultural identity. Negotiation of the values, cultural practices, and beliefs of the host culture is also suggestive of some third culture construction as intercultural interaction takes place. These processes are explored in more depth in the remainder of this chapter.

As participants sought to acculturate, they also had to establish their place, their cultural identity, in relation to their New Zealand hosts. This process is explored next.

8.3.2 The participants' negotiation of place in the host culture

In this section participants explain their place in relation to the host culture, that is, how they perceive their cultural identity as a result of their intercultural encounters, and as a result of being exposed to the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of another culture. As indicated in the previous section, WK, FO, AS, and, to a lesser extent, SY and PS were sojourners. Even so, none went untouched by the experience of living in another culture. For the others the issue of permanent residence meant that living in New Zealand, and their resultant intercultural communication encounters, had a deeper meaning, resulting in some third culture building. First, I consider the accounts of those participants who intended to return, the sojourners, followed by the accounts of those who had permanent residence in mind and, thus, felt a greater need to acculturate.

The sojourners' relationship with the host culture

The undergraduates explained how their sense of cultural identity differentiated them from their New Zealand counterparts. PS concluded that, as he had come to New Zealand as an adult in his early 20s, his culture was already firmly embedded in his values, cultural practices, and beliefs, the components that comprise his cultural identity. Even his New Zealand friends did not influence him that much: 'I can't change any more from my culture' (PS). However, in other stages of the study he did recount positive social contact with some New

Zealanders (namely, in his homestay family). But, ultimately, the focus of his life here was towards his CHC friendship networks which dominated his social life. He concluded: ‘I’m an outsider, yeah. I’m not belong in New Zealand, even though I live in here two or three years’ (PS).

AS conceded her inability to feel any closeness to or empathy with New Zealand students in particular:

I just don’t have the kind of friendly feeling [with the New Zealand students on campus]. . . . I mean I won’t have a good relationship with them, . . . but it’s a way of living and I think I’m not used to it. (AS).

More importantly, she is alluding to what she perceives as a New Zealand prototype of friendliness which, compared with the intense interpersonal relationships experienced in CHCs, is distant and shallow.

FO, in his pragmatic way, described himself as accepting of the differences he had noticed, especially with regard to New Zealand student behaviour: ‘I think after I come here I tend to [be] more of accepting rather than avoiding, so it doesn’t really put any problems with me’ (FO). Perhaps FO’s position of being untouchable is understandable given his choice to isolate himself within the Smithfield community. (And yet, in Chapter seven, he recounted how he had been *touched* by a racist experience in the city one evening.) As with AS, I was the New Zealander with whom he had the greatest contact. FO summed up his relationship with the host culture:

Here I feel excluded. I feel that I’m not a part of the community, so . . . when you have this sort of feeling, you can’t really join in to them. . . . Although I like the lifestyle here, I would choose still to go back because I have a feeling that this is still not my place. . . . I still have part Chinese, part Malaysian in me, so I would still prefer to go back, although my thinking is different. (FO).

Although FO felt excluded, the fact that his ‘thinking’ had changed suggests some renegotiation of cultural identity. The values that underpinned his Malaysian cultural identity were reassessed in light of his experience here. He acknowledged that in Malaysia people focused on earning money and work, but on his return to Malaysia he was resolved to spend more of his time on travel and leisure as New Zealanders do. This reconstruction of values suggests some identification with a New Zealand cultural identity, at least in this respect.

WK, who desired to extend his interpersonal communication experiences beyond the group, had to subjugate what he called the *going back* mentality. He explained: ‘I’m returning to Malaysia so what’s the point’. Instead, he felt it was important to ‘move out’ (WK). In trying to socialise with the New Zealand students, especially, WK was aware of the differences in values, such as their preoccupation with drinking, and their casual attitudes towards relationships and sex. WK explained how he dealt with these differences:

I mean I didn’t actually have to cope [with the values of the New Zealand students]. It’s just like it’s there. You just live with it, I mean who are you to put yourself before other people, so I just leave it. But it does influence me or something like that. Sort of like if I’m not disciplined enough [about my own values] I might get involved. (WK, second semester)

Thus, this interaction with those in the host culture caused WK to question the first culture values that underpinned his cultural identity. This level of interaction corresponds with the fifth step in Starosta’s (1991) nine step model of third culture building.

One of the reasons SY came to New Zealand and the School to study was because his parents wanted to remove him from the frivolous life he had led in Malaysia. SY concluded: ‘New Zealand is for me to slow down my, how do you say, temper, . . . change my attitude, my character’ (SY). Because of SY’s experiences in the social world before coming to this university, he felt he had the upper edge on his New Zealand student friends. He described himself as ‘friendly, . . . open, I got no religion, I’m free thinker, I easy to mix into other socials [societies]. So if I’m in New Zealand, what New Zealand[ers] do, I follow what they do these things’ (SY). From the start SY acknowledged that he had left his own culture behind and, in immersing himself in this student culture, he was negating his own culture, language, way of thinking, doing, and being. In short, he was negating his cultural identity:

I don’t really bring in my culture to make friends in New Zealand. Just try to do what they are thinking. They don’t really know what my culture is at all, so I just try to follow your culture, so that’s the way easy to get into other people’s culture. (SY)

He saw this immersion among the New Zealand students in his Hall of Residence as being important for his survival, both socially and academically, and also because he shared the interests and, to some extent, the values of these students. At the same time they, too, shared in some of his interests. For example, they enjoyed accompanying SY to the casino to watch him gamble.

They did not gamble themselves so he gave them money to do so. They also lent him money if his loans from Malaysia were late arriving at the bank. Thus, SY and these New Zealand students were clearly demonstrating a reciprocity of interests, mores, values to resemble and accommodate one another (step five of Starosta's model). Towards the end of the study he was able to claim, unlike any of the other participants: 'In New Zealand I feel like I more belong to New Zealand student culture' (SY).

However, at other times, SY expressed a feeling of cultural withdrawal. Whereas the other participants had many opportunities to reaffirm their cultural identity among those from their own culture, SY had very little. He saw this negation of his own cultural identity in terms of sacrificing his sense of belonging, of nationhood and the rights this status endows upon its citizens: 'Even if I work or if I'm study, that's my country. I've got everything there, and I used to live there, so I think there's a lot freedom there compared with New Zealand' (SY). By comparison, he felt that his life in New Zealand was circumscribed by his status as an international student, a status which he felt denied him freedom, and rights. In terms of his political identity within New Zealand, his presence was meaningless:

I can't even have one step wrong here. If I got any court case or those kind of stuff I can [get] kick out from New Zealand. You say, "How bad are you, SY". You see, I can't even do one things wrong. . . . The difference [is] like, I'm Malaysian in New Zealand. That's a very big difference. They just treat me like, "Oh, you are overseas [student], you just come here to study". Okay, like those kind of stuff. You're not important at all. If you die, die!
(SY)

Furthermore, because he had segregated himself from the Malaysian community here, this international student status only served to remind him that he was, in the eyes of the New Zealand state, an interloper. Thus, this negation of the first culture does not seem to have been entirely desirable, at least in SY's case. Nonetheless, he intended to seek permanent residence to provide himself and his parents with 'a better future' (SY). Perhaps this legal entitlement would enable him to address this political shortcoming in his sense of belonging within the host culture.

SY's situation is a paradox. He was able to share the cultural knowledge of the host group of New Zealand students, to reconstruct his values, to experience successful intercultural encounters, to come to understand and identify with this community, and to demonstrate the beginnings of third culture building among

his New Zealand student peers. Yet, this reconstruction of cultural identity was undermined by the emergent conflict between his legal status as an international student in New Zealand where he had little freedom, and his legal entitlements as a citizen of Malaysia. Further, it was undermined by a sense of belonging to and identification with Malaysia, through family and through cultural knowledge, that was not present in New Zealand.

Thus, in describing their place as a consequence of their intercultural experience, the participants reiterated the importance of their own culture and cultural identity. While they acknowledged that some reconstruction and renegotiation was taking place, there also remained a strong sense of identification with their first culture.

Choosing permanent residence: the need to acculturate

In Chapter seven I discussed the issue of permanent residence for some participants in terms of how they viewed their future and the resultant adjustments they would need to make. In this section I consider how attitudes towards attaining or having permanent residence affected participants' sense of cultural identity.

From the outset LJ began the process of reconstructing and renegotiating his cultural identity in an effort to *feel* and *be* like a New Zealander. In the quotation which began this chapter, LJ articulated how important it was to him to make the shift from being a Chinese from China, to being a Chinese who lives in New Zealand, and lives, works, and socialises with New Zealanders. This process of noticing the cultural other and the questioning and replacing of attitudes and values to resemble those of the host culture is akin to the third culture building process. In earlier chapters he described his attempts to build relationships through affiliations in the community, study in the School, and intercultural interactions. These are manifestations of this process.

LJ cited his decision to remain in New Zealand as the reason for being so positive in his commitment to reconstruct his identity towards that of the host culture. Once he had reached this decision, he felt even more determined to 'go to the other side' and 'try to contact the outside person', that is, to renegotiate his cultural identity in order to develop a sense of belonging among those in the host culture. He articulated the advantage he had over other overseas students through his role as international support person within the School where he was

required to liaise with staff in the School and University. This opportunity enabled him to develop deeper interpersonal relations: ‘If I don’t work in the campus, it’s hard to find out opportunity to meet Kiwis. You can meet on the road, but you don’t have the opportunity to get to know them’ (LJ).

Part of LJ’s awareness of his own cultural identity, and thus, the adaptations he had to make, resulted from his recognition of the importance of an intercultural communication experience in enabling an understanding of one’s own culture. He articulated this position:

It’s difficult to follow the another cultural way. Maybe it disadvantages [you]. But from another point of view you get another cultural experience when you get into Kiwi culture. Maybe you have a clear understanding. . . . If you [have] never been to the other culture’s environment you only get one cultural experience. You don’t know what’s the unique feature of your culture. If you go to the other culture, “Oh, it’s this culture”, and you come back and, “Oh, my culture is that”. . . . Before I come to New Zealand some friends, they have been overseas, told me, “When you are in New Zealand or the other foreign countries you will get more clear understanding of China”. Yeah, I agree with them. (LJ)

While this seems a self-evident truth, developing intercultural awareness is an important stage in acknowledging difference (Collier and Thomas, 1988) and, thus, in being able to renegotiate one’s values and behaviour and develop appropriate communication strategies to address these differences. For example, LJ soon realised that his desire to be self-reliant and establish independence fitted well with the New Zealand culture. In this, and many other respects, he did not consider himself to be typically Chinese. While the other participants did not articulate this phenomenon, they certainly demonstrated development of intercultural awareness, as their many accounts in this study have demonstrated.

By contrast, although ML had permanent residence, she felt that her cultural identity was very much aligned to the Chinese community here: ‘I’m [a] foreigner here I think, . . . a Chinese foreigner’ (ML). As a student, she did not feel disadvantaged by this in the School, but in the host culture she felt a distance and unfamiliarity with the people and way of life. This was not helped by her social network which was Chinese dominated, and often included helping Chinese newcomers to settle. Thus, as ML crossed the boundaries of the communities that were the focus of her social interaction she was made aware of her cultural identity, which she felt was Chinese.

YR underwent a complete change in her desire to acculturate when she decided to take up permanent residence. Initially, she had little interest in learning about

the host society. She expressed her resistance to moving beyond her own culture at that time:

As a student my life here is very simple, . . . not much complex connections with others in society, with Kiwis. . . . [I] don't have much talk with any Kiwi. . . . All I have to connect with is the lecturers. . . I don't want to become part of the culture, but somehow I may be influenced by the culture. Not really want to become part of the culture. (YR)

With the arrival of, first, her daughter, followed by her husband, and as she neared completion of her degree, she started to reconsider her position. Obtaining permanent residence was crucial in this turn around. In the third semester of the study, upon completion of her degree, she applied for jobs, with varying degrees of success. After much soul searching she finally accepted giving up her career in China, and possibly settling for a menial job in New Zealand for the sake of her family, especially her daughter. Her initial disinterest in engaging in life in New Zealand was transformed into a desire to settle here for the future with her family. However, even by the end of the study YR confirmed her identity with her Chinese culture, and with those from other CHCs: 'No matter I stay here or go back, I'm always a Chinese' (YR). Nonetheless, her decision to take up permanent residence and stay brought about a greater interest in developing a sense of belonging through a closer association with the host culture and, concomitantly, a greater acceptance of the values they lived by.

Conclusions to 8.3.2

Those undergraduate participants who intended to return to their first culture upon graduation expressed a range of feelings about the extent to which they felt they belonged in the host culture. AS and FO remained consistently on the outer boundaries here: AS because she lacked a closeness or empathy with the students and found the friendship here shallow and distant, and FO because he felt excluded by his Malaysian/Chinese identity which had been heightened for him by his stay here. SY reconstructed his Malaysian identity in order to accommodate the life style of the New Zealand students he befriended. His interactions with the New Zealand students demonstrated aspects of third culture building. However, he also acknowledged the narrowness of his experience of New Zealand culture and society beyond the confines of his prescribed in-group.

Such a position led him to the conclusion that his place within his first culture was much stronger than the one he held in the host culture.

Among the graduates who were seeking or had permanent residence, LJ vehemently expressed the importance of belonging by constructing a New Zealand identity: being a New Zealand resident meant learning to live alongside New Zealanders in daily life. Such an experience also enabled him to gain an appreciation of the unique features of his own culture. This opportunity to compare and contrast the features of one's own culture with the host culture enabled the participants to gain a clearer understanding of the reshaping of their values, cultural practices, and beliefs, that is, the reconstruction of their cultural identity. It also enabled them to evaluate these aspects of both cultures and reconstruct their cultural identities accordingly.

By contrast, ML, in confronting her cultural identity as she crossed the boundary between her own culture and that of the cultural other, was left feeling Chinese. YR expressed this same construction. However, YR was the only participant who moved from a state of separation from New Zealand society at the outset to a desire to belong and develop interpersonal relationships once she had decided to take up permanent residence.

Thus, participants' reflections of their place in relation to those in the host culture resulted in a movement between their first and the host culture. With this movement participants began the process of reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity as they re-evaluated the social recipes which prescribed their actions, and the typifications which outlined their beliefs, cultural practices, and values. Yet, participants acknowledged the importance of identification with their own culture within this process. Further, as participants moved across and among cultures they experienced a multiplicity of identities as they communicated with cultural others. And in reconstructing their identities they also demonstrated aspects of third culture building as they sought to establish shared social recipes for daily life through interaction with members of the host culture. The complexity of this renegotiation and reconstruction of the social recipes and typifications that underpinned their cultural identity often created confusion and conflict for the participants in their day to day lives. The next section illustrates this process.

8.3.3 Confronting Confucian cultural knowledge

As stated at the outset, the sharing of cultural knowledge -- values, cultural practices, and beliefs -- is an important part of understanding cultural identity. This process is formed and managed through intercultural communication (as illustrated in LJ's reflections in the previous section). Thus, the intercultural communication experiences with those in the host culture enabled the participants to evaluate, through a process of comparison and contrast of self to the cultural other, their own cultural practices more critically, a process which developed their awareness of their own cultural identity. As a result, they began to cherish and maintain some of their Confucian values, cultural practices, and beliefs, as well as question them.

Among the undergraduates, the role of family remained a traditional value onto which participants held. MC found that her behaviour, for example, her desire to show respect to others, was socially constructed within the context of her family, and guided her actions. Whereas she noticed that some young Taiwanese adults upon arrival here deviated from these traditional values, she always revered and retained hers:

I think the traditional thought is from my family, so I always remember this thought. . . . Young people come to New Zealand [from Taiwan], they change a lot, they change their hair style, their behaviours, smoking, they don't care [about] anyone, [only] themselves. . . . Because [there is] no parent, this kind of behaviour is, how to say, is become worsed. My family traditional thought is you cannot take advantage of people. You have to be reliable person. You cannot cheating people, you cannot use people. (MC)

In fact, these cultural values, to some extent universal, probably enabled MC to develop friendships with those New Zealanders in her neighbourhood.

In some instances the values held by the participants were particular to a context. WK expressed the important role of the in-group values held by the Smithfield community and how they were maintained throughout the research period. One such value was competitiveness, which evolved in Malaysia, and which the Smithfield students practised throughout their undergraduate study in the School. Furthermore, WK differentiated between the working relationship he could expect to have with his Smithfield group and with the New Zealand students. Among his Smithfield cohort there was the expectation that they would help one another out or repay one another, whereas the New Zealand students expected to work independently. WK referred to the values of 'loyalty'

and ‘reliability’, and the interdependence that characterised collectivist cultures, evident in such values as ‘working together’, ‘valuing the community’, and ‘the group is there to back you up’. These values represented the cultural identity of the group, and group members adhered to them. By contrast, WK noted that the New Zealand students tended to be ‘alone’, or ‘solo’, with ‘their own mind frame’ (WK). This co-operation within and identification with the Smithfield community might explain why the Smithfield students, and FO and WK in particular, had difficulty in developing close working relations or intercultural communication with New Zealand students.

