

International student cultural experience:  
A case study of the Noho Marae Weekend

Irene Teh

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Supervisor: Dr Dale Furbish

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Date: 18/05/2011

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## ABSTRACT

This exploratory study attempts to understand the outcomes of a New Zealand university programme designed to introduce newly enrolled international students to Māori culture. Informed by current knowledge on international student population, culture shock theories, and Māori cultural knowledge, a phenomenological-case study was undertaken to understand international students' cultural experience in the case of the International Student Noho Marae Weekend (ISNMW) organised by Auckland University of Technology. Twelve past participants of the ISNMW were interviewed using semi-structured interview approach to provide data on this topic. Thematic analysis on the data revealed seven emerging themes on the success factors of non-academic initiative in promoting cultural awareness among international students and four themes on helping international students with their social adjustments. Pertinent findings include the concept of *whanau*, the role of administrative staff, and the possible influence of cultural dissonance on international students' cultural awareness and social adaptation. However, findings on the ISNMW's influence on international students' perceptions of New Zealand were mixed. Nevertheless, the findings seem to indicate a new contribution to the ABC Model of Culture Shock.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Personal Journey

Every thesis has a story. I wish to begin with the inspiration that sparked my research on international student's cultural experience. Having embarked on the journey of a sojourner in my late teens, I developed an interest in other cultures. As an international student, I was introduced to a society whose ways of life was different from my own. I still recalled memory of transitions during my first few months of living in the new country. I was introduced to new colloquial phrases, new food flavours to tantalise my taste buds, different ways of doing things, and different values embraced by the local society. These experiences helped shape my understanding of "culture", a term which I will discuss further in Chapter 3. As an international student, I was also immersed in a community of multi-national students who hailed from various other countries. I began to formulate the idea that people from different countries have different social behaviour which are unique to the respective peoples. My life in a multi-national community exposed me to interaction with diverse cultures. The sense of living in a globalised society did not end as an international student. I continued my sojourning with a career in the education sector with responsibilities for the pastoral care for the international students.

I switched roles from being an international student sojourner myself to a mediator assisting new international students from diverse backgrounds to negotiate their adjustments in a new culture. I began to wonder about *1) the influences of initiatives carried out by educational institution on new international student's cultural adaptation, 2) the impact of cultural-based programme on international students' social integration, and 3) the influence of cultural-based programme on the perception of international students towards the country of sojourning*. My curiosity about these questions was unrequited until I took time off from full-time work to pursue research on these ideas.

## 1.2 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Going beyond a personal ideation, I sought relevance for my research quest by reading the body of knowledge on international students' cultural experiences. Beginning this discussion from an institutional point of view, knowledge creation and dissemination has always been a mission of institutions of higher learning. Students pursuing a

university qualification seek to gain knowledge constructed by scholars in the field of study. Many scholars and national leaders believe that higher education grooms the skills and expertises for the social and economic development of the nations (e.g. Brennan, 2008; Cunnane, 2010; Jacobs & Ploeg, 2006; Weerts, 2007). However, many students enrolling in higher education are not aware of a university's role for also promoting cultural heritage and world peace. Apart from the more notable role to educate people for sustainable economic and social development, UNESCO (1998) highlights on its website that,

Each higher education institution should define its mission...base it on an awareness of the fact that higher education is essential for any country or region to reach the necessary level of... cultural creativity nourished by better knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage, ...and internal and international harmony and peace.

In one UNESCO forum, Thomas (2004) further elaborates the cultural mission in light of the urgency caused by globalisation,

(T)hat one of the principal tasks facing the future of higher education, especially in the emergent economies of the world, is to achieve an acceptable, integrated yet dynamic balance between new knowledge cultures, and existing cultural knowledge, (including local or indigenous), so that cultural identities and societal continuity can be maintained and enriched, the catalyst for the enrichment being globalisation and internationalism. (p. 3)

To strike the balance suggested by Thomas (2004), institutions of higher learning have a vital part to play to transmit their respective national culture, and to promote appreciation of cultural diversity to the students knocking on their doors. A strong sense of cultural identity coupled with intercultural sensitivity becomes an important life skill as more and more people are crossing cultural borders each day. Borders crossing occur daily through physical movement from geographical location to geographical location, and via long distance communication with international acquaintances. Therefore, amidst all the important reasons to graduate with a qualification, international students will also find themselves immersed in an opportunity to experience cultural exchanges through the learning of local culture and the gaining of awareness on efforts to promote international harmony.

The call by UNESCO (1998) on the cultural function of university synchronises with New Zealand Ministry of Education's international student report's (Deloitte, 2008)

suggestion for educational institutions to promote cultural awareness among international students in the country. Although there are many studies on international students in institutions of higher learning in New Zealand, the bulk of the studies are in the areas of teaching and learning (e.g. Campbell & Li, 2008; Selvarajah, 2006) and social integration (e.g. G. H. Kim, 2006; Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009). Only one New Zealand study was found that is dedicated to the investigation on cultural awareness initiative among international students (Deakins, 2009). Therefore, it will be useful to look at a cultural awareness initiative organised by the department of international student support services as the organisational arm promoting cultural exchange among international students and locals. To take a closer look at this knowledge gap, I will first talk about the international student support services, and then followed by an overview of programmes conducted for international students.

While chairing the Board of Directors of the Council of International Educational Exchange, Charles (1999) comments that the opening of the United States “campuses to the world continues and expands the traditional role of student affairs” (p. 15). This growing significance of international student support office taking place in the United States is concurrently emerging in other parts of the world with various discussions around this office. For example, Bonnet (2004) presents a case study on the challenges of international student affairs practitioners in one of the Philippines’ institutions of higher education, Humfrey (2008) reports on the present condition and future expectations of international student services in the United Kingdom, and Seow (2006) shares insights on the changing roles of international student advisors at an Australian university. As the international student population continues to soar around the world (OECD, 2009), the need for international student support services becomes critical. Universities now have weightier responsibility not only to cater to the welfare of local students, but also the additionally substantial headcounts of the international students enrolled in their campuses. Moreover, needs specific to the foreign student necessitate that student support services to be enhanced.

In Wood and Kia (2000), an overview is given on the core purposes of the international student support services. Wood and Kia (2000) are careful to remind readers that the list they provide is looking at the services in general, acknowledging that the functions of international student support services “can vary greatly” (p. 56) depending on the respective institutions’ organisational structures. The main scopes of services identified

are i) helping international students to transit into the institution's educational system, ii) giving continuous support in cultural and academic adjustment, iii) organising social events for the international student community, and iv) facilitating administrative matters pertaining to student visa processing. These functions are in addition to the liaising work to connect international students to the other student services patronised by the local students. Indeed, the plethora of services offered by any international student support office can be extensive at times, ranging from administrative to pastoral to academic. The office is the international students' main channel of contact with the university's administration. For an international student who needs assistance, the international student support office is the place to go when he or she does not know where to go.