However, the participants recounted some disadvantages in retaining their Confucian cultural identity and practices in New Zealand. An overwhelming disadvantage of their Confucian socialisation lay in their communication styles which disadvantaged them among those in the host culture. Many of the participants commented on the difficulty they had in drawing the attention of others to their abilities, a cultural conditioning they felt disadvantaged them, above all, in the learning environment. KZ expressed the most serious consequences of this condition:

In my own culture they encourage you to hide, hide your ability, don’t show up too much. They don’t encourage you to be outstanding. They want you to be like others, the same as others, and that’s the safest way. (KZ)

As noted in Chapter five, this reticence resulted in what WK described as a ‘holding back’, that is, thinking carefully before speaking. This Confucian value resided in the need to show respect to those older, a feature of a culture which values power distance, a value, however, which did not exist among the New Zealand students. By comparison, participants felt that the New Zealand students would speak their minds, neither considering the status of the listener, nor the impact of what they were saying on their listener.

SX described the implications of Confucian conservatism in self expression. In China such reticence is a virtue, whereas in New Zealand, by not giving an opinion, the speaker loses the respect of those involved in the communication episode and, along with it, many opportunities:

If I know something and if I didn’t talk about it or do that, I think Westerner[s], say the New Zealanders, they will think, “No, you don’t know about that sort of thing”, and if you express yourself they will feel, “Oh, he’s good at that”, and he will, on the other hand, he will naturally respect you and let you do something. (SX)

Participants struggled with these differences. While recognition of these differences in communication styles led to the participants acknowledging the need to show themselves, reconstructing their values in order to effect this change (as discussed in previous chapters) was far more difficult for them.

SY was critical of the ways in which some of his CHC peers maintained their cultural identity here. Social practices inscribed within their identity, namely face saving practices, he abhorred. He explained why he sought to detach himself from the Asian community here:

Chinese, they always do this kind of thing. Asian! They try to cover the bad thing and only tell the good stuff. I tell you the bad stuff and the good stuff together. I'm only telling the truth. (SY)

AS found that as a result of coming here she was forced to acknowledge that she held what must be *conservative* values:

Sometimes I find that I am too conservative, I have to be open more. Sometimes, yeah. I don't like the [Malaysian] guys to touch me so easily. Some guys they just like to, how do you say, arm around you, and just talk very cosy, right. (AS)

AS, who had never before questioned these values, now wondered if she ought to be more open, more expressive, like the New Zealand students. She appeared to be responding to a renegotiation of values manifested by her male counterparts who, themselves, may have been influenced by the more relaxed attitudes in male/female body language here in New Zealand, compared to what would be acceptable in Malaysia.

The Chinese participants became critical of the complex webs of relationships existent in China and their importance for success in life. By contrast, the lack of complication in forming friendships and relationships among New Zealanders made life here, particularly for the graduates, much simpler than their lives in China. While the participants from China appreciated the simplicity of their interpersonal relationships with New Zealanders, they were critical of the Confucian patterns of behaviour regarding networks and relationships exhibited by those in the CHC community here, particularly with reference to those active in the Chinese Association. This maintenance of communication practices among the community from China corresponded with the communication practices the Malaysian participants exhibited within their Malaysian Society and

within the Smithfield group. In FO's case, such practices served to heighten his Chinese cultural identity and, hence, his exclusion here.

On a political level, SX provided an example of how his interpretation of a political event in China was constructed by his first culture values. He gave a critique of a film which represented a western interpretation of the events surrounding the events at Tienanmen Square in June 1989. His critique, formed in China and within the context of his Chinese cultural identity, conflicted with the perspective which had been presented in the media here, and in the West more generally. While SX felt that he did not obtain any more information from the western media than that which he already knew, he did find that the portrayal of the situation conflicted with his cultural understanding. He commented on the film:

It's hostile to China. The Chinese government on this issue, they did badly to the Chinese people, to the human privilege. But, on the other hand, America just use this, they just use this to [be] hostile to China, . . . to prevent China from developing. . . . It's not the first [only] thing that America [is] interested in now. . . . I think they have their own strategy. So if China is now America, and America were China, China I think, they will take the same strategy to America, yeah, because the America I think they don't like China. China . . . I think [has] the potential. (SX)

SX is showing his identification with the Chinese interpretation here in his response to the western view of that event. To clarify his final point, he believed that America was concerned about China as a potent force and the Tienanmen Square situation provided a pretext for criticising and marginalising China. He reconciled that, if China were in America's shoes, China would do exactly the same thing. This example shows the power of each culture in conditioning the thinking of its people. That SX can remove himself from his society, and explore the implications of another culture's interpretation of the same event, indicates the significance of this educational experience for him (and indirectly for us, in also being shown his perspective). It also suggests that he is able to disassociate himself from the cultural context in which he first constructed his views, and reconstruct the event from the perspective of those in the host culture. In doing so he is reinterpreting the values and beliefs of his first culture that guided the initial construction of this event.

Conclusions to 8.3.3

As the participants became more immersed in the host culture through their intercultural communication experiences, they began to experience a conflict between the cultural knowledge upon which their cultural identities were constructed in their first culture and the social recipes of the cultural other. The greatest conflict centred around their conservative values of obedience and respect towards family and parents, and these values were most difficult to shed.

In the case of the two Smithfield participants, identification with the values of that community and with the members within it, encouraged them to maintain practices of competitiveness. And traditional values of loyalty and reliability required them to defer to their in-group rather than seek to develop networks outside of this group and with other New Zealand students. By contrast, SX was able to juxtapose the political views constructed within his culture against those presented in the West to gain an even richer knowledge of his own culture and the world. It is in these diverse contexts that participants had to reconstruct the values and practices that underpinned their cultural identity in order to manage difference in the host culture.

Some participants were pleased to shed some Confucian values in order to better acculturate. The graduates, in particular, appreciated not having to cultivate social networks which included the practice of saving and giving face. SY, too, was pleased to extricate himself from this social practice which, he felt, the Malaysian student community had reconstructed in the host culture. Such reconstructions eliminated feelings of dislocation in the host culture. By contrast, participants such as LJ and SX appreciated the simplicity in interpersonal relationships with New Zealanders and generally expressed a preference for openness in communication. They were attempting to reconstruct their cultural identity and the values inscribed therein to accommodate those of the host culture. Through this process they believed that they would gain greater acceptance among members of the host community. Such practices were also indicative of third culture building.

The Confucian communication style which encouraged suppression of ability, and emphasised modesty and harmony, disadvantaged participants in that they had to renegotiate their communication style to accommodate the open and direct style they observed here. This was a lengthy process of discovery, comparing

and evaluating, and then attempting to adopt the New Zealand way. Participants constantly referred to the struggle they experienced with this difference and their attempts to construct a shared social reality throughout the research period.

Thus, as participants moved between communities, the boundaries that distinguished these respective groups delineated the identity of the group, that is, similarities and differences were brought into relief. Participants constructed identities to conform to the social realities and, concomitantly, the social recipes of these groups. And, like the identity of individuals, the identity of the community was questioned in social interaction (Cohen, 1985). This questioning of individual and group identity bears the hallmark of identity reconstruction and third culture building as individuals sought to acculturate to the host culture. This acculturation process is the focus of the next section.

8.3.4 Building a third culture

In the last section I discussed the Confucian values, cultural practices, and beliefs underlying the participants' cultural identity that they began to confront in their intercultural encounters in this host community. In this section participants explain how these realisations of difference impacted upon the typifications that underpinned their cultural knowledge, first, in terms of complementing their first culture values with those of the host culture and, second, in developing an independence from the familial values by which they were socialised in their first culture. These changes will be explored, first, in terms of participants' reconstruction and renegotiation of their cultural knowledge and, thus, their cultural identity, as they seek to find new and effective ways of benefiting from their intercultural encounters with New Zealanders and, second, in the extent to which the changes suggest the building of a possible third culture.

Complementing first culture typifications with New Zealand typifications

Adapting to the *openness* displayed by New Zealanders in social interactions appeared to be a key area of change for some of the participants. For example, WK had read about the openness of New Zealanders before he came here, but he did not understand the metaphoric meaning or its manifestation. Only upon coming here did he realise and understand the implications of this value which, for him, implied questioning and being critical:

[Living here] taught me to be more open, . . . to question. For my culture, sometimes it's like very restrictive. The government, if somebody on top thinks it's right, that means it's right. . . . Here, they taught me that it's good to question. . . . I value [that] to a certain extent because sometimes it's like we are too enclosed. It doesn't allow us to expand our mind and thinking. (WK)

One of the consequences of this openness and questioning was that WK began to be more critical of the notion of obedience, especially regarding individual choice. In Malaysia he realised that he was very much ruled by the values of his parents and the society around him:

Let's say your community is your family or your Chinese culture, yeah, and if they say that you can't have sex before marriage, that means you can't do it, you have to do it illegally. Here, it's like, "Oh, what the heck", I mean, "I have my rights, you have your rights, so, so what!" (WK)

WK was not about to give up the values by which he had been socialised, but rather to see them in a different light. This questioning revealed itself in another of WK's actions where his parents wanted him to work in Singapore upon graduation, but he decided that he would follow his own wishes and try to get a job in Malaysia first. He had reconstructed these values in light of his interaction with the New Zealand students.

The most important aspect of difference for KZ came in the form of changes to his 'thinking' which resulted from 'accumulated experience', a process of living here for three semesters (KZ):

Maybe I use the experience here to complement my own value[s], but not change it [them]. . . . I didn't change my own values, but I absorb some new ideas and the new values. . . . That's the point. Like the critical thinking I develop here and I use it because I found it is a good thing, so I use this kind of valuing tool. (KZ)

KZ went on to explain how he used this new tool of critical thinking to evaluate his experiences in his own culture, and also in this new culture, in order to take the good from both. This evolutionary process suggests that a renegotiation of the values which underpin his cultural identity are taking place in this different context:

I think, though, the value has its roots in the different environment. . . . Here [in New Zealand] is my own value, it's not like Chinese value, . . . only my own value. I accept the good things in Chinese value and the good things in New Zealand value, and I don't like the bad things in Chinese and also the bad things in New Zealand. . . . I think I used my own value to judge what kind of values [are] good for me. (KZ)

KZ had begun to notice that living here required changes, although he had difficulty articulating exactly what these changes were because they often evolved slowly over time. KZ, like other participants, was slowly developing an awareness of what these changes were and how they were manifesting themselves as a changing cultural identity. For example, in the second semester, he had observed how New Zealanders spoke their minds openly which he was unable to do at the time. By the third semester he felt that he had adapted to the new environment and was able to be critical of others in a way that he could never be in China. Like WK, he recognised that openness was one cultural practice where, in moving between cultures, he needed to change:

If I stay in New Zealand I will become more open to New Zealand people and also to the Chinese people. I will not hide my feelings to some extent compared to when I was in China. . . . If I go back to China, maybe I will still use the same kind of value and I shall hide myself, but if I come here, it's different, and I'll become more open, more easier to communicate, yeah, . . . because if you live here you have to change. (KZ)

Thus, KZ is suggesting an inevitability of change which will have consequences for cultural identity construction and third culture building as these CHC participants reconstruct their living traditions to accommodate those of the host people, and as both cultures mutually develop values, communication and organisational systems to co-exist.

Other changes occurred on a more practical and day to day level. FO and WK commented on how they and other members of the Smithfield group picked up and enjoyed using some of the slang used by the New Zealand students, for example, 'cheers', 'choice', and 'you reckon'. FO was sensitive, however, to the impact the Malaysian group had in public and modified his behaviour accordingly:

One thing I learn is here [I] try not to talk so loud in public. . . . Malaysians are normally the noisiest group among all the other group[s] of people. So, I mean, whenever I go around I try to, not to talk so much and gain so much attention. Yeah, I try to behave. . . . It's very impolite. (FO)

FO felt that such attention attracting behaviour, especially if they were speaking Mandarin, often incited racist comments from New Zealanders.

WK encapsulated the enrichment of the experience in that it opened up another perspective for him, that is, another way of regarding culture, friends, values, and education. And FO summed up how the experience had changed some of his values:

Before I came here I have the aim that I should work very very hard and earn a lot of money, but now I think that you should take your life easy. You should enjoy your life when you can. (FO)

FO came to the realisation that the Malaysian work ethic, that is, working long hours for the sake of earning money, was not necessarily something to which he would now aspire. As a result of much travelling he did in New Zealand, and also in Australia, FO came to value leisure and the notion that earning money is a way of pursuing leisure.

Furthermore, the experience of being an international student gave FO a feeling of privilege over his Malaysian counterparts because of the opportunities and privileges it afforded him:

They only have their leanings towards Malaysian culture, Chinese culture, so their mind[s] are quite closed in my opinion. . . . In their minds we have the opportunity to go overseas to study. You are better, I mean, in a lot of privileges. . . . They will see that you're more knowledgeable and . . . they think that if you go out [of Malaysia, then] you are different, because not everybody can go out, can go overseas and study, and [then go] back home. (FO)

More importantly, in making such an observation, FO has highlighted the impact of his international student experience on his world view. Had he stayed in Malaysia his mind, too, may have been as closed as those whom he observed. FO concluded that, although he had been enriched by these experiences, he had gained 'new ideas' and a 'new thinking' (FO), he still had to reconcile them against the need to fit back into the Malaysian culture, into a culture which values long working days and which does not easily accommodate or acknowledge the need for leisure time or open- and self-expression. He concluded that upon his return: 'I will still keep to what I have, but I will try to use what I learn here' (FO).

Similarly, WK described how the experience had opened up his way of seeing the world:

I feel like the whole general exposure, from like culture, friends, through to like values, to like education and the whole purpose, . . . it really like opens up my whole life. I mean push me out, like, because if there's no comparison you wouldn't know that yours might be wrong or yours were effective. Now, because I'm open to two [perspectives], so I might know more. I sort of like enjoy knowing . . . the different ways of doing things. (WK)

PS commented on how his experience had changed his attitudes: ‘I will feel different, but . . . I’m not sure [if my friends] will feel [that] I change or not’ (PS). He was adamant that when he returned he would need to pick up from where he left off, both with his friends, and in his attitudes to family and work, thus subjugating his experiences here. PS appears to be indicating the existence of two distinct identities: one for living in New Zealand, and the other for life in the first culture, Hong Kong. And yet, like KZ, FO, and WK, PS conceded that he had changed while living in New Zealand and, upon return to Hong Kong, he would ‘feel different’ (PS).

The participants’ reconstructions of self are indicative of the extent to which they experienced changes in the values embedded in their cultural identity. For example, they learned to be more open in their self-expression and to question their cultural knowledge. As KZ acknowledged: ‘If you live here you have to change’, and WK and FO appreciated how the experience enabled them to better evaluate the values underpinning their own culture, especially those concerning leisure and money. These reconstructions suggest that they have incorporated some aspects of the New Zealand cultural identity into their first culture identity and that these identities are fluid as they move between intra- and intercultural communication contexts. The reconstructions are also suggestive of the necessary processes that underpin third culture building as individuals reconstruct their cultural knowledge to accommodate the cultural other.

Developing independence from family

Another important change for the participants, both undergraduate and graduate, was the shift from being around family in their own culture to experiencing a life style which, if they chose, enabled them to make their own decisions. Even those participants who remained immersed within the community of their first culture here still experienced the opportunity to make choices about where they lived, who they lived with, about organising their social lives and leisure activities, and about being self-sufficient.

So how did they respond to the developing awareness of independence? PS had not envisaged the extent to which he would need to become responsible for himself. He had not been used to making decisions about his life and, by the end of this study, felt that he could ‘handle anything by myself. I never thought I can do [this]’ (PS), from organising a flat and taking care of himself within it,

to travelling around New Zealand. And AS found that she had become more independent in looking after herself and in setting her own goals for her future:

I have to be responsible by myself. . . . I think every year I'm still learning. I feel happier [now] than [in] my life in KL [Kuala Lumpur] last time. I know the direction is clearer now. (AS)

Even though WK remained in a Hall of Residence throughout his study here, he still felt that he, too, had learned independence and had the freedom to make his own decisions over everything regarding his daily life here.

FX noticed that she had to become self-reliant as a student here, a situation she much preferred. Rather than have decisions made for her, either by circumstances or by her parents (as was the case for her in China), she now had to elicit opinions and advice from within the University and community and make her own decisions, for example, about her thesis topic, or about returning to China independent of her husband upon graduation, or in seeking employment.