Therefore, international student support offices are charged with a strategic mission to foster cultural awareness in the international student community. The international student support staff are strategically linked to the international students because they have extensive contact with the international students and they are responsible for their cultural adjustment. As the division taking care of the well-being of sojourning students, organising programmes during the initial adjustment stage of new international students can be of high priority. It will be informative to the research community and the practitioners to know the impact of a cultural awareness programme organised for newly arrived international students on their initial adjustment.

In a study on support given to international students, Munoz and Munoz (2000) investigate the services provided by the International Center of a college in the United States. Six hundred international students participated in this study. Munoz and Munoz (2000) find that the needs met by the centre's services are in the areas of health and safety, university services, banking, immigration advising, and registration; all of which pertain to the administrative aspect of international student support services. Yet, questions remain from Munoz and Munoz's (2000) study on international students' experiences of the pastoral aspect of services provided by the international student support office.

In Mayhew, Vanderlinden, and Kim (2010), an extensive empirical study on 14,208 students across 35 institutions of higher education in the United States was carried out to investigate the impact of orientation programme on students. Their results provided

strong evidence that supports the importance of orientation programme in assisting international students' transition to the academic demands of universities. However, on the aspect of social adaptation, Mayhew et al. (2010) strikingly point out, "International students were significantly less likely than White, US students to credit orientation with helping them to adjust socially" (p. 339). This is a matter of concern because cultural adjustment and successful integration into campus life and local community will result in a more satisfactory and meaningful sojourning experience for international students (De Leeuw, Nicholson, & Gao, 2009; Richard & Margaret, 1986). This finding supported the International Student Survey Report's (Deloitte, 2008) recommendation to "publish case studies of those practices that are proving to be effective" (p. 112) on cultural awareness initiatives among the international students. Mayhew et al. (2010) finding of international student's poor social integration on campus suggests that insufficient cultural intervention has taken place to address the needs of international students in this area. They go on with the qualification and recommendation that,

The current study does not take into account whether the international students participated in orientation programming specific to their needs (e.g., an international student orientation program); some institutions have dedicated offices, programs, and staff with the primary focus of aiding in international students' transition and success. Institutions that lack the dedicated resources for international students, however, may be challenged to provide appropriate orientation programming, as well as staff members who are aware of the nuances of international students' adjustments to their new environment. This research suggests a need to reevaluate how well orientation programs meet the needs of this population. (Mayhew, et al., 2010, p. 339)

Mayhew et al.'s (2010) alert us to the need for greater understanding on programmes that will assist international students' transition.

In a recent study conducted at Victoria University in Wellington, De Leeuw et al. (2009) provide insight on an orientation programme organised for a specific group of international students who were scholarship recipients of the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZ Aid). The orientation programme, called NZ Aid Prestart, had the objectives to assist recently-arrived NZ Aid students with their "social/cultural adjustment and academic preparation" (De Leeuw, et al., 2009, p. 2). In one of the recommendations, De Leeuw et al. (2009) highlight the social/cultural segment was limited in that although it "covered topics such as Kiwi culture, culture shock, and living with dependents, most of these were information-oriented instead of

strategy-oriented” (p. 5) programme. The study, however, does not provide outline on strategy for such programme.

Munoz and Munoz (2000), Mayhew et al. (2010), and De Leeuw et al. (2009) provide an impetus to look at a cultural programme organised by international student support services as an urgent contribution to the body of knowledge. Internationally, there is a lack of studies on cultural awareness programme organised for international students (Mayhew, et al., 2010; Munoz & Munoz, 2000), while locally, there is a need for more in-depth understanding on workable strategy and impact of such programme. Hence, this study on a cultural programme organised for the international students in Auckland University of Technology (AUT) will serve to further the research on factors present in a cultural programme which influences international students’ cultural and social adjustment.

Moreover, I took into consideration the significance this research will bring to the immediate international student community in AUT of which I am a member of. I dialogued with three other international students on the possible concerns and benefits of a research around a cultural programme organised for international students, the International Student Noho Marae Weekend (ISNMW). Their responses were encouraging and welcoming. They shared the same sentiments on having interest to understand the cultural and social adaptation journey of international students. They agreed that the ISNMW was a possible context for the study I proposed.

Concurrently, I sought out the advice of Kitea Tipuna, the Equity Policy Advisor from the Planning Directorate of the Vice-Chancellor’s Department at AUT. Tipuna drafted the programme of the ISNMW. Together with Elberta Chan, Team Leader of AUT’s International Student Support Services, they proposed the first ISNMW. Both Tipuna and Chan have been involved in organising the ISNMW for new international students since 2001. Tipuna (2010) welcomed the proposed research and said that there had been no research being done on the ISNMW. Tipuna (2010) said this would be a contribution to the international student community in AUT. This research will serve to inform the international student community on cultural and social exchanges in one of AUT’s programme.

In summary, this study was undertaken with the following rationale:



- i. To contribute to the lack of study, at large, on programmes organised to help international students with their cultural and social adjustment;
- ii. To inform the existing gap of information on cultural-based initiatives carried out by New Zealand educational institutions;
- iii. To present a resonating research that will inspire others to think about their own cultural and social experience (especially among fellow international students who are conveniently living in an environment which is culturally different from their own); and
- iv. To answer to the questions I have as a practitioner facilitating the adjustment of international students in a new country.

This research will be meaningful to provide exploratory insights to the international education scene in New Zealand from the angle of a cultural awareness programme.

### **1.3 Scope and Limitations**

Since this research is positioned within of the ISNMW, one of the cultural-based initiatives organised by AUT, the scope of this study is confined within the specific context of this programme. Although there is a tendency to enlarge this scope to cover more possible cases from across universities or between different countries, this research is intended to focus the research effort in order to take a close look into a scenario that facilitates international students' cultural experiences. This research is also exploratory in nature as a platform to promote inquiry on the topic of learning of new culture from the angle of international student services which currently has limited knowledge.

This study is limited in generalisability across the range of cultural-based programmes being carried out by different educational institutions. This is in recognition of the complexity of differing programme characteristics, such programme objectives, types of activities, and duration, that may influence international students' perceptions on different cultural-based programmes. Another limitation of this study is that the participants recruited may not be reflective of the demographics of the population of international students who participated in the ISNMW. Finally, readers are cautioned that, although conscientious effort was taken to bracket my assumptions and experience, this study may be influenced by the researcher's bias.

## 1.4 Thesis Outline

Presented here in **Chapter 1** is the context for this research, beginning with the description of my journey in starting this inquiry, followed by the rationale and significance of the study, and explanation of the scope and limitations which this study is framed.

**Chapter 2** provides the background literature of the international student landscape in the recent years globally and in New Zealand. It goes on to outline the importance of international student in relation to New Zealand's international education agenda and how this study will play a part in contributing knowledge on international students in this country. The literature presented in this chapter frames the research questions of this study.

**Chapter 3** is the literature review which attempts to relate the context of this research to the existing knowledge on cultural shock theories and Māori cultural concept. This chapter provides the theoretical underpinnings that guide this research.

**Chapter 4** describes the research methodology adopted in the study. This chapter seeks to explain the epistemological assumptions of the research approaches and the philosophical principles applied in the different stages of the study.

**Chapter 5** furnishes the research findings thematically based on the themes that emerged from the data analysis process. The data gathered through semi-structured interviews from twelve participants of the ISNMW will be presented as descriptive vignettes to illustrate the themes identified.

**Chapter 6** discusses the themes emerged from Chapter 5 and triangulates them with existing scholastic knowledge related to the topic. It identifies the inferences of the findings in this research.

**Chapter 7** concludes with recommendations on further research that can be built from this study. It also suggests strategic potential practitioners can adopt to facilitate cultural awareness programme among the international students.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

This chapter will provide background literature to inform on the topic international students. I will give a global overview of the growth of the international student community in recent years, followed by the surge in the international student population in New Zealand and the relevance of the nation's International Education Agenda to this community.

### **2.1 International Students in the World**

The concept of an international student can be traced back to 272 – 22 BC in the accounts of travelling scholars to the earliest tertiary institution (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Ward et al. (2001) highlight, in spite of this long history, systematic research on the international education phenomenon only began to emerge after World War II. The issues associated with student crossing borders after World War II were fuelled by the flexing of political muscles between the United States and the former Soviet Union in the domain of education during the Cold War (Knight & De Wit, 1995; Varghese, 2008). One of the academic studying Cold War diplomacy, Bu (1999) comments, “The United States government made new cultural policies in terms of Cold War political concerns and relied extensively on private resources for the implementation of cultural diplomacy via educational exchange”(p. 393). Similarly, the Soviet Union offered to train students from Asia, Africa and Latin America under the wings of its educational institutions (Friedman, 2010). Sponsoring educational exchange became an extension of the Cold War nations' apparatus to influence the changing political landscape that was taking place among the many post-World War II countries who newly gained their independence.

In addition, the Colombo Plan, the Asian economic and social development programme (New Zealand Development Assistance [NZDA], 2001), further facilitated growth in the number of international students growth post-World War II. The idea of the Colombo Plan was conceived in 1950 during the British Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in January in the city of Colombo (Oakman, 2010). The Colombo Plan is a training and technical aid programme sponsored by the Western countries to advance the development of the South and South-East Asia nations (Tarling, 2004). This plan

too originated from a political motivation to curb communism from spreading into the South and South-East Asia regions. However, unlike the efforts taken by the United States which were more open in countering the influence of communism, the Colombo Plan was promoted “as a symbol of non-political union between Asia and the West” (Oakman, 2010, p. 75). This politically neutral image was meant to manage the beneficiary nations who were wearied of being caught in between the ideological battle during the Cold War. Nevertheless, the Colombo Plan has been recognised as one of the key initiatives which contributed to the increase of international student movement around the world (Tarling, 2004; Ward, et al., 2001).

However, with the cessation of the Cold War and the end of the reconstruction phase of post-World War II, academic and economic reasons eclipsed political motives for promoting international education opportunities (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Before the 1990s international student mobility was heavily subsidised by government funding. In contrast, post-1990 international students are mostly self-financing (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Tarling, 2004). This was brought about by the growing numbers of students coming from developing nations seeking for higher education opportunities overseas (Altbach, 2004). Many students are now going abroad because of the under-resourced universities and shortage of higher education places in many developing countries (Yang, 2010). Recent major influences on the high demand of higher education overseas are motivation for personal development and intention towards migration (Rivza & Teichler, 2007).

Growth in demand for overseas educational opportunities generated a complementary trend to internationalise universities across the world. Jackson (2008) proposes that institutions of higher learning are internationalising themselves to prepare their graduates in response to the impact of globalisation. The internationalisation of educational institutions has been defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). Examples of initiatives of internationalisation are sending students abroad for short-term programme, admitting foreign students on campus, and collaboration on teaching and learning with overseas institutions. Internationalisation can also be seen as an extension of the conventional reason to attract the crème of intellectual talents from overseas to promote the prestige of a university (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Institutions of higher education also see themselves benefitting economically when international students brought in US\$28 billion in revenue in 2005 for the top five exporting countries (Bashir, 2007). Between 1999 to 2005, each of these five countries, namely United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, provided education services to international students that amount to hundreds of millions of US dollars (refer to **Error! Reference source not found.**). In his report, Bashir (2007) highlights that the total trade contribution of education services utilised by foreign students has increased significantly in all five countries from 1999 to 2005. The United States and the United Kingdom both experienced around 50% growth, while Australia, Canada and New Zealand more than doubled their trade services to foreign students.

**Table 1.**  
*Export of Education Services (Foreign Students) by Main Exporting Countries, 1999-2005 (US \$ million)*

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Percentage increase 99-04/05
Australia	2038	2259	2528	2897	3925	4872	5563	173
New Zealand	273	257	343	632	925	998	1000	266
Canada	568	615	699	784	1014	1268	1573	177
United Kingdom	4101	3766	3921	3891	4709	5627	6064	48
United States	9620	10350	11480	12630	13310	13640	14120	47
Total of 5 countries	16600	17247	18971	20834	23883	26405	28320	71

*Note.* From *Trends in international trade in higher education: Implications and options for developing countries*, by S. Bashir, 2007, Washington, DC: The World Bank, p.19. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/WPS6\\_Intl\\_trade\\_higherEdu.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/WPS6_Intl_trade_higherEdu.pdf) Copyright 2007 by The World Bank. For all countries except UK, data are taken from “education-related travel services” in IMF (2006) - BOPS/IIP. For UK, data are from Office of National Statistics (2006); original values are in British Pounds and converted into US Dollars using exchange rate data from IMF (2006) *World Economic Outlook*. Total for 5 countries in 2005 includes author’s estimate of 1 billion for New Zealand.