Like FX, KZ noted that he no longer had to make recourse to his family in the decision making process. While they were kept informed, they were very much in the background and were unable to grasp the issues which KZ was confronting in his need to make decisions. KZ felt that here, in New Zealand, independence was thrust upon people at a much younger age, and to a much greater degree. However, he appreciated the fact that this independence made him 'more capable to handle different kind of things' (KZ), a process which allowed him to better realise his own capabilities.

The Chinese graduates had mobility and were free to make decisions about their future employment and place (and even country) of residence. They did not have such opportunities in China as such decisions lay within the context of the work unit in which they were employed or within their institution where they were educated.

For example, LJ's return to China, at the end of the second semester of this study, enabled him to reflect on his position as a result of living in New Zealand for three years:

When I went back to China I found my self-value enhanced by New Zealand culture, by the experience I get here. And probably you can say my self-value of culture is different from other Chinese. I'm more western orientated. . . . I found that some of my colleagues might discuss about their career with their parents, "What should I do next?" and, you know, "After [I] graduate could you help me find a job?" like that, and I think, "Oh, you're still here", like this. I did not like this way before I come to New Zealand, and after, when I [went] back to China I found, "Okay, I'm right, I choose the right place, I can decide my future, I can select my career". . . . I only ask of my parents their opinion. They cannot decide my future. That's my self value. (LJ)

Not only was he now independent in terms of creating his future, but he was also independent financially from his family. He had reconstructed that particular aspect of his cultural identity:

[My friends] get the money from their parents, or they are still staying with their parents. They keep their salary and their parents supported them. But, on the contrary, at the moment, I support my family, I earn money and support my parents and the kid. But in China the majority of the young depend on their parents [even when they are married]. [This is] part of the culture. (LJ)

In New Zealand he was able to assert his sense of self, in accordance with the individualism which characterises New Zealand culture, and not have to conform to the Chinese values of filial obedience, and family obligations and reliance.

Conclusions to 8.3.4

The theme of this section is best summed in an account by KZ. He illustrates one of the key consequences in coming to live in another society: 'If you live here you have to change' (KZ). For KZ, the experience enabled him to appraise his own cultural values and modify those that he felt needed changing as a result of his exposure to a different way. He was also able to be more critical of the good and bad in each culture. Thus, no matter how much participants, such as AS and FO, tried to recreate their own culture within the host culture, inevitably, exposure to the host culture necessitated some element of change, for example, in a reappraisal of first culture behaviour and values which resulted in a reconstruction and renegotiation of identity. For example, WK felt the need to become more open and to question ways of doing and being. And FO mentioned the need to speak more quietly when speaking Chinese among his in-group in order not to incite racist criticisms. Many expressed an appreciation of

a different environment and pace of living, and differences in attitudes to leisure, money, material values, and food.

Certainly, the undergraduates' experiences here had changed their values, attitudes, and behaviour, but they believed these changes would, to some extent, need to be reconciled with and subjugated within the values of the dominant culture to which they were returning. They would be required to take up their place again, but with a difference: they felt that they were richer and better off as a result of their experiences in another culture, than their peers who had been unable to leave. They had had a range of diverse experiences which resulted in changes to their thinking and an openness to new ideas and to other cultures. WK encapsulated this position in his evaluation of the experience of studying abroad: 'Now . . . I am open to two [perspectives] . . . the different ways of doing things' (WK).

All of the participants appreciated the experience of being independent. Although living away from the extended family imposed difficulties such as loneliness and loss of direct support, it also enabled them to realise a sense of freedom and independence in making their own choices and decisions about their daily lives. They all articulated this experience positively.

For the participants from China, the dislocation from the social and physical environment they experienced initially, nonetheless, represented an irrevocable change in their view of themselves and in their desire to live within another social system with different values and a very different communication structure. For example, they were reminded of no longer having to defer to family members about decisions regarding the self, and they appreciated the independence they had developed for themselves over their choices for living, for family, and for their careers. In rejecting their own place in their culture they had much to sacrifice. Changes in their social recipes which comprised their cultural knowledge, in turn, resulted in some questioning of the cultural identity they had socially constructed in their first cultures. This process led them to search for a new place in their adopted culture, a process that would take time and, undoubtedly, require them to make and accept further changes to themselves as they negotiated mutually acceptable ways of interacting with the cultural other, in short, as they negotiated a third culture.

8.4 Application of a model of cultural identity change

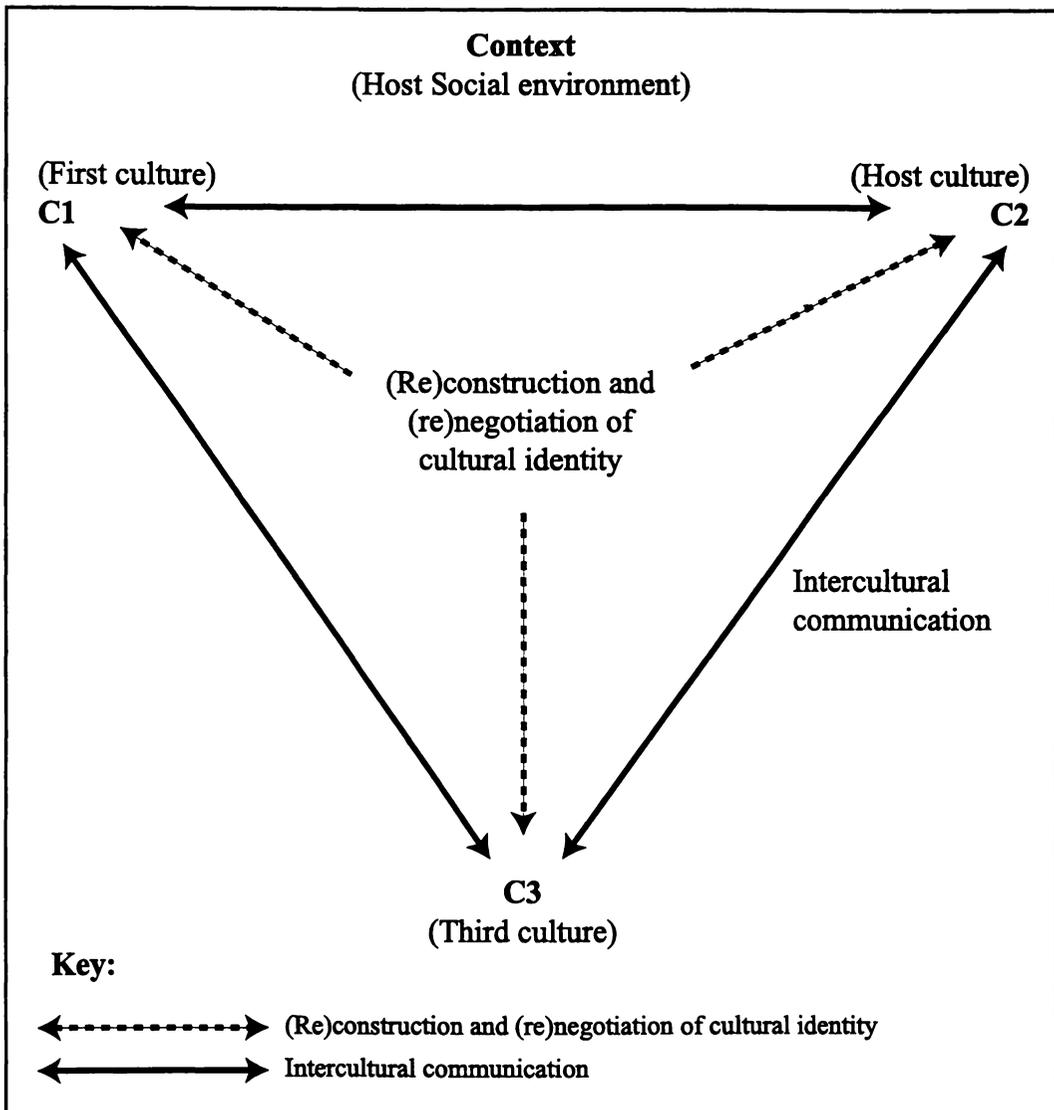
As participants experienced intra- and intercultural communication across a range of contexts and communities they began to question their own place in their first culture. They had begun a process of reconstruction and renegotiation of their own beliefs, values, and cultural practices as a result of their intercultural communication experiences in the individualist culture in which they had been residing, which further resulted in a reconstruction and renegotiation of their cultural identity. These changes in cultural identity support Collier and Thomas' (1988) notion that identities are fluid and negotiable, and that identities are formed, negotiated, modified, confirmed and challenged through communication and contact with others. Further, these processes support the notion of the existence of a multiplicity of identities (Belay, 1993) as individuals experience a range of intercultural communication exchanges in different cultural contexts. Finally, these processes support the construction of a third realm (Starosta, 1991), and the beginnings of third culture building (Casmir, 1993; Starosta, 1991) as participants sought information about their hosts and began to question their own attitudes, cultural practices, values, and beliefs.

The participants' experiences and accounts of their intercultural communication and interaction described in the substantive chapters of this study suggest the emergence of a third culture, albeit tentative at this stage. They do, however, firmly point to the reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity as the first and host cultures interface. For example, as noted earlier, LJ attempted to reconstruct his first culture identity to conform to his understanding of the New Zealand way. And SY's experience of shared social interaction with his New Zealand peers approaches this goal in third culture building as he subjugated his own cultural identity in order to assume that of his New Zealand peers. Both YR and FX were able to discard parts of their identity they disliked, for example, managing networks, displaying wealth, and gossip. KZ reassessed his own cultural values, retaining those of familial respect, but embracing those that allowed for self-expression (as did LJ). WK and FO, although sojourners and constrained by their Smithfield cohort, made changes: WK reconstructed values of familial piety and sought greater autonomy, and FO reconstructed values about work, leisure, and travel. And MC sought ways of communicating with other New Zealanders to better inscribe herself within New Zealand society.

These processes and experiences are illustrated in the model developed in Chapter two of this report and re-presented below.

Figure 4

**Towards a model of cultural identity change
in intercultural communication**



Thus, there appears to be support for the process illustrated by this model in the experiences these participants have undergone. What appears to be missing, however, is a deeper knowledge about the extent to which people in the host culture underwent reconstructions of their own values in order to arrive at mutually acceptable forms of interaction with these outsiders.

Further, the third culture building process, generally, has implications for fourth, fifth, and sixth etc. culture building as individuals and groups construct communities, or other cultures, within the host society wherein their constructions of cultural identity can reside. For example, it is possible to suggest, following the models of Casmir (1993), Starosta (1991) and the one above, that the Malaysian, Chinese, and CHC communities have also emerged according to this culture building process as the members who form these communities fuse their mutually developed values, communication and organisation systems to find new and mutually effective ways of communicating with their hosts, with other CHC people, or with others across a range of intercultural communication contexts. The Malaysian, Smithfield, Chinese, and CHC communities are not exact microcosms of their parent cultures, but reconstructions of shared systems of values, beliefs and cultural practices, including those of the host culture, that enable their members to accommodate cultural difference.

The experiences of the participants within these communities, as discussed in this chapter, support the possibility of multiple culture building. Moreover, the existence of multiple cultures has resonance with the existence of multiple cultural identities (as these participants have constructed) that are constantly challenged through intercultural communication with others.

Summary

The findings in this chapter addressed the final research question concerning the reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity and the implications of this process for third culture building. The chapter reintroduced the conceptualisation of cultural identity and third culture building. The substantive section began with an appraisal of the place of the first culture community within the host culture. Among the emergent communities there were two distinct groups: the undergraduate Malaysian and CHC community; and the less pervasive Chinese community of graduates. The existence of the former was detrimental to the Malaysian participants' development of relationships with the cultural other. The Chinese, on the other hand, valued their community for the help it offered them in daily life. Because of the influence of Confucian values and because of the participants' collectivist orientation, such movements between

communities caused them to question their own place in their first culture. and to increase participants' awareness of difference. Overall, the existence of a first culture community with which the participants could identify and, in some cases, a CHC community, also provided a basis from which to reconstruct their CHC cultural knowledge in light of their intra- and intercultural communication experiences with the cultural other.

Second, participants recounted their changing cultural identity as a result of their exposure to the host culture. Within this discussion participants either identified with returning, or *going back*, to their own culture, thereby resembling the definition of sojourners. Or they intended to remain by means of permanent resident status; thus, they expressed some commitment to acculturation within the host culture. Emerging from this dichotomy was the need to acknowledge the impact of the host culture on their sense of cultural identity. Consequently, they were obliged to confront their Confucian values and changes in behaviour and values in light of their experiences in the host culture. The Confucian values of obedience and respect towards the family appeared to be most difficult to reconstruct, whereas the Confucian communication style, which emphasised modesty and harmony, was most disadvantageous and required a reconstruction.

Through their intercultural communication experiences and interaction with those in the host culture, participants' awareness of their own cultural values and identities were exposed. The result was a questioning, not only of the social recipes and typifications that underpinned their cultural knowledge, but also a questioning of those of the cultural other. The accounts given by the participants in this chapter suggest that individuals constructed their everyday lives in order to create, sustain, and share meaning with other individuals and social groups through (intercultural) communication. These processes resulted in some reconstruction and renegotiation of their cultural identities and, hence, a multiplicity of identities as they moved among a range of cultural contexts and intra- and intercultural communication exchanges. In doing so they began the process of building a third culture, and possibly a fourth, or fifth culture, as they sought mutually acceptable ways of social interaction with cultural others residing within the host society.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and implications

In this chapter I draw major conclusions pertaining to this study which have emerged from the substantive chapters (Chapters five to eight), and discuss theoretical, methodological, practical, social, and political implications, and directions for further research. The chapter closes with a conclusion focusing on the contributions of this study to furthering knowledge.

9.1 Major conclusions emerging from the study

In exploring the ways in which a group of CHC students reconstructed and renegotiated their social realities through their intercultural communication experiences in the host learning and social environment over a period of time, the following major conclusions emerged from the findings in this study. These conclusions fall into three key and inter-related areas: first, intercultural communication experiences in the learning environment and in the society beyond; second, cultural difference; and third, reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity and its impact on third culture building. However, these generalisations need to be set against individual experiences which were circumscribed by the interplay of context, circumstances, and the personalities involved.

In addressing the first area, intercultural communication experiences in the learning environment and in the society beyond, the following major conclusions emerged. First, *participants wanted to have communication experiences with New Zealand students, especially at the outset of their study in the School, but found initiating and sustaining communication problematic.* Getting beyond initial and perfunctory greetings was difficult with other New Zealanders in both academic and social contexts, and developing friendships with New Zealanders was difficult in all

contexts. Participants generally expressed an interest in other New Zealanders, and in having closer relationships with New Zealand students out of the School. Reasons they gave were: they could gain a better understanding of New Zealand people and their way of life, their thinking and culture; and they could practice their spoken English. About half of the participants shared WK's view that one of the objectives in studying in another country is to find out something about its people and culture. However, participants always expressed reservations due to difficulties in communication and understanding brought about by differences in language and culture.

Second, and closely related to the first major conclusion, *participants' communication experiences tended to focus around those from their own culture, and other CHC students, both in the learning and social environments. The existence of these communities both created and maintained cultural difference.* In the case of the Malaysian undergraduates, this resulted in the construction of a strong Malaysian community, also shared by other CHC participants and students. The graduate participants from China showed somewhat less dependence on their first culture community, especially in the academic environment, but relied on others from their first culture more for help in getting settled and in everyday survival in New Zealand. School and University based support systems did not seem to hold high priority when the participants required help. This was because participants preferred to communicate their difficulties to someone from their own culture or, in some cases, from another CHC who shared a common language and, more importantly, a common cultural perspective.

Within the learning environment especially, these intercultural communication experiences were impacted upon by the differences between the CHC and New Zealand educational contexts. Thus, *participants, as international students, had to learn new teaching and learning styles to accommodate these differences.* The environment of the first culture in which the participants had been educated, and their attitudes to education, based on the principles and values of Confucianism, were in opposition to the teaching and learning environment in the School. Participants needed to, and did to varying degrees, acquire new learning strategies and adapt to different teaching styles.

Further, *participants had to develop different communication skills and strategies for performing in spoken and written communication contexts in the learning environment.* Although participants had met the TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) and IELTS (International English language testing system) requirements, these tests were inadequate measures of the functions they were required to perform for learning. For example, asking questions, interrupting, moving arguments forward, and challenging the arguments of lecturers and students were problematic. The students themselves attributed their difficulty to deficit English. This feeling of inadequacy often resulted in a lack of confidence in communication, both in the learning and social environments, thus exacerbating engagement in intercultural communication. However, deficit English did not generally inhibit their overall academic success, although it did at times cause them major difficulties. Many achieved excellent results. Other factors aside from English affected their performance which resulted in their reconstructing and renegotiating their learning styles.

Other, and equally significant, major conclusions focused on the remaining two areas of cultural difference and cultural identity change.

First, participants generally did not give high priority to knowing and understanding New Zealand culture and society, and the Malaysian participants, once they had established their first culture community, did not give high priority to having intercultural communication experiences with New Zealanders. The prime focus for all students was on achieving an academic qualification. The undergraduate participants, particularly the Malaysians, demonstrated a sojourner mentality of *going back*, of treating their stay as a means to an end before establishing a professional career back in their own culture and resuming their familial and social lives there. While they did not focus on knowing and understanding New Zealand culture and society, nor on having broad intercultural communication experiences, they acknowledged the benefits attained by their New Zealand experience, of developing another world view.

By contrast, the participants from China experienced different goals. The opportunity to attain permanent residence opened up new possibilities beyond their initial goal of obtaining a masters degree or diploma and then returning to China to resume their careers. Their goals changed from being less interested to more

interested in New Zealand culture and society. Unlike the sojourners, *those with or desiring permanent residence tended to be more favourable towards intercultural communication experiences, both within and beyond the School, as they sought ways of belonging. However, many of these intercultural communication experiences led to feelings of difference and also served to maintain difference.* In spite of a favourable attitude towards intercultural communication experiences, these participants continued to experience difficulty in intercultural communication and in establishing friendships with New Zealanders.

Second, *all participants showed some reconstruction and renegotiation of values, cultural practices, and beliefs as they sought to understand and accommodate the host culture and society.* All participants valued the learning experiences and changes they had undergone in their worldview, often heightened by a return sojourn to their first culture. Participants began to question some of their CHC values in light of their intercultural encounters, and also strengthened their appreciation of their CHC values. Much of this reconstruction and renegotiation depended upon the extent to which participants sought a sense of belonging. For some of the Malaysians, their limited contact with those from the host culture meant little integration or adjustment and, hence, little reconstruction and renegotiation of values, cultural practices, and beliefs: they were merely sojourners. By contrast, their Chinese peers, through their desire to belong, demonstrated these processes to a greater degree.

The conclusions in this study, in line with other studies on adaptation (Pedersen, 1991), were inconsistent with Oberg's (1960) U-shaped hypothesis. In some instances participants underwent a reappraisal of their cultural values and, in others, found a confirmation in the values they were educated by in their first cultures. Retention of first culture values served to further differentiate the participants from those in the host culture. In particular, their *conservatism*, resulting in what they felt was a need to preserve social correctness and harmony as well as the avoidance of face threatening acts, disadvantaged them in their communication with those in the host community. Participants felt restrained by these values in contrast with the openness of New Zealanders in their communication.

On the other hand, participants also modified some of their values and adopted some New Zealand patterns of behaviour, values, and ways of communicating which

suited their lifestyles here. However, the undergraduates, especially, gave priority to the expectations placed upon them by their families in their first culture. In the case of the graduates with families, decisions were often based on what was best for their children. Feelings of belonging were hindered, however, by experiences of racism, although participants did not feel a sense of discrimination as a result of these racist taunts, attributing such attacks to what they regarded was a minority of uneducated youths.

Third, these shifts in values, cultural practices and beliefs indicate that *participants reconstructed and renegotiated their cultural identities to accommodate their everyday life in the host culture*. They began to evaluate the culture in which they were educated and socialised, retaining and valuing the positive aspects, and renegotiating those that they had come to question. Participants expressed an appreciation of the benefits they had gained from their international student experience which also resulted in a better understanding of their first cultures. For all, the experience signified an irrevocable change for their future lives, a change which they valued for the better.

Fourth, *as participants experienced different intra- and intercultural communication exchanges in a range of cultural contexts, they demonstrated, in the process of reconstructing and renegotiating their cultural identities, a multiplicity of identities*. Participants' identities were inscribed not only within two distinct cultural contexts, but within a range of contexts that encompassed aspects of both cultures. Thus, their cultural identities were constructed around the requirements of each cultural context.

Finally, in reconstructing and renegotiating their cultural identities towards the New Zealand host culture, *participants demonstrated the beginnings of third culture building* as they began to adopt aspects of the living traditions of their New Zealand hosts.

These major conclusions suggest a range of mismatches arising out of intercultural communication between the cultural other and those in the host society. These mismatches, and the challenges they create, have practical and social implications for people in western tertiary institutions (international students and their hosts), for communities in which these international students reside, and for social and

administrative practice within these communities. I explore these conclusions more fully and focus on their practical and social implications.

9.2 Practical and social implications

International students, and CHC students among them, tend to be treated as an homogeneous group, disregarding differences in ethnicity, culture, and even individuality. This approach has been unhelpful in better understanding where mismatches might lie, and how they might be better addressed. I will now consider more closely this mismatch between CHC and western learning environments in terms of the challenges they provide for teaching and learning in the host environment, for intercultural communication, for managing cultural difference, for belonging, and for policy formation.

9.2.1 The challenges of these mismatches within host institutions

Mismatches in teaching, in learning, and in (intercultural) communication styles, along with participants' feelings of inadequacy with the English language have important implications in the learning environment for English language requirements, for language and learning support structures, for university teachers, for host students and, finally, for international students. These areas are now addressed.

English language requirements

TOEFL and IELTS scores, although useful in determining the macroskills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, 'do not address the question of language which is specific to a new research environment, nor the larger question of academic conventions and behaviours favoured within the new context of a particular university or department' (McGowan and Cargill, 1994, p. 1). Kennedy (1995) suggested that such a language requirement is a technical solution which 'might be a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring academic success for the overseas student' (p. 43). And Kao and Gansneder (1995) opined that such tests were 'not

the most appropriate measure of students' English proficiency' (p.133). Furthermore, Ginsberg (1995) claimed that IELTS is a test of *world knowledge*, more specifically characterised as 'knowledge of the cultural assumptions and academic conventions required to succeed in an English speaking university' (p. 6). Such tests are not appropriate as entry requirements for international (or CHC) students who take these tests in their first cultures because they have not yet been exposed to this world knowledge.

The elimination of international English language testing systems would result in a more open entry system. But what are the consequences? An open entry system, if carefully planned and promoted, would enable more international students to have access to more courses within the University; internationalisation within the tertiary institution would be encouraged; and there would be a greater intercultural awareness, leading to greater acceptance of diversity. However, there are caveats in bringing about such change, which focus on better educating faculty and host students. As the findings in this study have indicated, it is inadvisable to simply insert CHC students into the New Zealand educational environment without acknowledgement of previous cultural and educational experiences (Burns, 1991; McLaren, 1998). Thus, such an initiative would require a faculty who are knowledgeable about and sympathetic towards the presence of non-English speaking background (NESB) and CHC students and their needs, and host students who are sympathetic towards difference.

Language and learning support services

The undergraduates in this study preferred to seek support from their own culture or from other CHCs, while the graduates preferred to work alone. It would appear, then, that the support offered by the School and the University was not appropriate, even though the School invested considerable resources in international students during the course of this study (in providing social events for international students, in monitoring the academic performance of first year international students, and in providing them with follow-up remedial tutorials). Thus, university administrators need to give serious consideration to the nature, appropriateness, and accessibility of support to CHC students, bearing in mind the preferences undergraduates expressed for using their own networks, and the graduates' preferences in working alone.

Given the participants' motivation to succeed, and the fact that they usually did over time, we perhaps need to look more closely at curricula and strategies that enable students to address the issues which have emerged in this study. One possibility is the provision of a credit bearing preparation or skills course (Felix, 1993). Credit bearing status adds value to such courses for international students since it addresses issues like loss of face suffered by those CHC students, in particular, who need to or must attend; it also addresses the question of time not readily available for such classes, which overseas students tend to regard as remedial (Samuelowicz, 1987). A second possibility is a focus on *bridging* which is integrated into the content of the course of study, rather than prior to entry into it, and which runs in tandem with the degree structure (McGowan and Cargill, 1994). A third possibility is the implementation of *adjunct* programmes which are credit bearing courses in, say, writing, and which are integrated into the degree curriculum (Beasley, 1990). Thus, according to Beasley, all students, including NESB students, would learn writing strategies in conjunction with course content. The University offers both credit bearing preparation and skills courses through its language centre, and a writing for university purposes course for all (including NESB) students. Such courses have begun to address these students' needs. An adjunct course within the School would have the advantage of providing language and skills appropriate to the style of instruction in the School. However, such a course would require at least some academics who could teach both curriculum and the conventions of academic study.

Further, there needs to be more careful planning of support services to alleviate feelings of frustration, anxiety, and failure among CHC students. While Cownie and Addison (1996) found that the majority of universities gave English language support to international students, they questioned its accessibility to students and its quality, especially given that staff in such institutes tended to be marginalised and had poor employment contracts. While the University's international centre has played a role in this respect, better ways and means need to be found to encourage CHC students to seek support from these services. As the findings in Chapters five and eight suggested, these participants preferred the help obtained from their own in-group or community rather than that offered by the official School or University channels. By focusing training on senior members of each community, the help given within support networks would then be in line with the goals and practices of the School.

Social support services

Given the participants' preferences for interpersonal communication which tended to be focused towards those from the same culture, there are important implications for the nature of the social support at present offered to these students by host institutions. Burns (1991) noted that white, middle-class counsellors with western values are inappropriate and assistance might better be sought via a peer counselling network consisting of those from the same culture. For example, when the School appointed an adviser who was an international student (a doctoral student from Thailand), she was inundated with requests for support from her same culture *juniors*, and had to relinquish the role in order to complete her doctoral studies. This situation has implications for who should provide the support and/or counselling needed, especially given the collectivist orientation of these students, for the appropriate level of support offered, and for the form that the support should take.

Host institutions

Host institutions need to be aware that they are meeting these students' educational needs in order to give them value for money (Munro, 1998). Institutions like Education New Zealand could and should be leading the way here. There is also a need to consider the international credibility of the degree itself, and the reputation of the institution which these students carry back with them to their first cultures. Thus, broader curricula, which address issues of language competence, a less localised knowledge base, and different cultural perspectives, might better address the needs and competencies of these CHC students.

University teachers

Traditionally, the onus to change has been on the overseas students. However, Fox (1992) pointed to the need for university teachers to emerge from their culture-bound approaches to critical thinking and analysis: instead of using *deficit language* they should move to an acceptance of *difference language* in working together to bridge the gap. However, teachers, while becoming more mindful of the need to recognise and accommodate difference, generally receive little preparation and assistance in accommodating these students in their classrooms. For example, the School at which the study was conducted recently entered an arrangement whereby Chinese students from Shanghai enter at mid-degree level; however, staff have received little information or preparation to manage cultural difference in their teaching. Such

preparation of staff is vital for the success of the programme. Further, teachers need to be informed about the teaching and learning environments of CHC students in their first cultures so that they can better understand the issues for these students in the host learning environment and better accommodate these students in their teaching styles.

Host students

Given the difference in learning and communication styles existing between CHC students and their New Zealand hosts, as this study has indicated, much needs to be done to prepare local students for acceptance of difference: first, in styles of teaching and learning and, second, in communicating with those from cultures whose perspectives and values are different. If host institutions admit international (and CHC) students, then host students need to be better educated about Asian cultures.

International students

Finally, there are implications for the international students themselves. In their relationship with the learning institution, with the staff and students therein, and with those in the society beyond, international students need greater preparation and awareness building of the host culture and learning environment (prior to, upon, and beyond entry). They also need to recognise the value of the intercultural communication experience beyond the obtaining of a western tertiary qualification. Ongoing learning and social support is necessary to build upon their understanding of their intercultural communication and learning experiences. The value of a same culture community needs to be recognised as a place where international students can make sense of their experiences with the cultural other. However, international students also need to acknowledge the reciprocity of the intercultural communication encounter and their responsibility in facilitating communication with the cultural other.

9.2.2 The challenges of intercultural communication in the learning environment

Participants found intercultural communication with other New Zealand students and university teachers in the learning environment challenging. For example, participants desired intercultural contact, but found initiating and sustaining communication problematic. For some, especially the Malaysians, this meant retreat to communication with others from their same culture and same culture support networks. For others, especially those who decided to remain in New Zealand, much desire and effort was put into developing intercultural communication with New Zealand students. However, the purpose of this interaction -- for seeking friendship and receiving study support -- was not always reached.

As feelings of *foreignness* seem to apply to both sides of the cultural divide: for the CHC students on the one hand, and for the New Zealand students and university teachers on the other, what can be done to promote intercultural communication and interaction, especially among New Zealand and CHC students? An awareness and acceptance of diversity is called for from both sides. Traditionally, and this University and School are no exception, orientation programmes are a compulsory part of international students' initiation into the learning environment. However, what focus is placed on communication with the cultural other? To what extent are overseas students prepared for intercultural interaction in the host environment? In this University and School, very little!¹ Similarly, orientation programmes rarely attempt to prepare host students to better understand and communicate with CHC and other overseas students.

Keating (1998) argues that there is a need for the teaching of *Asia* throughout tertiary institutions in New Zealand in order to better acknowledge the diversity which has arisen in institutions of learning as a result of New Zealand's patterns of immigration, international education, trade and commerce. This initiative would better prepare New Zealand students as *Asia specialists*, and broaden *Asia-knowledge* among as many New Zealanders as possible. It would also better

¹ In a departure from this situation, at present the School's language consultant holds a weekly one hour support tutorial for the newly arrived Shanghai students where they receive academic and social support in their School life.

prepare New Zealand students for intercultural interaction with CHC students.

Further, the School and University policy of increasing international student numbers necessitates greater understanding of intercultural communication. And increasing diversity within the New Zealand population and workforce and among New Zealand's trading partners necessitates greater attention on the part of curriculum planners of business degrees to promote knowledge about Asian cultures.

And yet, universities have tended to underutilise international students as an educational resource in developing this awareness of diversity, neglecting the contribution they might offer in encouraging other ways in which we might view the world (Kaplan, 1987; Smith and Smith, 1989; and Pedersen, 1991). Mackinnon highlighted the valuable intercultural experience created by the presence of overseas students in the learning environment:

The big plus (of having overseas students) is the increased breadth and depth of the educational experience when students from many cultural backgrounds are present in the classroom, . . . [providing students with] more opportunities to mix with and understand people from other languages and cultures. (Mackinnon, 1990, p. 8, cited in Nesdale and Todd, 1993, p. 191)

New Zealand students need to be helped to recognise that they, too, can gain from the diversity offered by the intercultural learning environment, and that they can benefit from the skills and knowledge of overseas students. This scenario has implications for both staff and local students in their intercultural communication with CHC students: first, university teachers need to better understand what CHC students are thinking about in order to facilitate and encourage communication; and, second, New Zealand students need to be better prepared to receive and communicate with these students in order to create an enriched learning environment for the benefit of all.

9.2.3 The challenges of intercultural communication in the community

Participants' differences in communication styles resulted in their having difficulty in establishing and maintaining intercultural communication with those in the host community. That they have culturally different communication styles has implications for the extent to which submersion in the host culture is, in fact, a valuable experience. The participants themselves indicated the awkwardness that occurred as a result of isolation from their CHC peers in some of their homestay situations. They also described how they were more greatly challenged by working together with other CHC students in the learning environment. While none of the participants would undervalue the opportunity for intercultural contact, there is also clearly a place for same culture contact to avoid feelings of social dislocation and to foster understanding of the host culture through intracultural communication with other CHC students.

This situation has important implications not just for these CHC and other international students, but also for those in the host community if we are to move towards an understanding and acceptance of cultural difference. First, there is a need for greater education for overseas students, both international and permanent resident, about how to communicate with New Zealanders, both in the learning environment and in the host community, and an understanding or appreciation of what they can value from intercultural communication encounters. Further, the participants' motivation and goals as students in the host culture have implications for those in support roles within educational institutions. They need to take international students' motivations into account with regard to promoting intercultural experiences.

The need for greater education about how to communicate with the cultural other is also reciprocated in New Zealanders. If New Zealand aspires to be a bi- and multi-cultural nation, then an appreciation of cultural diversity and, I would add, difference in communication styles needs to begin from an early age and be an integral part of New Zealand's educational curricula (Keating, 1997). As Pedersen (1991) noted, the skill of adapting to cultural diversity is an important resource for helping people learn about one another and about themselves in a multicultural society. Given the rhetoric that addresses notions of multiculturalism in New

Zealand, and the current trend (worldwide) towards globalisation, improving intercultural communication needs to be given greater prominence within New Zealand.

9.2.4 The challenges of managing cultural difference

All participants showed degrees of reconstruction and renegotiation of their cultural knowledge -- values, cultural practices, and beliefs -- as they sought to understand and accommodate the host culture. Nonetheless, cultural differences prevailed and, somehow, needed to be managed.