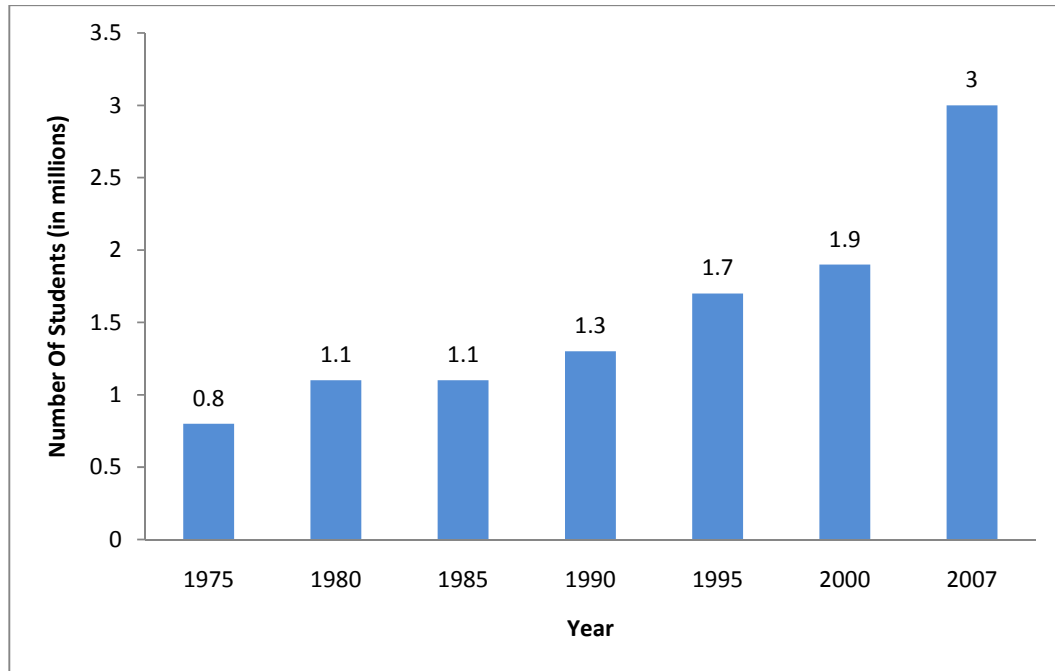
This supply and demand dynamic between international students and universities has been welcomed at the national level with changes in government policies. Governments have supported agencies that promote their countries’ universities abroad in an effort to share a piece of the lucrative pie in international education. Examples of such agencies are the EducationUSA (Institute of International Education, n.d), the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UK Council for International Student Affairs, n.d), the

IDP Education Australia Limited (IDP Education Pty Ltd, n.d), and the Education New Zealand (Education New Zealand, n.d). Furthermore, immigration policies were adjusted in the case of New Zealand, Australia, and Canada to tap the talent pool of international students graduating from their universities to meet the shortage of skilled labour (Tarling, 2004). But in the United States, after the September 11, 2001 attack, we also saw the tightening of student visa restrictions entering the country (Altbach, 2004). Nevertheless, countries with the capacity to provide higher education places for international students are supportive of the expansion of international education.

In recent years, signing of free trade agreements based on the World Trade Organisation and the General Agreement on Trade and Services guidelines have further promoted the supply for the growing number of international students to be met in more innovative ways (Moutsios, 2009). Many institutions that are supportive of international education are exporting their education programmes overseas by setting up offshore campuses, offering distance learning programmes and partnering with institutions in countries with high demand for higher education. Literature reviewed suggests this phenomenon has caused the emergent of different variations of the term international student. For example, Healey (2008), Naidoo (2009), and Smith (2009) use the term international students to include foreign students recruited in a branch campus located in the foreign students' home country. This reference to international students is often found in research on offshore internationalisation effort by institution of higher learning. International students are also referred to as foreign students admitted into distance learning programme where the students and instructors interact while they reside in separate locations (McDonald, Berg, & Lai, 2008; Smyth, 2005). This spectrum of international students pursues a degree from a foreign educational establishment in the comfort and convenience of not having to leave home. At this point, I would like to clarify the term international students used in this study refers to the conventional definition of foreign students who moved geographically away from their own country to a new country for the purpose of education.

Given the promotion of international students from different fronts, it is not surprising that the post-1990 conditions for international student growth were even more compelling than before. Motivations of individual students, institutional ambitions and governmental repositioning complement one another to accelerate the expansion of the international student population. Movement of students seeking education in a foreign

country saw a rapid growth since the 1970s as presented in *Figure 1*. The number of international students around the world has almost quadrupled since 1975. In another account, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2009) states that international students in the tertiary sector has a 41% surge between 1999 and 2004.



**Figure 1. Number of Students Enrolled Outside their Country of Citizenship 1975 – 2007.** Adapted from Long term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship, by OECD, 2009, *Education at a glance 2009: OECD Indicators*, Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), p.313. Retrieved February 18, 2011 from [http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_43630976\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_43630976_1_1_1_1,00.html) Copyright 2009 by OECD.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Caruana and Spurling's (2007) selective literature review notes that research interest on international students has doubled since 2002 when compared to 1995. Caruana and Spurling's (2007) survey of conference papers and journal articles dating from January 1995 to March 2006 inclusive, identifies 116 works reporting on emerging perspectives related to international students in higher education. However, much of the research on international students in higher education is predominantly targeting academic and economic concerns (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). These aspects of research popularity are not surprising, considering the fact that international students are poised to gain an academic qualification in the land of sojourning and that this phenomenon is a multi-billion dollars industry in the five main receiving countries: United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New

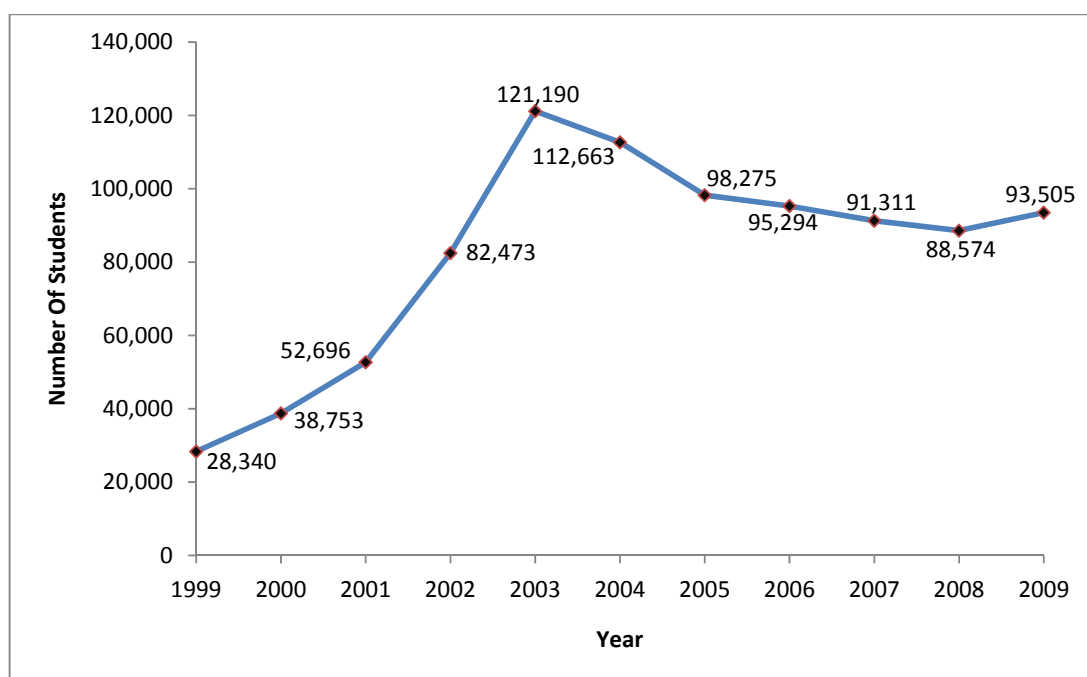
Zealand (Bashir, 2007). Scholarly attention on the international student community will likely increase in anticipation of the projected economic benefits from growth of this group to 8 million by 2025 (Jackson, 2008).

## **2.2 International Students in New Zealand**

In parallel, New Zealand's international student population size took a leap at the beginning of the twentieth-first century (refer to Figure 2). The yearly enrolment of international students in New Zealand has hovered around the 100,000 since 2003. This is a significant figure compared to 1999 when the population of international students was less than 30,000. New Zealand has also been recognised as one of the top five countries receiving international students in terms of trade amount (Bashir, 2007). Although the 2005 revenue generated by the inflow of international students in New Zealand was estimated at US\$1 billion (Bashir, 2007), Tarling (2004) contends that the presence of international students here should be viewed in a larger perspective by looking at New Zealand's policy on international student since the 1950s.

Historically, immigration policies have been the gatekeeper to the admission of international students onto the shores of New Zealand (Tarling, 2004). After the World War II, New Zealand participated in the Colombo Plan to aid neighbouring developing countries, in particular the Pacific and the Southeast Asian nations. New Zealand benefitted from the Colombo Plan through the goodwill and promotion of good bilateral relationship with the Colombo Plan beneficiaries. New Zealand only began imposing higher fees on international students in 1980 at an arbitrary figure of \$1500 (an amount that was insufficient to cover the full cost of education). This fee increment was necessary to regulate the inflow of international students which, at that time, was causing New Zealand to experience a shortage of university spaces for local students. When the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada raised the fees imposed on international students in the 1970s, many self-supporting international students changed their educational sojourning to New Zealand due to the cheaper university fee. A few years prior to 1980, other major English speaking countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, had begun to impose full fee on inbound students to manage the similar issue of shortage of university spaces for local students.





**Figure 2. Number of International Students Enrolled in New Zealand 1999 – 2009.** Data on 1999 – 2002 adapted from Foreign fee-paying students in New Zealand July 1999 – July 2004, by International Division and Data Management and Analysis, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005, *The New Zealand international education sector: Trends from 1999-2003*, p. 6. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/15260/the\\_new\\_zealand\\_in\\_ternational\\_education\\_sector\\_trends\\_from\\_1999\\_to\\_2004](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/15260/the_new_zealand_in_ternational_education_sector_trends_from_1999_to_2004) Copyright 2005 by New Zealand Ministry of Education. Data on 2003 – 2009 adapted from International enrolments by provider groups, by International Division, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2010, *International student enrolments in New Zealand 2003-2009*, p. 3. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/15260/76293> Copyright 2010 by New Zealand Ministry of Education.

In 1990, international student full fee paying policy was introduced in New Zealand. The consistent upward trend of the international student population and the subsidised fee they were paying for their education in New Zealand had resulted in a substantial financial expenditure for the government. When the boom of Chinese international students began to flood overseas institutions of learning, New Zealand reaped economically from its full fee paying policy for international students. Bashir (2007) reports that New Zealand received US\$1 billion worth of contribution towards its gross domestic product (GDP) in 2005 from international education.

At present, New Zealand, together with other nations around the world, is suffering from the shortage of skilled workers as the baby boomers are retiring from the pool of global talents (Hawthorne, 2010). New Zealand is attempting to attract workers from the constricting labour force who are highly mobile. In this respect, New Zealand has

strategically leveraged on the presence of international students by offering study-to-work visas in order to retain the talents nurtured from local universities. These changes were made in New Zealand immigration policy in 2005 (International Division, 2007). In addition to immediate benefits to the local economy, international students have been identified as potential economic contributors to New Zealand's future in the highly competitive global economy. Therefore, in 2007, the New Zealand government drew up the International Education Agenda 2007 – 2012 to provide a more focused approach to manage the effects of internationalisation of education.

### **2.3 International Education Agenda 2007-2012**

In the broader picture, the International Education Agenda 2007-2012 (“the Agenda”) was strategized to promote New Zealand government's priorities of strengthening national identity and fuelling economic transformation (International Division, 2007). As a nation building strategy, international education facilitates New Zealanders' interactions with a globalised world, learning about others and learning about “who they are as New Zealanders and their nation's place in the world” (International Division, 2007, p. 2). This thrust is aimed at grooming young New Zealanders to be world-ready citizens, able to flourish in a global economy. As an economic transformation strategy, international education is one of New Zealand's engagements to build a sustainable economy that will benefit from globalisation, both in terms of monetary gain and access to innovative and quality workforce.

The Agenda is built upon two priorities, articulated through four overarching goals which are measured by seventeen clear outcomes (*Figure 3*). Of the four goals in the Agenda, “Goal 2: International students are enriched by their education and living experiences in New Zealand” has a direct implication on the well-being of international students in the country. Goal 2 underlines the importance for international students to receive a satisfactory education experience in New Zealand. It is also deemed that a satisfactory studying and living experience will result in the recruitment of skilled migrants among New Zealand international graduates and the nurturance of international alumni with goodwill towards New Zealand. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZDA, 2001) records many New Zealand Colombo Plan alumni who reached the peak of their professions in their home countries and internationally,

GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR NEW ZEALAND			
National Identity		Economic Transformation	
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES			
<b>Goal 1</b> New Zealand students are equipped to thrive in an inter-connected world.	<b>Goal 2</b> International students are enriched by their education and living experiences in New Zealand.	<b>Goal 3</b> Domestic education providers are strengthened, academically and financially, through international linkages.	<b>Goal 4</b> New Zealand receives wider economic and social benefits.
KEY OUTCOMES SOUGHT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New Zealand students have well developed global knowledge, especially of Asia and the Pacific rim.</li><li>● They understand and respect other cultures, and contribute to the good of national and international communities.</li><li>● They have the skills to succeed in multi-cultural and multi-lingual settings at home and overseas.</li><li>● They are enterprising and outward-looking, and their identity as New Zealanders is strengthened by their international experiences and interactions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● International students are welcomed, receive effective orientation guidance, exemplary pastoral care, and learning support.</li><li>● They succeed academically and increasingly choose to continue their studies in New Zealand.</li><li>● They are well integrated into our education institutions and communities.</li><li>● Employers benefit from their talents, supported by responsive immigration policies.</li><li>● They become ongoing advocates for New Zealand, facilitating future academic/economic connections.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The academic and research performance of New Zealand education providers is further strengthened through international linkages.</li><li>● International education programmes are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– high quality</li><li>– strategic</li><li>– well aligned with providers' missions</li><li>– diversified</li><li>– innovative</li><li>– sustainable</li><li>– well managed.</li></ul></li><li>● New Zealand school and tertiary qualifications are internationally recognised and valued for study and employment purposes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New Zealand's international relationships are further strengthened through educational partnerships.</li><li>● New Zealand research benefits from increased international collaboration, funding, and commercialisation.</li><li>● There is greater uptake of our educational intellectual property and services overseas.</li><li>● International education and other New Zealand business activities are well linked.</li><li>● There is sustainable growth in New Zealand's export education earnings, with beneficial flow-on to local communities.</li></ul>