The challenge for the participants, and for those in the host community, is to avoid ethnocentric tendencies by blocking out that which is contrary to individuals' cultural *truths* or which conflicts with individuals' beliefs and values. To some extent, participants, by reflecting on the ways in which those in the host culture communicated, and the values and behaviours they lived by, were developing an intercultural awareness which was important in enabling them to accept and acknowledge difference, or to make changes which allowed them to accommodate and understand those in the host community. However, it would be unrealistic to claim that the participants did not display some elements of ethnocentrism in their choices for living. It would also be unrealistic to stop them from doing so. What is important for these participants, along with others from CHCs and other overseas students, is that they reach a sharing, an understanding, an accommodation with those in the host culture. Such a challenge is equally applicable to those in the host community themselves who must also transcend their own ethnocentrism in their intercultural communication encounters with the culturally other. The advantages in taking up this challenge are outlined below by Eddy:

The great value of multicultural education for mainstream [host] students and minority [CHC students] is the opportunity to transcend ethnocentrism and to explore varied perspectives of the world. (Eddy, 1990, p. 15)

The role of intercultural communication is particularly important here in that such interaction presupposes cultural knowledge. Gumperz outlined the difficulties that may arise when this cultural knowledge is lacking:

When speakers' inferences do not accord with those of other participants, the resulting discrepancies may violate the latter's expectations and conversational collaboration may be affected. . . . When inferences clash and background is shared, participants can draw on their knowledge of others' histories to find reasonable explanations for what is happening and thus give each other the benefit of the doubt. Moreover, the problems that arise are often readily repaired. But where the necessary shared background experience does not exist, difficulties arise. (Gumperz, cited in Young, 1994, p. xvii)

Thus, the challenge for those educators in intercultural communication contexts is to encourage the development and awareness of this cultural knowledge among their students, as well as a recognition and acceptance of difference. Such a challenge could also be applied to the students and, in some cases, the university teachers, in the host institutions of international education.

9.2.5 The challenges of belonging in the host culture

Arising out of the participants' attempts to accommodate the host culture, through their reconstructions of values, cultural practices and beliefs, participants also showed some reconstruction of their cultural identities. These reconstructions were greater among those who either had or sought permanent residence. Underpinning this reconstruction was the need to develop a sense of belonging and the challenges and implications it brought.

Reasons for wanting permanent residence were grounded in establishing a better quality of life for close and extended family members. With the issue of permanent residence came the issue of employment in New Zealand. Some of the graduate participants felt that their course of study did not advance their employment opportunities. Furthermore, the prevailing attitude of employers in New Zealand exacerbated their chances of being given the opportunity to show that they were equally as worthy of employment as a New Zealander, an opportunity which may have enhanced their feelings of belonging. Participants felt that difference, in terms of both culture and differing orientations and perspectives in the workplace, was not welcomed. And yet many were prepared to make significant sacrifices in terms of their status and careers in their first cultures to remain.

The situation of taking up permanent residence raises three issues. The first concerns the course of study undertaken by these students upon arrival here. In the case of those from China who all eventually sought permanent residence, in some instances their course of study did not provide them with job opportunities here in New Zealand. SX, with his masters degree in economics, was the only participant who found a job easily upon graduation. The second issue concerns the attitude of employers towards those from CHC cultures. There is a serious need for employers to acknowledge difference in the work place, and the value in alternative approaches to problem solving. The third issue addresses the role of universities in mentoring CHC students towards vocational opportunities in their choice of study programme, and in developing contacts within organisations in order to facilitate entry into the job market, especially at graduate level where their research is often grounded within an organisation.

In developing our economic and educational links with Asia, New Zealanders need to acknowledge the role that people from CHCs in our society can play in this development. The participants in this study who intended to remain in New Zealand have the intercultural skills and knowledge to promote exchange and accommodation. In particular, they demonstrated a willingness to reconstruct and renegotiate their cultural identities to accommodate the cultural other, and they took the first steps in third culture building in an attempt to accommodate their culture within the host culture. The challenge now lies with New Zealand society to respond to these processes. A present research proposal by the New Zealand Immigration Service to explore migrant outcomes in New Zealand may contribute towards understanding and acceptance of cultural difference and the challenges of intercultural communication between such CHC migrants and their New Zealand hosts.

9.2.6 Challenges for government and education in policy formation

The experiences of these CHC students in the host culture have important implications for policy formation within the social and educational domains of government in New Zealand, and also within the private sector. This study needs to be acknowledged by those in positions of policy making in developing intercultural awareness and acceptance of diversity, particularly in the social and employment

arenas. It also needs to be acknowledged by people within educational institutions and organisations, for example, the administrators who are responsible for the internationalisation of their campus, and the politicians and administrators in government who are responsible for policy concerning international student quotas and conditions. A further organisation which plays a pivotal role here is Education New Zealand, who is directly responsible for the marketing of its educational programmes to international students abroad. As Education New Zealand rigorously expands the marketing of education in New Zealand, it should also take into account the consequences of bringing international students to New Zealand. Thus, it should not neglect the issues emergent in this study.

If New Zealand is to remain an attractive destination for CHC (and international students generally), then more needs to be done, in the area of government initiatives to put New Zealand on the *knowledge* map as a world leader in educational research. For example, the British government recently announced plans to increase its share of the fee paying international student market in English speaking countries from 17 to 25 percent by 2005, increasing its export earnings in education and the number of students enrolled in further education within the United Kingdom (Education New Zealand News, June, 1999). Following suit, the New Zealand government aimed to increase spending in research in order to compete globally in the education sphere. Such an initiative should encourage New Zealand to maintain a competitive edge and thus remain an attractive destination for further education.

One of the key moves towards acknowledgement of the outcomes presented in this research is to have the issues placed on the agenda within the organisations themselves so that the issues can be translated into policy intentions, policy programming and, finally, implementation (Rist, 1994). Education New Zealand has already begun to initiate this agenda by working closely with its members and government agencies to develop a strategic plan for New Zealand's international education industry (Education New Zealand News, May, 1999). Implementation of the outcomes of this study should form part of this agenda to keep New Zealand tertiary institutions attractive and globally competitive to international students. One of the purposes of this study is to challenge those in the above mentioned organisations to respond to the implications which have emerged from this study, that is, to enhance the intercultural communication experience of the CHC student in New Zealand host institutions.

9.3 Theoretical illustrations and implications

In this section I discuss how the theory enabled a description and interpretation of the experiences of these participants in this context. I provide illustrations of how the theory contributed towards an understanding of the processes of participants' intercultural communication, and suggest emergent implications of the theory for this study. The areas of theory I address are, first, social constructionism, including parallels between Schutz's social construction of the stranger entering the host culture and these participants' experiences at this New Zealand university, second, intercultural communication and, finally, cultural identity.

9.3.1 Social constructionism

The social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; and Schutz, 1971, 1973), on which this study in intercultural communication is underpinned, offers a way of viewing the world from the perspective of the individual within a particular social group, where meaning is particular and peculiar to individual social groups, and where communication is seen as being central to the reality experienced by individuals in these particular social contexts. This approach also permitted the active involvement of the researcher in the interpretive inquiry, an important aspect of the methodology. The theory has offered insights into how this group of CHC students socially constructed their everyday world in the host culture in the following ways.

As the findings indicated, in spite of sharing their Confucian heritage culture, the participants in this study varied in their personhood and everyday experiences. Social constructionist theory enabled the researcher to focus on the participants' individual meanings brought to the communication encounter and the resulting social constructions that emerged within the context of this study. While the findings suggested some commonalities among, for example, the Malaysian undergraduates, the theory allowed for interpretation of individual differences, an important aspect of the findings.

Schutz's notion of typifications, which enable people and things within a social group to be placed within generalised categories that *typify* them, were manifested in the experiences of the participants in their everyday intra- and intercultural communication. Similarly, the social knowledge that participants acquired through these typifications enabled them to develop social recipes, that is, typical, well-understood ways of doing things in particular situations. As Schutz noted, social recipes enable participants to classify things according to some mutually understood logic, to communicate, and to establish proper behaviour in different situations. This happened, to varying degrees, in the learning environment as participants, in order to succeed academically, reconstructed and renegotiated their first culture learning and teaching styles to accommodate difference. For example, participants learned the meaning of the typification of critical analysis and the social recipe it entailed, that is, of analysing a text, presenting a reasoned argument in favour of and/or in opposition to the ideas within, and evaluating the arguments logically. However, in learning the social recipes associated with these typifications and others associated with communicating with New Zealand students, participants constantly referred to the lack of communication skills and strategies for performing in different spoken and written communication contexts. For most, learning and enacting these social recipes remained problematic throughout the research period, and, thus, diminished opportunities for intercultural interaction and, consequently, served to maintain difference between the CHC participants and the host group.

In participants' social lives beyond the learning environment, the typifications and social recipes that had been constructed in their first cultures were constantly being challenged through intercultural interaction in the host culture. As participants observed and experienced another cultural way they came to better realise and understand their own culture, and either to reinforce or to question their values, beliefs, attitudes, and cultural practices. For example, participants felt disadvantaged in their social interaction by the social recipes surrounding typifications of social correctness and harmony, which manifested themselves in a reluctance to express face threatening acts. For the Malaysians especially, the typification of the network of gossip acted as a regulator of intra- and intercultural interaction. Participants retained their typifications of thriftiness and familial roles in preference for what they saw as much looser constructions within the host culture. However, the typification of deference to family members and the social recipes surrounding it, that is, of parents determining the future lives of their children, and

of children considering parents in their daily actions, were renegotiated to resemble the much looser New Zealand typification.

The extent to which the participants' CHC typifications and social recipes could be reconstructed was to some degree reflected in their choices for their future lives. Where participants showed less willingness to reconstruct and renegotiate their cultural knowledge they manifested a *going back* mentality. That is, life in the host culture was a sojourn until they returned to take up professional employment and resume their first culture lives. This was most noticeable among the Malaysian undergraduates. By contrast, those who either had or who sought permanent residence, namely, the Chinese participants, demonstrated a much greater willingness to reconstruct their cultural way and communication styles to understand and accommodate those in the host culture.

A further aspect of social constructionism includes *multiple realities*. Schutz defined this as individuals' constructions of their realities within 'the world of everyday life [which] is the scene and also the object of our actions and interactions' (Schutz, 1973, p. 209). The findings illustrate the existence of multiple realities as participants described diverse interpretations of intra- and intercultural communication experiences. For example, multiple realities can be seen in the two very different views of Malaysian group regulation through the typification of gossip. The gossip network regulated AS's actions among her Malaysian peers. She did not want to be seen as transgressing the rules for behaviour. By contrast, SY shunned the gossip network and the Malaysian students associated with it. Living in New Zealand and associating with New Zealand students enabled him to detach himself from such networks, networks which he had disliked in Malaysia. Consequently, he largely rejected communication with the other Malaysian students.

Analogies between the participants and Schutz's stranger

Schutz's (1971) analysis of the newcomer, the stranger, to the host culture provides a foundation for understanding the social dislocation which resulted when the typifications and social recipes underpinning the participants' first culture no longer fitted with those of the host culture. This is the crisis these CHC students faced in entering a new culture. Like the stranger, these participants lacked the knowledge of the host culture necessary for interpreting the cultural patterns of group life, that is, the folkways, mores, laws, habits, and customs of the approached group (Schutz,

1971). Thus, the basic assumptions about social life become problematic. For example, their *thinking as usual* is no longer shared within the host culture. Nor do the cultural patterns and communication styles of the approached group have the authority of a tested system of recipes which have already been formulated by them in their first cultures. Furthermore, the history of the host culture has not become an integral part of the history of these students' biographies. As a result, the participants experienced *reality shock* (Kramer, 1974) upon arrival. Thus, intercultural communication provided an important medium through which they could reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities in the face of this new knowledge.

Schutz regarded the experience required for intercultural communication as important. Like the stranger, these participants found themselves marginalised from the in-group (the New Zealand students in the learning environment and others in the social environment). They found themselves on the border of the cultural pattern of in-group life. For the Malaysian students, in particular, constructing first culture and CHC communities provided a means of coping with this dislocation and marginalisation. These communities provided a familiar and safe context for social interaction within the host community, albeit among other CHC students, and a support network. The existence of these communities reduced the opportunities for these participants to gain experience in intercultural communication, to reconstruct the cultural and communication patterns that would facilitate interaction.

A further process of reconstruction the stranger needed to undertake was to *translate* the cultural patterns -- the typifications and social recipes -- of the host culture into those of his or her own group. Interpretive equivalents did not always exist. This process was most noticeable in the learning environment where the participants had to acquire new recipes for learning, for example, independent thinking, critical analysis, working in groups, and giving presentations. Further, interpretations of cultural patterns did not always coincide with those of the in-group. For example, LJ and KZ found that the New Zealand students' approach to group work, of distributing work to individuals and then joining the parts at the end to reach a co-ordinated product, did not fit with their understanding that group work required ongoing negotiated co-ordination in order to succeed.

Another area of concern was language. The participants, like Schutz's stranger, had to develop the communication skills and strategies for effective intercultural communication in the host culture. That is, they had to acquire knowledge of these new cultural and communicative patterns before starting to adopt them as the scheme of their own expressions. Schutz noted that in language learning there is a difference between the passive understanding of a language and its active mastering as a means for realising one's own acts and thoughts. This discrepancy was fundamental in enabling and facilitating participants' intercultural communication experiences with the cultural other. Notwithstanding this conclusion, Houlker (1996) and Zhou (1995) concluded that language deficiency is used by international students as a mask for other problems in communicating with those in the host culture. That was certainly evident in this study. For example, FO and WK remarked upon the difficulty of going beyond perfunctory greetings, what they called *common topics*. And KZ lamented that New Zealand students had 'New Zealand interests'. Thus, the difficulty lay with what to talk about, rather than with how to talk. That is, they did not share topics of interest with the New Zealand students.

The task for the stranger, then, in acquiring the knowledge for intercultural interaction is summed up by Carbaugh (1990). Carbaugh argued that a better understanding of the nature of communication during intercultural contacts comes from an understanding of the norms, forms, and codes that pattern social lives and of listening to the ways in which culture is articulated by the in-group in such patterns. Such socially situated knowledge he regarded as necessary for interpreting the common meaningfulness of communication to its participants. Participants opined that they lacked common topics of conversation with the in-group, resulting in difficulties in initiating and sustaining intercultural communication. This suggests that they had not sufficiently reconstructed and renegotiated their social realities, their own norms, forms and codes that patterned their social lives in their first cultures to accommodate those of the host culture. While that may be the case for some participants, there were others, such as SY, who succeeded in articulating the patterns of the in-group as he became an accepted member of a group of New Zealand students in the Halls of Residence. And for LJ, in some cases, his acceptance within the in-group was inhibited not so much by *his* inability to articulate the patterns of the in-group, but of *their* inability to reconstruct their patterns to accommodate an outsider.

The implication for researchers here is in the importance of foregrounding culture in studies of intercultural communication in order to understand how both outsiders and people in the host culture reconstruct and renegotiate the norms, forms and codes -- beliefs, values, and cultural practices -- that pattern social lives to enable intercultural communication. Social constructionism, as a broad theory that enables researchers to describe and interpret for understanding the ways in which individuals construct and reconstruct, negotiate and renegotiate their everyday lifeworlds in interaction with the cultural other, provided a valuable foundation for this process. The theories explicated by Schutz (1971; 1973) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) were supported by the practical findings in this study.

9.3.2 Intercultural communication

Just as individuals construct and negotiate their everyday experiences to make sense of their social worlds, so in intercultural communication must individuals and groups negotiate their relationships with one another and, thus, redefine or recode their ways of speaking according to culture-specific criteria (Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen, 1994). Communication is also cultural in that where unshared cultural patterns exist, misinterpretation and misunderstanding can arise (Carbaugh, 1990). Given the degree of heterogeneity between the cultural and experiential backgrounds of the CHC participants and their New Zealand hosts, the potential for misinterpretation and misunderstanding in intercultural communication was high, and the processes of reconstruction and renegotiation of the norms, forms, and codes for communication were greater.

By focusing on the conversational context of everyday life, on the meanings generated by participants in their interaction with New Zealanders in the host culture, it has been possible to better understand their intercultural communication experiences. Further, in looking at the meanings and significances of the participants' ordinary everyday lives as they reconstruct and renegotiate their social and communicative living traditions in the host community, it has been possible to develop an understanding of their subjective and intersubjective lives. Thus, communication, as conceptualised in this study, has enabled an exploration of the ways in which the outsider acquires the cultural knowledge, the living tradition, of

the host culture, and *the ways of talking* (Shotter, 1992) to begin negotiations in the host culture.

Participants were much more successful at creating, sustaining, and sharing meaning in groups through intra- rather than intercultural communication. The participants shared their socially constructed reality through their Confucian heritage. Shared language, although important, was sometimes subordinated by shared culture and cultural identity. This was noticeable in the preferences for relationships and friendships the participants formed, not just with those from their first cultures, but also with others from CHCs, and in the constructions of CHC communities. The participants' intracultural communication patterns fitted Hall's (1976) notion of high context cultures which are characterised by the use of indirect communication and the ability to intuitively understand others, the process of drawing meaning from the social context, and the importance of context and the roles and relationships of communicators in modifying the spoken message.

A second aspect of Hall's theory concerned the attribution to context (Miller, 1984), whereby collectivists rely more heavily on contextual information such as interpersonal relationships, situations, group associations. By contrast, individualists use more context-free, abstract information such as abilities, traits, knowledge, and cognitive-emotional style. Thus, there is a dependence on context for the regulation of social action. These differences were played out in the participants' descriptions of their difficulties in reconstructing their communication styles to accommodate the cultural other in both the learning and social environments. For example, WK did not know what to talk about with the New Zealand students on his floor in his Hall of Residence because they did not share the same contextual background of place, family, and socio-historical background, unlike the other New Zealand students on the floor who were able to interpret these contextual features. Such differences also suggest why participants preferred intracultural to intercultural communication experiences.

Thus, these conceptualisations of (intercultural) communication have enabled an interpretation and understanding of these CHC participants' communication styles and experiences in a host culture.

9.3.3 Cultural identity

Collier and Thomas' (1988) framework for understanding cultural identity was useful in understanding the extent to which the participants in this study reconstructed and renegotiated their cultural identity through intercultural communication. This process can be better understood by returning to the conceptualisations of cultural identity as presented in Chapter eight. First, cultural identity is a person's understanding of and identification with the culture system of a particular group, but is contextual, processual and dynamic, and is played out in the intercultural encounters between and among individuals and groups. All of the participants retained cultural identification with their first culture, for example, the Chinese in their maintenance of family values and desire to be thrifty. The Malaysian undergraduates demonstrated cultural identification to their own culture system to the greatest degree, manifested in the formation of a Malaysian community within the host culture, in their ties with others in the Malaysian community, and in their resolve to return to Malaysia upon graduation, what they referred to as *going back*.

Second, an awareness of cultural identity is formed and managed through intercultural communication and through intercultural contact. In identifying with the living traditions of a culture individuals are able to give meaning to these forms and the boundaries that they render. For example, LJ came to know what his culture was as a result of living in and communicating with the cultural other: 'If you [have] never been to the other culture's environment you only get one cultural experience. You don't know what's the unique feature of your culture' (LJ). Linked to this is the third component, cultural identification which develops through a process of contrast of self to others, and one's group to other groups. And fourth is acknowledgement of the defining features of cultural identity -- the cultural practices, beliefs, and values -- by which individuals have been educated and guided in interaction and in (intercultural) communication.

As suggested in the major conclusions, all participants showed some degree of reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity. The Malaysian undergraduates exemplified the process of identity negotiation in their questioning of the cultural values underpinning their cultural identity. In accommodating some of the values of

the host culture, for example, in appreciating independence from their families, in valuing opportunities to explore another country and its people, and in questioning their conservative attitudes, these participants showed varying degrees of acculturation. In recognising their own values and how they are reconstructed and renegotiated within the host culture, the participants are demonstrating an acknowledgement of the defining features of their cultural identity.

Participants who desired, or already had permanent residence, showed a greater willingness and effort in reconstructing and renegotiating their cultural identity as they actively sought intercultural contact and tried to better understand the host culture. Examples include LJ in his desire to identify with the host culture through his social interaction at the Cosmopolitan Club, and in his association with the staff of the School in his position as international support person, and MC in her efforts to host people from the host culture at her home. And KZ noted how certain aspects of his cultural identity, particularly, his Confucian attitudes towards family were either confirmed or modified as a result of his contact with New Zealanders. These strategies suggest an awareness of cultural identity as it is formed and managed through intercultural communication and intercultural contact.

The participants' experiences also support the notion of multiple identities (Belay, 1993) which are fluid and negotiable, and are formed, negotiated, modified, confirmed and challenged through communication and contact with others (Collier and Thomas, 1988). All of the participants, as they encountered a range of intercultural interactions and contexts, were engaged in this process of multiple identity construction. For example, those with permanent residence, namely LJ and MC, were constantly reconstructing and renegotiating their cultural identities as a result of their intercultural communication experiences, and through a process of acculturation, but, specifically, through a desire to gain acceptance within the host culture. LJ's experiences crossed a range of contexts: as International support person dealing with international students he drew on his CHC identity. On the other hand, he also had to collaborate with School and University staff who were New Zealanders (both Maori and European), or those of European origin. As a graduate student he sought classes where there were few international students thus facilitating contact with New Zealand students so that he could develop his New Zealand identity. As a father and husband supporting his parents here in New Zealand he was reminded of his CHC heritage, and as a member of society

exemplified in his membership of the local Cosmopolitan Club he sought ways to improve his intercultural interactions with members of that club. And MC, in addition to negotiating the role of undergraduate student, managed a range of accommodation experiences, developed a relationship with a Chinese Thai national, purchased a house in New Zealand, and maintained close relationships with Taiwanese family friends. And SY, who had international student status, was able to move between immersion within the social and learning world of his New Zealand peers, and links with his Mandarin speaking friends from Taiwan and Malaysia. However, in experiencing these multiple identities, SY appeared to be expressing a degree of dislocation. On the one hand, his communication experiences with his New Zealand peers were expressed positively and he was able to make shifts in his values to accommodate a different cultural way, to reconstruct his cultural identity to live side by side with his New Zealand peers. On the other, his feelings about his place and his legal status as an international student prevented him from feeling as if he belonged, from becoming a New Zealander.

In applying the theoretical conceptualisations of Collier and Thomas' (1988) framework, it is possible to interpret and understand the ways in which participants experienced a changing identity. For example, a return sojourn to the first culture by some participants enabled them to better interpret the extent to which cultural identity reconstruction and renegotiation was occurring, resulting in reflection upon their sense of identity and place in both their own and the host culture. This sense of cultural identification emerges through the process of contrasting self to others, and one's group to other groups. A return to their first culture also led them to both question and value parts of their own culture, and also to appreciate their intercultural and learning experience in another culture. For example, LJ returned to New Zealand appreciating the independence he had gained from his family and no longer expecting financial support from them as some of his Chinese peers still did. FX valued the confidence she had gained in rejecting the snobbery attached to fashion, and she appreciated, like all of the participants from China, not having to focus of nurturing connections. MC looked forward to returning to New Zealand from Taiwan to resume her independent life and complete her studies. She no longer shared the same interests in night life as her Taiwanese friends. These examples indicate participants' acknowledgement of the defining features of their cultural identity, their living tradition, formed and managed through intercultural communication.

Further constructs contributing to my analysis of cultural identity, that is, community, values, and third culture building, are now explicated.

Community

The existence of a Malaysian community and, to a much lesser extent, a Chinese community support other claims within Collier and Thomas' (1988) framework: that identities are negotiated through a process of contrast of self to others and one's group to other groups; that individuals culturally identify with such groups which share preconceived stereotypes, opinions, meanings, and norms; and that cultural identity is inscribed within dimensions such as nationality, personality, and the contextual setting. There is also a relationship here with Cohen's (1985) conceptualisation of community, where 'members of a group have (a) something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups' (p. 12). And community is where one learns and continues to practise how to be social: where one acquires culture, that is, a knowledge and experience of the symbols (typifications and social recipes) which will equip an individual to be social.

Participants, particularly undergraduates, identified with others who shared a similar world view. As intercultural communication was problematic for most participants, the emergence of a Malaysian community, where there was shared Confucian heritage background and opportunity for student bonding, provided a context for negotiating the purpose of their sojourn: the attainment of a degree. Further, the community provided learning and social support. Similarly, the existence of the Smithfield community was an example of this same-culture identification, where there was shared knowledge and experience of culture.

By contrast, the Chinese participants were more resourceful and demonstrated greater independence from the Chinese community. It provided assistance for daily life rather than existing as a key source for intracultural communication and social interaction. Chinese participants observed that within this community they were beginning to construct much looser relationships and interpersonal communication patterns with other Chinese members than they would have in China as a result of their stay in New Zealand.

The difficulty participants experienced in establishing communities that included those from the host culture further created and maintained cultural difference, especially within the learning environment. Participants found greater acceptance in communities such as church, or in friendships with other New Zealanders beyond the University (although such friendships for most participants were rare). Homestay communities sometimes heightened intercultural contact (as with PS's experience), and sometimes diminished it (as with MC's and YR's initial experiences).

Community also provides a marker of cultural identity through the concept of *boundary*. Cohen (1985) defined boundary as the beginning and end of a community. Boundary marks belonging to the community, and provides people with a referent for their personal identities which they can then express in social life. For example, WK's desire to cross the boundary from his Smithfield group into the host culture, in his desire for further intercultural contact, marked the importance of this feature of community. It also created a dilemma for WK because he did not want to be seen by his Smithfield group members to be showing a preference for communication or identification with the cultural other over them. By contrast, the reluctance of SY and FX and, to some extent, YR and LJ to identify with their community resulted in their distancing themselves from their first culture community.

Philipsen (1990) made the point that when people from diverse communities try to communicate with each other, they bring to the communication encounter different typifications and social recipes about what is appropriate and proper communicative conduct. The typifications and social recipes that united the Malaysian participants within their community were evident in the support they showed for one another in the academic environment, in the need to establish trust in friendships, and in the maintenance of such cultural practices as gossip and adherence to familial expectations. By contrast, the participants' inability to find common topics of conversation with New Zealand students, both in the academic environment and in the Halls of Residence, suggest that they did not share these typifications and recipes, in what they considered to be proper communicative conduct.

In some instances, a common language provided an underlying unity for their communities. Cohen (1985) concluded that through communication in a shared

language individuals are able to affirm their shared identity and, thus, establish a common basis for meaning and actions. Philipsen (1990) labelled this sense making process a *how to act*, either when with those who share the identity, or when dealing with others who do not, as is the case in intercultural communication. This important aspect of shared language has resonance with the participants' experiences as they sought to make sense of the cultural other and the host culture through *intracultural* communication within their communities. The participants' often limited English language competence, together with their associated lack of confidence in communicating in English, made intercultural communication problematic and, hence, made crossing the boundary into the academic and social communities of the host culture more difficult. Because SY was able to transcend his own cultural notion of *how to act* and reconstruct his cultural identity to conform with that of his peers in the host culture, he became a more successful intercultural interlocutor.

The findings in this study suggest that shared cultural identity and shared typifications and social recipes were at least as important in creating community as shared language. For example, within the Malaysian community, participants shared to varying degrees some of the following languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, and English. By contrast, the Chinese participants, although they shared Mandarin as their key language of communication, had a far less cohesive community. Thus, while some degree of shared language played a role for these participants in shaping communicative conduct and identification with a particular community, the typifications and social recipes of these CHCs provided an important underlying unity.

Values, cultural practices, and beliefs

Ward and Kennedy (1993) noted the importance of foregrounding the role of culture of the sojourner in future research into international students. This study has attempted to address this call by focusing on the elements upon which culture and cultural identity are predicated: values, cultural practices, and beliefs. It was concluded that all participants showed some reconstruction and renegotiation of values, cultural practices, and beliefs as they sought to understand and accommodate the host culture.

Participants tended to reconstruct and renegotiate their values to their advantage, complementing their own cultural values with what they regarded were positive New Zealand values, and being more critical of their own values which denied freedom and independence in choices for their future lives. For example, the Malaysian participants who had chosen to return were faced with having to accommodate the best of both worlds on their return to their first cultures: more time for leisure, less emphasis on the material aspects of life and valuing independence, juxtaposed with the need to maintain and respect the dominant Confucian familial values, and to preserve harmony and face.

Participants showed less willingness to shed values concerning the family -- filial respect, obedience, and responsibility -- and they generally eschewed their New Zealand peers' less reverential attitudes towards the family. They also noted that the CHC virtue of showing modesty disadvantaged them in the learning environment as they were seen to be less capable and knowledgeable than their New Zealand peers.

To conclude, understanding values, beliefs and cultural attitudes are important because they are the building blocks of cultural identity formation. Further, they are the source from which cultural differences often emerge. The extent of their reconstruction and renegotiation, through intercultural communication, are important steps in the outsider's ability to identify with the host culture through a process of third culture building.

Cultural identity change and third culture building

As individuals make important responses to the experiences they encounter during the intercultural communication process, they begin to reconstruct and renegotiate the beliefs, values, and cultural practices that underpin their cultural identity. A major conclusion of this study was that, as participants experienced different intra- and intercultural communication exchanges in a range of cultural contexts with other New Zealanders in the host culture, they began to question some of their Confucian values, cultural practices and beliefs and reconstruct and renegotiate them. These changes in cultural identity resonate with Collier and Thomas' (1988) conceptualisation of identities as being fluid and negotiable, and formed, negotiated, modified, confirmed and challenged through communication and contact with others. In addition, they demonstrate a multiplicity of cultural identity constructions (Belay, 1993).

Further, the participants' intercultural communication experiences demonstrated the beginnings of third culture building (Casmir, 1993; Starosta, 1991) as they accommodated differences in cultural knowledge with those in the host culture. Starosta labelled this accommodation as the construction of a third realm. The participants' experiences in this study have indicated how the living traditions underpinning their cultural identities have been reconstructed and renegotiated through intercultural communication in the social environment with those in the host culture. The model developed in Chapter two, grounded in Casmir's and Starosta's conceptualisations of third culture building, illustrated this process. Thus, the model contributes to knowledge of the relationship between culture, cultural identity and communication. It enables a better understanding of the processes of cultural identity reconstruction in intercultural communication and, thus, how culture and cultural identity influence the experiences of cultural others as they communicate with those in the host culture.

Casmir noted that third culture status proper is the fusion of 'mutually developed values, communication, and organizational systems' resulting in an interdependence of 'new, effective, and mutually acceptable ways of benefiting from human relationships (p. 407). However, it was not possible to ascertain the establishment of the cultural patterns which might underlie a third culture proper, given its focus and the duration of the study. Nor did the scope of the study permit exploration of whether those in the host culture showed any fusion of the participants' CHC values which, according to Casmir (1993) and Starosta (1991), occur in the latter stages of the third culture building process.

Importantly, however, the conclusions in the study supported the possibility of multiple constructions of cultures beyond a third culture, for example, a fourth or fifth culture, as participants sought mutually acceptable ways of social interaction with cultural others in the host society. This was seen in the construction of a Malaysian, a Chinese, and a CHC community within the host society. The processes by which these communities emerged are akin to the third culture building process. Thus, just as the participants constructed multiple identities, I suggested that they also constructed other cultures within which these identities could reside. All of these processes are underpinned by and constantly challenged through intercultural communication, as the model illustrated.

9.4 Methodological reflections and implications

Where the methodology is concerned, four areas emerge for further comment and reflection. They are the application of the methodology, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, participants' views of the research process, and the use of the computer software, Nud*ist. These four areas are now explored.

The applications of the methodology

Ethnography and the underlying principles of grounded theory were found to be appropriate in uncovering the multiple realities that the participants socially constructed in their lifeworlds within the context of the study. An understanding of the social constructions of the everyday worlds of these participants evolved through *thick description* (Geertz, 1973), and through a recognition and understanding of *meanings and significances* (Shotter, 1992). This qualitative approach enabled the richness and vitality of a particular cultural and social context to emerge. In considering the ways in which the CHC students in this study reconstructed and renegotiated their social realities, it has been possible to identify the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the interactional, processual, contextual aspects of intercultural communication, and their impact on communication, culture and cultural identity. Because the study constituted an investigation of change over time, the qualitative methodology applied was appropriate.

The thick description accounted for differences at both the individual and group level, as well as permitting the emergence of commonalities across this group. It also accounted for particular episodes that may have had resonance in the study. That is, one mention by one participant may have significance; there was no necessity for this episode to recur, to develop, or to be experienced by others. By drawing on these emergent themes it was possible to identify the multiple realities of participants within the data. Future research in intercultural communication needs to include such thick description in order to better understand the complexities of the individual lifeworlds of the participants of a particular cultural group as they reconstruct and renegotiate their social realities in the host culture.

The methodology sought to preserve, as much as possible, the voices of the participants in their natural setting. In doing so, this study departed from Strauss and Corbin's (1990) interpretation of grounded theory where categories emerge as a result of a rigorous coding process. Glaser (1992) later critiqued this process on the grounds that the data were being *forced* to fit the categories, rather than being allowed to emerge over the time of the study.