**Figure 3. The International Education Agenda 2007 – 2012.** Adapted from *The International Education Agenda*, by International Division, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007, *The international education agenda: A strategy for 2007 - 2012*, p. 9. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/InternationalEducation/PolicyStrategy/11950%20ie%20agenda%20final%20download%20100807.pdf> Copyright 2007 by New Zealand Ministry of Education.

including a Director for the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, a former university Vice Chancellor, cabinet ministers and also a recipient of the World Food Prize. The Ministry comments that New Zealand is now benefitting from these Colombo Plan international students' positive studying experience. During the fiftieth anniversary of the Colombo Plan in Wellington in 2001, Professor Datuk Mazlan Othman, a past recipient of the Colombo Plan scholarship to study in New Zealand's University of Otago, shared in her speech (as cited in NZDA, 2001),

I was able to explore the many different facets of Kiwi life. ...I am personally very grateful for the opportunities that were afforded me through the Colombo Plan –

for the opportunities to get to know and to love New Zealand and to become a “Kiwi”. ...I understand that there were over 35,000 international students in New Zealand last year alone (2000)... If these students can enjoy the experiences that I was privileged to receive 30 years ago, you will have 35,000 new ambassadors for New Zealand. They are a valuable asset. Nurture them carefully. (pp.15-16)

Similarly, four other former Colombo Plan scholars also expressed positive impressions of the country gained during their education in New Zealand (NZDA, 2001).

Reciprocally, NZDA (2001) also presents three of the many New Zealanders who were brought into contact with Asian students through the Colombo Plan. The three stories capture fond memories of New Zealanders’ encounters with international students. In one of the instance, “Magaret (a New Zealand student) points out that the links created under the (Colombo) Plan have been strong enough to last not only a lifetime for those involved, but also into the next generation...” (NZDA, 2001, p. 26). While Darryl, another New Zealander, says “these sorts of encounters, as well as the more unremarkable day-to-day contact with people from other countries, opened my eyes to the world beyond” (NZDA, 2001, p27).

To monitor the progress of achieving Goal 2, international student experience surveys have been carried out in 2003 (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) and 2007 (Deloitte, 2008). These surveys capture a longitudinal picture of international students’ experiences in the country. The findings from these surveys help to inform institutions, agencies and the government on the initiatives being carried out to enrich international students’ learning experience. The areas covered by the survey are: 1) motivation for making New Zealand the choice of educational pursuit, 2) living conditions in New Zealand, 3) academic experience, 4) services and facilities provided by educational institution; 5) providence of emotional and social support or help, 6) interaction with New Zealanders, 7) overall satisfaction with life in New Zealand, and 8) future plans to further study or reside in New Zealand.

Overall, the international students surveyed in 2007 indicated higher satisfaction than those surveyed in 2003. The later survey findings are encouraging indicators that New Zealand is on track in fulfilling Goal 2 of the Agenda. However, the 2007 report concludes that more can be done to further enrich international student’s experience. The key recommendations centred around cultural engagement with both local and international students, interaction between New Zealanders and international students, publicity of educational services and facilities, and research on understanding Chinese

students' expectations (Chinese students in particular because they are the most populous nationality among the international students). Of the recommendations given, cultural engagement was highlighted in half of the suggestions compiled by Deloitte's (2008) report.

## **2.4 Contextualising the Current Study**

Cultural difference between sojourning students and the host community has been thought as a common reason for affecting academic and living adjustment (L. Brown, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2010; Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010; McLeod & Wainwright, 2009; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Tran, 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the recommendation of the Deloitte (2008) report is,

The Ministry of Education in partnership with Education New Zealand could initiate a stocktake of what initiatives are currently being undertaken by education providers to assist cultural awareness in education institutions and publish case studies of those practices that are proving to be effective. (p. 112)

Given that cultural adaptation is a crucial factor of international students' experience, this study serves to address the first research question which addresses the issue of cultural awareness:

### ***Research Question 1: How do international students perceive their cultural experience at a cultural-based programme?***

On the same note of enriching international students' experience in New Zealand, Deloitte (2008) also highlights, "The research findings indicate that on the whole international students would like to have more New Zealand friends and spend more time with New Zealanders" (p. 88). Paradoxically, international students have been found to cling on to co-national students while desiring to have New Zealander friends. Study by L. Brown (2009) suggests that international students resort to co-national students for comfort of familiarity as a form of support from homesickness. Co-national students are often confidante who will be able to better empathise with the problems while sojourning. Additionally, Montgomery and McDowell (2009) find the support within the international student community themselves helps international students to advance academically and build social capital. This latest finding shed new light to the

previous deficit model that suggests that when international students stick together, they tend to lose out and become isolated.

This predisposition among the international students is not new, considering the fact that more than thirty years ago, Bochner and colleagues have indicated that international students tend to seek friendship with students of the similar cultural background (Bochner, Buker, & McLeod, 1976). However, Bochner and colleagues are aware of the need of balance when, in a later part of the same paper, they conclude, “...some compromise between the two extremes of cultural immersion (with students who are culturally different) on the one hand, and insulation (among co-nationality students) on the other seems desirable” (Bochner, et al., 1976, p. 289). To date, this dilemma on the choice of friendship between what is desired among the locals and what is actually happening has yet to be resolved.

It would seem reasonable to suggest that institutional initiatives to promote cultural awareness is a walk on the tight rope of balance between the extreme of promoting cultural awareness and giving room for social familiarity. Scholarly works identified earlier have shown that learning of the local culture and friendship with members of the host society will help international student’s adjustment. At the same time, sufficient data have been found to indicate the social support needed by international students from within their own community. This dichotomy offer us a strong proposition to conduct by empirical studies on cultural initiates which demonstrate the dual nature of promoting cultural awareness as well as allowing for international students to socialise among themselves. Thus, it will be invaluable to gain insights on a programme which provides for international students to socialise among themselves and yet at the same time facilitates social adjustment into local communities through the promotion of cultural awareness. This will inform the second research question,

***Research Question 2: How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their social adjustment into the university community and the general local community?***

Extending the study on this programme further, this research will also seek to understand the programme’s influence on international students’ perceptions of New Zealand as an outcome of the promotion of cultural awareness.

***Research Question 3: How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their perceptions of New Zealand?***

In searching for a study on local initiative promoting cultural awareness among international students, one study was found. Deakins (2009) reports on an intercultural understanding initiative carried out in a class in an institution of higher learning in New Zealand. The quantitative and qualitative study involved eleven postgraduate participants (six international students and five domestic students). Deakins (2009) suggests that the pedagogy used in the class setting to promote cultural understanding had been an effective vehicle in raising participants' awareness on cultural diversity and influencing participants' attitudes and outlook on managing multicultural issues. Although Deakins (2009) provides a useful insight on a local initiative similar to the intention of this study, this exploratory study approach cultural awareness initiative from a pedagogical context of teaching and learning. This adds on to the scholarly discussion on incorporating cultural awareness in teaching as an effort of internationalising educational institutions (Campbell & Li, 2008; Currie, 2007; Y. Zhou, Jingal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008; Y. R. Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005).