Future research in this area might also benefit from *co-operative inquiry* (Reason, 1988) where the participants share with the researcher in the authorship of the study. Such an approach, through greater co-operation, would better ensure the inclusion of all the participants' voices and delimit the researcher's position and power in the representation of the text. However, this study, a doctoral thesis, precludes such co-authorship.² Co-operative inquiry has importance for the data presented in Chapter eight and, to a lesser extent, Chapters six and seven, which were derived from the participants' perceptions of their experiences during interviews and discussions with them. Checking these perceptions against reality was, at times, difficult. However, one step I took towards assessing the quality of the data was to ask two of the participants to read the findings chapters (Chapters five to eight). They did this, pointing out minor technical errors rather than misinterpretations of participants' realities. Thus, this ethnography is largely a report of the participants' experiences and perceptions, as interpreted and represented by the researcher. Future research in this area would benefit from greater representation of the participants' voices in the style of Reason's co-operative inquiry.

Although the study was longitudinal, covering a period of 18 months, it was impossible to capture all of the changes participants underwent in their constructions of their social realities, and in their reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity. Such changes are sometimes slow in forming, and require ongoing investigation and evaluation over time in the research process. Thus, this study is limited in this respect. A corollary to this limitation is that participants require time to become conscious of and respond to understandings and awareness of these changes. Further investigation that is more prolonged and that includes more extensive time spent with participants may reveal deeper insights.

² Co-authorship would not have been deemed appropriate by the Higher Degrees Committee of this University.

Thus, future research in intercultural communication would benefit from prolonged immersion in the field, through the reflexivity of the researcher in the research process, and through a preservation of thick description which accounts for each individual's story as it unfolds over time.

Researcher/participant relationships

A second aspect of the methodology concerns the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The graduates were appreciative of the communication that occurred between them and me. LJ gained confidence in his communication style: 'I am more confident about the way I am doing it [communicating] . . . I'm doing the more open way' (LJ). He explained that he could better understand why he came here. Similarly, SX became more reflective about how his communication experiences were impacting upon his personhood. All the graduates acknowledged a better understanding and knowledge of communication styles and cultural difference in relation to their communication experiences with New Zealanders. YR acknowledged that from the research process she realised that she had changed. SX appreciated being taken beyond the usual international student mode, regarding this process as valuable. He compared himself with other international students who 'just study their lessons and then relax' (SX).

The undergraduates also expressed their appreciation of this relationship. MC thanked me for my kindness: 'Always take care of me, always ask me what happened in the School. I think I need this kind of person always' (MC). AS was appreciative of the chance to have a conversation in English as she did not have this opportunity elsewhere. For FO, I was his only point of contact with a New Zealander, and mine was the only home he came to during his two years of study here.

From a practical perspective, two of the graduates explained initially that they were interested in participating in the study to learn about the research method which might be helpful to them in their own study. For example, YR found the process of interviewing useful for her own research, and LJ found my reflective comments on the PhD process informative since he was considering undertaking doctoral research.

Thus, the relationship they experienced with me enabled them to better understand and reflect upon their intercultural communication experience in New Zealand, to have extended conversations in English, to develop a rapport with a New Zealander and, in the case of two of the graduates, to learn more about doing research.

A further aspect of their relationship with the researcher concerned the nature of trust. At the outset to Chapter six participants discussed the importance they placed on establishing trust in their interpersonal relationships with those from their culture, from other CHCs, or from the host culture. This need to develop trust also extended to me. For example, WK indicated towards the end of the data collection period that I should place more emphasis on what he said once the study was under way rather than at the outset, particularly during the pilot study, since he was guarded in his comments at this point. YR noted that, well into the research period, she was able to phone me for advice and information, which she explained was a sign of her trust in our relationship. Participants manifested this relationship of trust in requesting me to be a referee for job applications (YR), to provide a character testimonial (SY), and be a witness at KZ's wedding. Such roles were indicative of their willingness to trust the researcher and, therefore, to perform the role of *reliable* cultural informant in ethnographic enquiry. However, there was a failure to extend the relationship of trust between participant and researcher with at least one of the participants. I felt that the relationship was limited to that of *public face*, thereby limiting the richness of the data that emerged.

A consequence of the participant/researcher relationships was that, to some extent, I also prompted their interest in having intercultural communication experiences by asking them about these issues. Had I not, they might have continued with their student experience here, giving little thought to their intercultural communication with others. The disadvantage, then, of this participatory research is that, to some extent, my probing may have helped to shape, not what to think, but what to think about, by making them conscious of what was happening to them in their intercultural communication and interaction. Others saw the research as advantageous in that they had not thought about these issues prior to participation in the study and now found it interesting to do so. And yet, in other ways, their participation in my research did not dramatically influence the outcome of their experience in the host community. For example, FO, although he often told me throughout the study that he wanted to have some New Zealand friends, ended his

time here more entrenched than ever within his Smithfield group, and AS spent her spare time among her CHC friends, including her Malaysian boyfriend.

The positive rewards derived from the researcher/participant relationship helped to sustain the data collection process which was at times, intense, exhausting, and arduous. Thus, future researchers using such methodology need to account for the intensely personal nature of this approach, both for the researcher and participants, and the impact of this relationship on the findings of their study.

Participants' views of the research process

Participants also expressed views about the research process itself. The methodology also served an instrumental purpose for the participants who were not just subjects of the research process, but key players within it. For example, LJ was surprised that he should have such a participatory role in the research process. Even undergraduates expressed an expectation of passivity. At the end of the study they expressed surprise that they would be involved in such extended and in-depth interviews and reflection, or that they would be the subjects of such extended observation and on-going meetings, in short, that they would provide the thrust and substance for the study itself. This was manifested in its most extreme form in MC avoiding initial meetings with me because she felt she had nothing to contribute to this research process. She later learned that her view was false.

*The use of Nud*ist*

The computer software, Nud*ist, used to categorise the data into emergent themes and categories, proved invaluable as a means of managing the thick description emerging from the study, and as a method of handling, storing, and arranging a large amount of data. However, the ability of Nud*ist to apply word searches and juxtapose themes proved less useful as such conceptual decisions needed to be made by the researcher in light of the emergent data. While the pictorial form of a tree diagram was useful in illustrating the structure and in shaping the emergent data, the program was unable to represent the complete tree on the screen. Thus, a manual representation was required instead. A further shortcoming concerned the inability of Nud*ist to cut and paste data once it had been indexed to a category. Nud*ist needs to be further refined to address these limitations in the management and handling of data in interpretive inquiry.

9.5 Directions for further research

The scope of this study addressed the intercultural communication experiences of CHC students in a host university in New Zealand. There remain many unanswered and unaddressed questions for further research.

Further and more in-depth longitudinal studies of the intercultural communication experiences of CHC students within the learning environment and the larger society would enrich the understanding already arrived at in this study. In the case of permanent resident students, further points of focus could include long term adjustment and belonging to the host society and employment opportunities. These studies need to account for the interactive, cultural, processual and dynamic nature of intercultural communication encounters (Collier and Thomas, 1988; Gudykunst, 1983; Hall, 1992; Kim and Gudykunst, 1988).

There is also a need for research that focuses on the voices of those in the host culture, the constructions of New Zealand students' intercultural communication experiences with CHC students, as well as those in society with whom these CHC students interact.

Where cultural identity construction is concerned, there is a need for an understanding of the extent to which people in the host culture reconstruct their cultural identity to accommodate people from Confucian heritage cultures in intercultural communication. This would enable a better understanding of their role and contribution in the third culture building process. Further, there is a need to establish the extent to which CHC sojourners reconstruct their cultural identity through communication upon return to their own cultures.

Deeper exploration of the culture building process of sojourners and permanent resident CHC students in the host society is required and, more particularly, how the process influences, and is influenced by intercultural communication. Culture building research also needs to address co-culture building with those in the host culture, or within other cultures within the host society. Finally, there is scope for investigation of multiple culture building by both CHC people and New Zealanders, and the extent to which cultural identities are reconstructed within them.

Conclusion to the study

In developing this study I expected to find evidence of the participants engaging in a range of intercultural communication experiences on campus and within the host culture which would lead to a reconstruction and renegotiation of their social realities in their everyday lifeworlds. This has happened to some extent. However, these experiences have also been circumscribed by other important events in their lives, in particular, coping with academic study. In addition, for the undergraduates in their early twenties, the experience has also included issues of maturity in forming life partnerships and, for the graduates, it has also included managing family life. Thus, in these respects, their first culture lives have been extended into the host environment, albeit under the influence of another culture, resulting in degrees of reconstruction and renegotiation of cultural identity and the experiencing of a multiplicity of identities as they engaged in a variety of intercultural communication encounters in a range of (inter)cultural contexts.

The study has focused on providing a detailed and personal view, from the perspectives of the participants and researcher, as they adjusted to and accommodated the learning and social environments through their intra- and intercultural communication experiences. In doing so, it has contributed to research and practice in the following ways.

First, it has attempted to respond to calls for studies in intercultural communication which are longitudinal and contextual, grounded in the experiences of the participants themselves, thus exploring the interactive, cultural, processual and dynamic nature of intercultural communication encounters. It has also focused on the development of intercultural communication across a range of cultural contexts by addressing the *living traditions* (Shotter, 1992) of the cultural other in intercultural communication.

Second, it has provided a unique account and longitudinal monitoring of the experiences of the participants in the New Zealand culture, and the reconstructions and renegotiations they have undergone with respect to their Confucian heritage. In doing so it has made an important contribution to intercultural study by providing

‘an idea of the range of possibilities for being human in different but productive ways’ (Cronen, Chen and Pearce, 1988).

Third, it has informed intercultural communication theory by generating data which provide further empirical evidence of the complex interaction residing in intercultural communication between those from Confucian heritage and western cultures, and the processes which emerge from this interaction. It has also generated a further perspective on cultural identity change and third culture building.

Fourth, it has contributed to the field of qualitative research methodology in intercultural communication through the use of a combination of ethnographic and grounded theory techniques which have been employed rarely in this field, and through a discussion of the methodological problems and issues.

Further, the study has made a contribution to the growing field of international education at a time in which educational institutions grapple with the issues and dilemmas arising from increasing numbers of international fee paying and permanent resident student enrolments. Specifically, it has contributed to an understanding of what it means to be a CHC student in a western culture, and the impact of this experience on everyday life in the host culture. Furthermore, it has provided a starting point for further investigation into issues of intercultural communication among such students and their host culture, and the associated issues of cultural identity change, belonging, permanent residency, and third culture building. Such a study is both timely and important as the New Zealand government, in keeping with other western nations, seeks to upgrade its *knowledge industry* in order to remain competitive in the spread of globalisation and in order to remain an attractive destination to those in developing countries who wish to invest in education in a western context.

And finally, it has generated data which could be of use in educational institutions among teachers, students, administrators and international student support staff as they seek to promote the internationalisation of education, and in government and private agencies which promote international education in other countries. It also provides data which could be useful in the study of intercultural communication in other contexts, particularly as New Zealand expands its contacts with Asia through commerce, tourism, migration, and educational exchanges.

In accordance with the concept of theory as a process which is grounded in human experience, the purpose of the study was not to provide a definitive account of all that occurred in the participants' experiences as students, but rather to provide a perspective on, and insights into, their intercultural communication experiences. Such a process allows for further refinement and development. Other accounts of other CHC and international students remain to be written, as do further accounts of the intercultural communication experiences of those participants who have remained in New Zealand, and the impact of the sojourn on those participants who have already returned, or soon will be returning to their first cultures. Meanwhile, these present accounts have provided an important insight into the lifeworlds of the participants as they reconstructed and renegotiated their everyday realities in the host culture.

Appendix A

The research contract

Research project: Ethnic Chinese students - their experiences in the School of Management Studies

Research agreement

The purpose of this research agreement is to make sure that everyone involved in this project is informed about the purpose of the research, and the rights of participants to confidentiality and control over their involvement.

The research is being carried out as part of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. This means that it will be written up as a final thesis report, as well as in the form of various articles both before and after the thesis is completed. It is also likely that I will present conference papers and carry out other public presentations drawing on my research. This agreement covers storage and access to tapes, confidentiality and publication.

Storage and access

I agree that the tape recordings of all interviews will be held at the University of Waikato archive. Only the researcher, direct supervisors, and the interviewee may have access to the recording of my interview.

Publication

I understand that extracts of interviews may be quoted in published work, but that anonymity of all participants will be safeguarded, and I will be informed about eventual publication.

Feedback and information to participants

The researcher will supply:

- * general information about the research project;
- * any further information about the research project that participants are interested in, as long as this does not breach confidentiality or anonymity for other participants;
- * a summary of research findings when the project is completed; and
- * notification about the thesis when it is published.

Amendments to the agreement or any other conditions for participating in the research:

Signed

1. Participant.....Date.....

2. Researcher.....Date.....

Appendix B

A sample of fieldnotes

Jong Xi

Giving a presentⁿ

27/3 Wed. 511 Presentation with Lianjian (see 15).

- Both very nervous about presenting. Problem is ~~with~~ with 'Lang' ^{and} ~~but they both look very well organized~~ on the 1/2 time to discuss at 1 pm bec. they have to do critique
- Context LJ and FX gave a presentⁿ to 12 students. They were first. Worth 30%. LJ had to think on feet. Challenged frequently by Michele. Had to provide exs + listen to her examples and respond to them. LJ used OHTs. Also organized 4 groups for discussion.
- How did FX deal with critique? Q

28/3 Fri. 512 - Seems to be exhausted after presentⁿ on Wed, and writing of critique today. Up all night on computer at Comp. Lab.

- Explained how big the jump from Lij. to MAAS was. Q
Explore this jump in interview.
- She said LJ was very good. She didn't think she was. Why not? Q
Problem with language ('technical lang.')
- What does FX think about the SS' presentation today? Q
Well organized, video, blackboard diagram, not dependent on notes + overheads. Ask LJ too. What do you learn from this teaching/learning style?
- Under S direction class broke into discussion in groups. FX sat back, didn't participate - why not? Is this usual? Q

LJ responded to Ms Z's letter - present, exactly, able to give [spontaneous] active response. She knows answer in head, but FX + LJ can't express. Always afraid SS will ask ??

- FX thought is got class participate asking ?? Presentⁿ makes FX recall reading, stimulates her ideas about topic.

- 512 climate - 80% are Asian students. Check with Michele.

- If she is too far away 'can't hear - I asked her how' this made her feel. She said she didn't feel anything.

29/3 Tues. Informed meeting (about Wed. 511).

- FX feels she needs to use simple words + sentences. Just spoke a short while bec. LJ had better Eng. give him more time. M. didn't ask too many ?? of FX.
- FX thinks it is because her English isn't very well. One person asked FX a question. FX tried to answer but LJ said she had mis understood. FX didn't think so - not sure, but can't use exact words. Both LJ + Michele helped her.
- FX had observed presentⁿs in only one class last semester - saw SS read, or do OHTs. No model for this presentⁿ.

Appendix C

A sample from the researcher's diary:

Issues concerning field work

But I do need to address this with SS.

10.55 pm -
Sat 13/4.

This won't work in groups. No-one will say anything! What should they say? They don't have any responsibility for the research (don't

own it). Yes: 2/3 It's mine, not theirs or ours. When will it become ours?

Post Easter tasks

- write up Pilot Study.
- Transcribe interviews.
- Organise student profiles + field notes.
- Conduct interviews in 2nd week of Easter break.
- Run a forum, in 2 groups on Sunday 19/4. Review of research process so far.
- Organise email groups.
- Organise 2 dinners.

Thursday - Admission night - Barbeque for Int. SS.
- invited F + K again to continue study. They are happy to do so. They seemed concerned that they hadn't handed in their diaries.
- spoke to Cik-shun. She is also keen.
- these were the only 3 who came - all Sunday. (Sense of union + similarity there. What happened to all the others?)

pm. Phoning students - those I want to contact are engaged. Meeting the two IEMP students at Lang Inst. Tomorrow.

- Reminders to SS -
- Brian - remind them to make entries (key words).
 - Brian (and Teresa sheet), my email.
 - E-mail addresses.
 - Easter - social gathering - put luck for grads with families.
 - interview
 - forum (focus group on research).

Appendix D

Three interview protocols

First Interview (May-June 1996)

Pre-interview discussion points

Diary

E-mail - get addresses, maintain weekly dialogue

Lunch (from time to time after Easter. I will be more active with participants, ie. attending classes etc, in last three weeks of semester - weeks 10,11, and 12)

Open-door policy

Research contracts

Interview

1. Biodata follow-up

2. Previous learning environment

Leave this until the end. Do only if there is time.

Describe the teaching/learning environment you experienced during your education in your own country (ie. tertiary for grads, secondary for undergrads). Describe:

- lectures
- tutorials
- assignments (what assignments did you have to do)
- examinations (how long? what format?)
- discussions with students (in and out of class) *communication behaviour*
- discussions with teachers (in and out of class) *communication behaviour*
- any other methods of teaching/learning?

3. Perceptions about being a student in New Zealand (before coming)

What perceptions did you have of:

- NZ students (eg. attitudes to learning, learning styles, values, behaviour, social life)
- lecturers (eg. attitudes to students, expectations, teaching styles)
- the learning environment (eg. lectures, tutorials, assessment, students/lecturer discussions)
- the way of life in New Zealand

Have these perceptions been confirmed/refuted or challenged?

4. Describe your first experiences in the SMS. (What is a significant memory for you? Describe it.)

NB. For graduates it may be either from when they began their diploma or MMS.

5. SMS learning environment (provide context ie. you have been attending classes in the SMS for nearly five weeks now)

Tell me a story about each of the following:

- a lecture
- a tutorial
- a discussion with a staff member
- a discussion with a New Zealand student
- a written assignment
- a presentation

(Informants may prefer to speak generally about these topics eg. how they find each of these topics, or what experiences they had had with these topics)

Describe what networks you have developed to help you with your learning

6. Social life

- Tell me the ways in which you socialise in your spare time?
- Describe your friendship network(s). In what ways are they important?
- Tell me about some experiences you have had with local New Zealand students. What have you learned from them?
- Have there been any moments when you have come across different ways of behaving or thinking? Describe a significant experience.

Consider here cultural elements such as values, norms, beliefs. See Geertz and Collier and Thomas 'the relations between persons and the narratives which they display in cultural communication'.

7. Key words

Describe the moment when you have had this feeling the most. (What happened? How did you feel? What did you do? Who was involved? What did you say? etc.)

On the light side

- Happiness
- Success (or illumination)
- Friendship
- Approval

On the dark side

- Confusion
- Disapproval
- Fear
- Loneliness
- Helplessness

8. Anything else you would like to tell me about?

Second interview (October-November)

Ask about:

Timetables

Research agreements

Diaries

At the outset - open question

Is there anything you would like to ask me or tell me about? Something bothering you, or that you find confusing, or you're too afraid to ask anyone about. Anything at all? About anything?

How are you thinking/feeling about yourself?

Are you feeling any different now to when you first came? Explain.

How is it all going at the SMS, and with your social life?

Keith's question

What expectations did you have when you first started here? What degree of success? Did you imagine failure? (If so, why?) Are you meeting your goal(s)?

School

a) Courses

Which course(s) have you found the most difficult? Why?

Which have you enjoyed the most? Why?

b) Lectures

- How do you feel about being in large lecture theatres (undergrads)? Or in a small group lecture (post-grads)?
- Teaching styles and equipment: OHTs; handouts of powerpoint presentations; handbooks; using L drive?
- Listening span over 50 minutes?
- Comprehension?
- Concentration? (Are you selective? What helps you to concentrate?)

c) NZ material

- How do you manage with the examples drawn from NZ society which lecturers/tutors and students use in class (eg. examples from the political, social, economic environment; cultural symbols and references)? How do you respond to this?
- How much of this do you understand?
- Do you read the newspapers, watch television news, or listen to the radio, to follow what is happening in NZ? Discuss your impressions.

d) Being an independent thinker and learner

One (graduate) student described how lecturers teach in the SMS:

[The lecturer] just [gives] concepts or just the whole idea, not the contents in detail, so you can think about it. And of course you must read a lot of books after class (LJ).

- What is your response to/experience of this situation?
- Are you becoming better at operating in a critical environment (eg. have you begun to ask more questions in class, engage in discussion or debate, challenge other students and lecturers)?
- Do you think you have become more independent in your thinking and learning? In your essay writing? In what ways?
- Have you become more critical or analytical?

e) Exams

Describe your experience with exams.

Preparation; usefulness of lecture notes, handouts, textbooks, readings; independent study; using previous exam papers; the exam experience itself.

f) Language

- Have you noticed improvements in your language proficiency (eg. reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing, ability to discuss in class, social English)?
- How has your English proficiency enhanced/impeded your communication with others?

Lecturers/tutors (story telling)

- Choose a lecturer/tutor with whom you interacted the most? Provide a reason for your choice. Describe your relationship/experience with this person. Relate an incident/ scenario/discussion that you had with this person. What was interesting or significant about it? What did you learn from it?
- Lecturer/tutor feedback? Is it what you need? Is it enough? Do you understand what lecturers/tutors tell you?
- How do you think the lecturers/tutors see you (ie what do they think about you)? Any changes over the year?

New Zealand students (story telling)

- Describe your experiences of working with NZ students in class (eg. group work, presentations)?

- Describe a significant or memorable experience you have had with an NZ student. What happened? What was interesting or significant about it? What did you learn from this experience?
- How do you think the NZ students see you (ie what do they think of you, or of your ethnic group, ie Chinese)? Any changes over the year?
- Do you feel that you are being treated differently (by NZ students, lecturers, administrators in the School) from other students (eg. NZ or mature students) because you are an international/PR student, or ethnic Chinese?

Learning networks

- Who is your key source of help? Discuss.
- Describe how you have used any of the following, and explain their usefulness to you in helping you to adapt to/cope with the learning environment:
 - friends (which cultures?)
 - SHOP
 - MIST
 - international student tutorials, drop-in and advice clinics
 - lecturers and tutors (both during and outside of office hours - what are their reactions to your requests for help? Any surprises?)
 - advisors in the School
 - me
 - ISO
 - TLDU
- Have you noticed any changes in your coping strategies (this year).
- Describe an experience you had with the following:
 - an essay
 - a presentation
 - a test

(Describe in terms of people involved, the interactions and discussions which took place, any difficulties or differences you encountered. What did you learn from the experience?)

Next section - Questions relating to intercultural communication outside of the School- what happens when two different culture systems interface?

Social networks

- What time in the day do you study? What about at weekends?
- When do you socialise during the week? At weekends? Who with?
- What activities do you do as part of time spent socialising?
- Who is your best friend here? From what culture? Explain how this person is important to you.
- Who are your other friends? Explain how they are important to you.
- Do you have any New Zealand friends? Describe these friendships? What do you like about them? What do you dislike?
- Have you had any housing changes? What have you learned (about New Zealanders and life in NZ) from these different living experiences?
- Who are your neighbours (in the halls of residence, or next to where you live)? What differences do you notice about their ways of living?
- Do you belong to a community? Describe it? How does it compare with your understanding of a New Zealand community (ie. what are the similarities and differences between the two)? Do you feel a part of the New Zealand community (ie. do you have any sense of belonging, do you share some of its values, beliefs, traditions). Or do you feel different? Explain
- Do you feel part of the SMS community? Do you sometimes have feelings of being an outsider within the SMS? What about in the community outside of the SMS?

Cultural practices

- These are some of the behaviours of NZ students which research participants noticed as being different. Explain your thoughts and feelings about these attitudes:
 - respect for parents

- respect for teachers
- drinking
- attitudes towards study
- attitudes to sex/dating ("too open-minded")
- Have you noticed any other behaviours you can add to this list? (eg. social etiquette such as eating; ways of speaking, ways in which males and females interact or treat each other ie. gender issues)?
- What have you learned about the way New Zealanders behave:
 - in the School?
 - in your living and social environments?
- Which behaviours do you approve of? Disapprove of? Explain why?
- Have you changed any previous ideas you had about these people?
- Have you changed any of your ways of behaving or speaking as a result of being here? (Give examples, eg. the way you address lecturers).

Key words

What feelings, situations, experiences do these words suggest? Describe what happened, how you reacted and felt, who was involved, what was said, etc.

Stress/anxiety

Helplessness

Impatience

Sadness

Isolation

Happiness

Hypothetical situation

If you went back to your country and your friends asked you to tell them what your life was like (i) in the SMS, (ii) in NZ, what would you tell them?

A way ahead - Help me!

In the next weeks I would like to be a (participant) observer in your social life outside of the School. In what ways could I share some of your experiences with you of your life here? (ie. What would you feel comfortable with?)

Third interview (June-July 1997)

1. Have you noticed any improvements in your ability to communicate with other New Zealanders? For example, have you found it easier to have discussions with lecturers, speak up in class, talk to New Zealand classmates, or talk to New Zealanders outside of the School? What were some of these conversations, eg. who said what?
2. Have you developed any further friendships since I last interviewed you, eg. with those from the same culture, other international students, other NZ students, other NZers? How have these friendships helped you with your study and your social life here?
3. Do you want to have intercultural experiences with New Zealanders? What are the difficulties associated with these experiences? What are the advantages? What have you learned about life in NZ from these experiences?
4. Have you had any housing changes? What have you learned (about New Zealanders and life in NZ) from these different living experiences?
5. Do you belong to a community? Describe it? How does it compare with your understanding of a New Zealand community (ie. what are the similarities and differences between the two)? Do you feel a part of the New Zealand community (ie. do you have any sense of belonging, do you share some of its values, beliefs, traditions). Or do you feel different?

6. Do you feel part of the School community? Do you sometimes have feelings of being an outsider within the School?
7. Have you noticed any situations where New Zealanders think differently from you in the School and University? Outside of the University? Talk about them.
8. Is there any part of your culture which you think disadvantages you, or makes you feel different, here (at the University, in New Zealand)?
9. Have you had to change in any way to fit in here, to survive here, eg. ways of behaving or speaking?
10. What have you had to give up to study here? (Materially, of your culture, of yourself?)
11. To what extent do you want to become part of/know about NZ culture? What steps do you take to achieve these aims?
12. What part(s) of your culture do you now value as a result of being a student here?
13. Can you describe what New Zealand culture is? How does it compare with yours? What cultural practices have you adopted to fit in here? What cultural practices from your own culture have you maintained here?
14. Can you describe how New Zealanders talk, that is, what is their style of communication, ie. what do they talk about? How do they talk? Do you have any difficulties in communicating with New Zealanders? Have you adopted any of their ways of talking in order to fit in?
15. What do you think are the values of New Zealand students (or New Zealanders)? How do they differ from yours? Do you think that you have changed any of your values as a result of your interactions with New Zealand students (or New Zealanders)? What values (from your own culture) have you kept?
16. Consider the time you have been in New Zealand, eg. arrival, everyday life, trips home, and returning and resuming life in NZ or at the University. Do you feel that your Chineseness, or your New Zealandness, has influenced the way you have thought or behaved during these stages? For example, when do you feel very Chinese? When do you feel like a New Zealander (if at all)? What things irritate(d), what things do(did) you like, during each of these stages?
17. Have you noticed any changes in yourself, for example, your thinking, or behaviour, since you first left home to come here? What circumstances have influenced how you act(ed) or behave(d)?
18. What things do you value as a result of your experiences here? What things do you value less as a result of your experiences here? (ie. what have you gained by being a student here? Consider friendships, exposure to a new culture and a new way of thinking, a new language and communication style, changes to yourself.)
19. If/when you went back to your country and your friends asked you to tell them what you learned from your intercultural experience as a student here (i) in the School, (ii) in NZ, what would (did) you tell them?
20. If you have returned home since being a student here, what impact did your return to your own culture have on you? What did you learn about yourself, eg. about what you value, how you think, how you behave? Do you feel you now no longer fully belong in your own culture?
21. Do you think you have developed another set of cultural values, another identity as a result of living in New Zealand as a student? What are the components of (i) this culture, (ii) this identity?

The research process (Please be honest and open)

a) At the outset

22. What expectations did you have about being a research participant at the beginning of the research period? Have your expectations been met? Or have other things happened?
23. Describe how you saw the role of the researcher, eg. what effect (if any) did differences in age, gender, culture, language, and professional role make?

b) During the research period

24. How did you feel about my presence during classes? Out of classes? In the company of your friends?
25. Did you feel you behaved differently in my presence? (eg. "concentrate harder, show respect because I am older" as one student said.)
26. How did you feel about the idea of an interview? In reality, what were the interviews like for you?
27. Did you want to know more about what I was thinking or doing?
28. Did you feel involved in the research process? Describe your attitudes and feelings about the research.

c) Overview

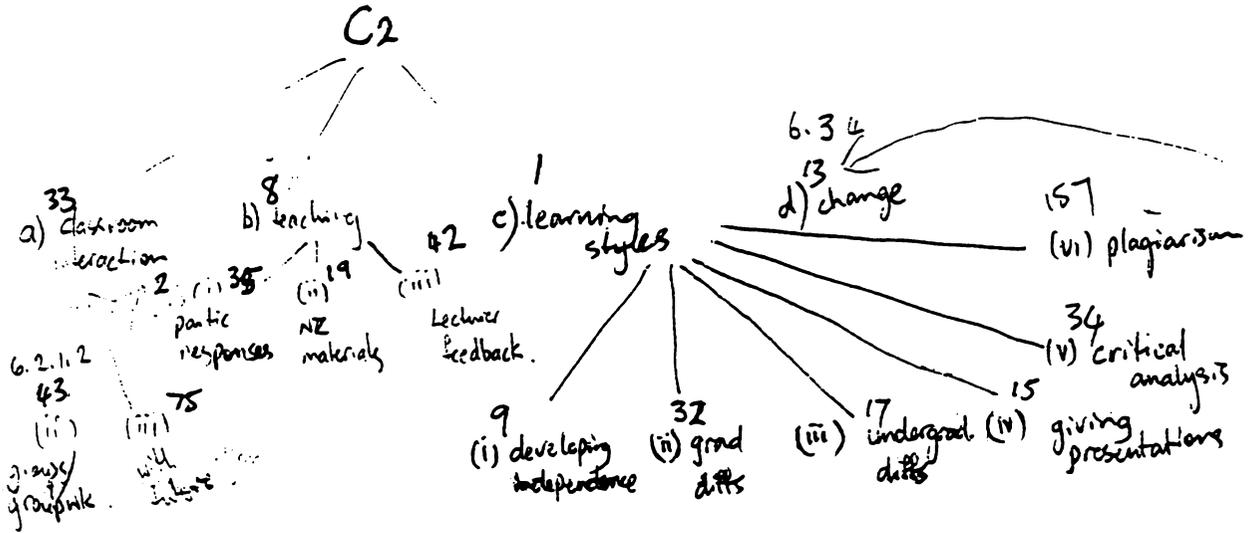
29. What do you like about being a research participant? What do you dislike? Do you regret that you agreed to participate?
30. Is there anything you would like to tell me about this process?
31. What have you learned about yourself from this research process?
32. What have you learned from me (about being a student in the SMS, about living in NZ)?

Appendix E

A sample of the researcher's index tree

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⑧ IC experiences in the learning environment

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① Interface: Learning environment of host culture



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Addendum

This addendum has been added in order to clarify a question that arose in the oral examination of the thesis. The discussion concerns the existence of a power relationship between the researcher and the participants which may have impacted upon the outcomes presented in the findings and conclusions.

It is important to acknowledge that, as a doctoral student (with my own office and computer) and as an adviser to some of the participants, I held a position of authority and, therefore, this position could possibly influence the answers participants gave to my questions. These perceived status differences were present throughout the data collection period. Thus, I had to try to overcome the barriers these differences presented.

One way of approaching these differences in status was to establish trust and rapport with the participants. (This issue is discussed in the report in Chapter 6.1.) I did this by meeting them outside of observation settings, and inviting them to my home. Examples of my success in establishing trust and rapport are evidence in the following situations:

- Permanent resident students, such as FX and LJ (for whom I was not an official adviser), sought help from me about how to critique literature;
- YR shared her pleasures (gaining permanent residence) and pains (frustration at sacrificing her status in China as a revered lecturer in order to be a student again) with me;
- WK confessed that, initially, he'd regretted getting involved in the study, but later was quite happy about contributing; and
- WK, towards the end of the study, said that I should not place too much emphasis on the accuracy of his discussions with me at the outset as he was not entirely trusting of me in the researcher role then.

In fact, the depth of the participants' revelations about their experiences and feelings, as exemplified in their voices in the latter stages of the report, are evidence of the degree to which they were prepared to reveal their experiences to me.

Although I constantly clarified my role as researcher to the participants throughout, they may still have felt some obligation to participate in the research. Ways in which I attempted to clarify my role were in the research process itself. For example, I explained why I was observing and interviewing them, and why I was meeting up with them and wanted to know more about them and their lives beyond the school. However, one participant demonstrated his confusion over my dual role as adviser and researcher. SY thought that advisers researched international students (p. 191). Further, I was rarely visited by the international students in my adviser group who were not participants in my study.

In spite of the existence of perceived power differences between researcher and participants, as this study exemplifies, it is not uncommon for researchers to hold some position within the structure of the organisation they are researching. What is important is that participants are made aware of the researcher's position, and that the associated biases are acknowledged in the research setting. (This was my intention in raising this point on p. 258.)

In conclusion, as reported in the thesis, there are multiple indications that the participants were willing to comply and went beyond providing me with the *right* answers. I believe the efforts I went to in developing trust and rapport, in clarifying the researcher/adviser role, and in the many ways in which participants came to me for support and advice are all ample evidence that power did not unduly influence the findings. However, the role of power in the researcher/participant relationship can never be fully known; it is important that this position is recognised, and readers may want to take this into account when reading the findings and evaluating my conclusions.

Prue Holmes