However, much is still missing about the broad range of cultural awareness initiatives both internationally and in New Zealand, such as a cultural exchange programme set in the context of the host culture. The context of this study was framed in light of the literature showing the relevance to investigate a type of cultural awareness programme organised for international students so as to contribute to the gap of knowledge on such a programme internationally, and the urgency to provide information to New Zealand practitioners locally. Much can be gained from looking at the ISNMW as a unique case; this research will go in depth on an exploratory study to unravel on a topic which is rarely discussed. To enable this study to build on firm philosophical underpinnings, the next chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks which inform this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ON CULTURE

The purpose of this literature review is to provide philosophical groundings and inform the research on the topic of culture in relation to international students. This chapter will begin with an examination of the notion of culture, followed by the exploration of the culture shock phenomenon experienced by international students, and finally presentation on the concept of marae in Māori culture.

### 3.1 Culture

Many authors (e.g. Bosselman, Fernsten, Manning, & Kisseleff, 1989; Burn, 1980; Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Jackson, 2004) suggest that various forms of cultural interaction occur when students study overseas. A literature search revealed many different conventions exist in the definition of the word “culture”. To date, there is no conclusive agreement among scholars on how this abstract jargon should be represented in absolute terms (e.g. Deardorff, 2006; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Wright, 1998).

Interestingly, at a time when burgeoning scholastic interest on culture developed in the mid-twentieth century, Kroeber and Kluckhohn identified 164 definitions and terms about culture up to the 1950s. Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s (1952) extensive work provide a classic review of this contestable term. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) categorise definitions of culture into six groups:

- i. Descriptive – Authors of this category of definition define culture comprehensively by explicitly listing all aspects of the idea of culture the respective authors have. An example is Taylor’s definition made in 1871 (as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), “Culture, or civilization, ...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (p. 43)
- ii. Historical – Culture is defined in light of the social tradition passed down from generation to generation which is independent of biological influence. Terms such as “heritage”, “heredity” and “inherit” are used in this category of definition. An example is Linton’s 1936 definition (as cited in Kroeber &



Kluckhohn, 1952), "...the social heredity is called culture. As a general term, culture means the total social heredity of mankind, while as a specific term a culture means a particular strain of social heredity." (p. 47)

- iii. Normative – Definitions in this category focuses on the concept of rules observed in social living. One such definition of culture is Wissler's statement made in 1929 (as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), "The mode of life followed by the community or the tribe is regarded as a culture... (It) includes all standardised social procedures... a tribal culture is... the aggregate of standardized beliefs and procedures followed by the tribe." (p. 50)
- iv. Psychological – Scholars in this group of definition, although is psychological in nature, is broadly based. This type of definition stresses a variety of psychological traits, such as adjustment to the environment, ways of problem solving, learning theory and concepts on habits. An example is Young's 1942 definition (as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), "Culture consists of common and more or less standardised ideas, attitudes, and habits which have developed with respect to man's recurrent and continuous needs." (p. 56)
- v. Structural – This definition of culture is viewed as a system of interrelated features. Unlike the descriptive type of definition, this group of definition emphasises the patterning which exist in the overall picture rather than the individual items in the list. Gillin's definition made in 1948 (as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), "Culture consists of patterned and functionally interrelated customs common to specifiable human beings composing specifiable social groups or categories," (p. 61) is an example.
- vi. Genetic – This last category of definition focuses on the origin, the genesis, of culture. Under this aspect are three distinct facets. The origin of culture can be traced to 1) tangible products of human association (i.e. artefact), 2) abstraction of ideas communicated within a social group, or 3) symbolic representation as a characteristic of mankind (in contrast to animals).

After reviewing all the descriptions of culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) conclude:

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 embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. 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 conditional elements of further action. (p. 181)

Goldstein (1957) critiques Kroeber and Kluckhohn's work as "broad and general definitions may well serve the didactic ends of textbooks written for the purpose of an introduction to the field" (pp. 1075-1076). Goldstein (1957) highlights that Kroeber and Kluckhohn's work lack theoretical formulation of the concept of culture, thus leaving the definition empirically ambiguous. Without the support of a more definitive theoretical understanding of the concept, it makes culture complex to investigate.

Acknowledging the limitation on Kroeber and Kluckhohn's description and the ongoing debate on culture, this study cautiously adopts Kroeber and Kluckhohn's description on culture. This study finds Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition personified culture as the makeup of a particular community of people, represented in both tangible and intangible forms which have been associated with the group due to repetition of those forms over a period of time. As there is yet any definitive agreement on the notion of culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn's depiction inclusively encapsulates the many different expressions by scholars who treks the culture labyrinth from multifaceted angle. Therefore, this study will embrace Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) definition on culture to **identify the content of cultural awareness** the international students experience as a result of participating in the ISNMW. This representation of culture is suitable to serve as a foundational understanding fitting the exploratory nature of this investigation.

### **3.2 Culture Shock**

Everyone belongs to one or more group(s) of association, international students included. Even as culture is a symbolic representation of a particular people group, inherently every international student carries with him/her some form of culture. When international students leave their home countries for another, they experience a cross-cultural encounter because the people who they interact with have changed in the new country; the culture experience in the new place is different from that of the native culture.

International students' sojourning experiences are characterised by a change from the familiar to the unfamiliar. This experience is caused by the dissonance posed by the interactions with the new living environment compared to the one back home.

International students, like other sojourners (e.g. migrants, expatriates and tourists), must adjust to the new conditions (Y. Zhou, et al., 2008). The need for adjusting occurs in different ways when international students interact with the new environment, such as physiological, relational, and linguistic. International students experience physiological adjustment when they need to get use to the taste of the local cuisine and negotiate the best option to find food closest to the taste from home (L. Brown, et al., 2010).

Relational adjustment happens when foreign students build new networks of relationships in the new community, whether for functional purpose as required in class work or for social support (L. Brown, 2009). And in the linguistic aspect, some international students face language difficulty when the medium of instruction in the university of sojourning is not their first language (Wang, Singh, Bird, & Ives, 2008). These adjustments are in addition to the adjustments required to acclimate to a new learning environment when international students embark on a course of study in a new educational institution.

These adjustments experienced by international students sojourning in another country for educational purpose have been coined as "culture shock" by researchers (e.g. L. Brown, et al., 2010; Cross, 1995; Jackson, 2004; McClure, 2007). The research of international student adjustment has been closely intertwined with the studies of sojourners experience in general (Ward, et al., 2001). The term culture shock was first introduced by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (Allan, 2008; Manz, 2003; Pedersen, 1995; Stewart & Leggat, 1998). According to Oberg (1960),

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life... All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness... Now when an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed.  
(p. 177)

A person who faces any degree of difficulty orientating to new social or geographical environment is considered to be experiencing culture shock. Berry (1997) claims boldly that everyone, without exception, transiting to a new country of sojourning is bound to experience some form of culture shock in one way or another. Supporting this claim,

Pedersen's (1995) collection of narratives written by sojourning students demonstrate that culture shock transpired but the experience varies from one individual to another in a personable and contextual way. Pedersen (1995) presents the voices of international students from around the world as each narrates key incidents of one's sojourning.

Some symptoms identified with the anxiety experienced by international students having culture shock, by various studies, are confusion (Currie, 2007; Y. R. Zhou, et al., 2005), loneliness (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Sawir, et al., 2008), homesickness (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Tan & Winkelman, n.d), discrimination (J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007; McClure, 2007) and language difficulty (Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Scheyvens, Wild, & Overton, 2003). These studies support Pedersen's (1995) findings on international student adjustment symptoms. Pedersen (1995) proposes six indicators signifying culture shock adjustment is taking place as:

- i. International students are not sure how to behave because the familiar cues in social conduct have been removed or now have a different meaning,
- ii. International students experience conflict between values embrace with the values in the new environment,
- iii. International students express anxiety, depression, or hostility,
- iv. International students are dissatisfied with the new environment and compare how things were done in the formerly,
- v. International students former skills used to recover from setback no longer work in the new environment, and
- vi. International students have the perception that the uneasy experience will not be resolved.

Being in a state of culture shock can cause discomfort for international students in a new country. In this era of a globalised world with unprecedented growth of the international student population, there is an impetus to propel the community of researchers to understand what they are going through and discover insights to ease the culture shock experience as much as possible.

### **3.3 Culture Shock Research**

Research on culture shock can be traced back to the early twentieth century. At the beginning, research on culture shock was applied to sojourners in the general sense,

accounting for any traveller to a foreign country regardless of duration and purpose of trip. Naturally, studies on international student adjustment were classified within the larger category of sojourner studies. The community of international student then was small and did not attract attention of the research community until after World War II (Ward, et al., 2001). Studies on sojourner adaptation were strongly influenced by mental health research. Adaptation challenges faced by sojourners were viewed as a failure to cope with changes while in transition. Ward et al. (2001) note that statistics reported in 1903 in the United States indicated 70% of the hospitalised mental patients were migrants. This alarming figure was disproportionate for the composition of migrants which only made up a fifth of the population in the United States at that time.

A major shift in the focus on international student adaptation research came about in the 1950s with the budding of international education with the increase in foreign exchange programme (Ward, et al., 2001). In addition, Ward et al. (2001) highlight that many mental health studies in the 1980s reported conflicting result with earlier sojourning research; there was no significant difference between reported cases of the sojourners and the natives. Research on international student experiences moved away from the stigma of mental health to the sociological and psychological aspects of the sojourning experience. This change was in line with the shift of profile of the international students coming onshore, from a group mainly aided by scholarships funding to a community of mostly self-paying contributors to institutions' operational cost. New research perspectives emerged to look at how education and living experiences of international students can be improved. These new viewpoints are more hopeful compared to the mental health angle of research because they approach culture shock experience as a process that can be mitigated with informational and experiential approaches.

Aligned to the research development on international students' culture shock, this study does not take culture shock experience as a problematic notion. This study uses culture shock as a neutral phenomenon of international students' adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. Culture shock may at times be a negative experience of distress, but culture shock can also lead to constructive experiences of new learning. The neutral connotation of culture shock used in this study is also discussed by Ward et al. (2001).

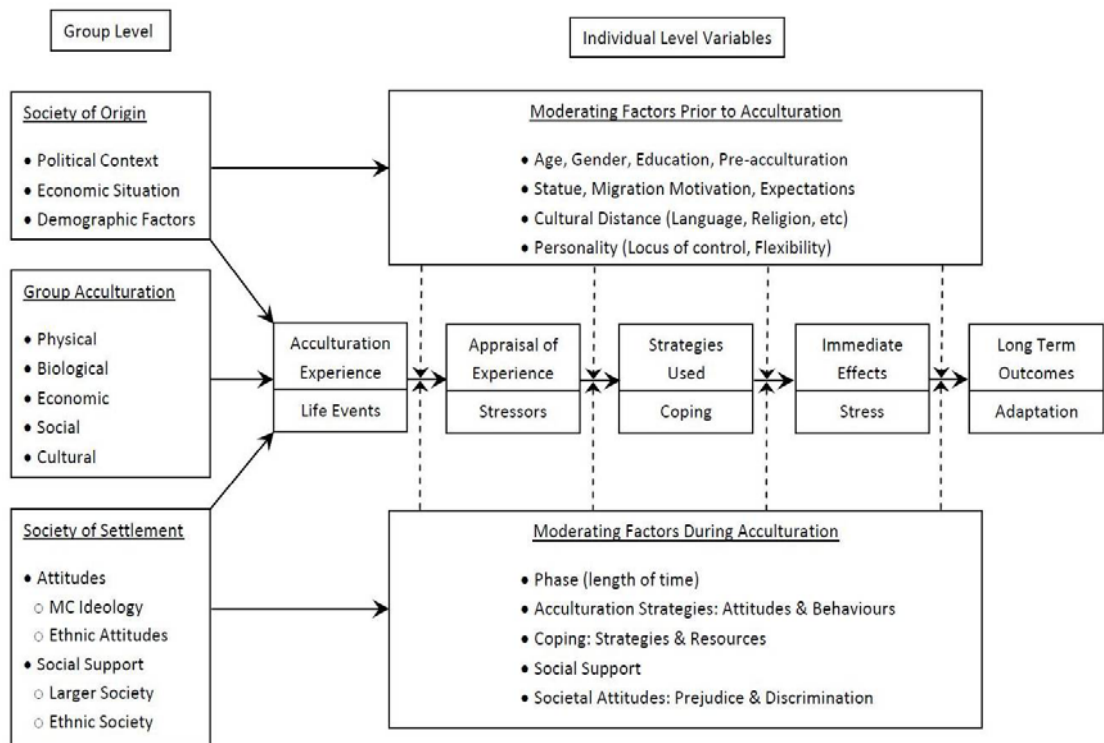
Three dominant areas of culture shock studies shape the contemporary research on culture shock. The first research approach is strongly advocated by Bochner (2003),

who contends that sojourner transition is a learning experience and not a medical problem. Although sojourner transition can be stressful in varying degree, the negative effects of the experience can be reversed with proactive learning about the new culture in the new country. The next prominent area of culture shock research relates to the interplay between stress and coping strategies. This research viewpoint, although psychological in nature, differs from the historical medical studies in that it comes from a perspective that there can be success in applying non-clinical coping techniques to manage a sojourner's transition. Rather similar to cultural learning's line of argument, sojourner transition is not an inevitable pathological response as in the case of clinical studies but it is a manageable social phenomenon. The third prevailing segment of culture shock research is in the aspect of social identification theories. Social identification theories address sojourner experience as an experience of identity conflict provoked by the new environment confronting one's worldview. In the next sections, each of these research approaches will be explored in greater detail to provide deeper understanding about the developments taking place in culture shock research.

### **3.3.1 Stress and Coping Strategies**

The stress and coping approach, as the phrase may suggest, is founded in the field of psychological research on stress. Evidence supports that the sojourning experience is a stressful phenomena which provoke adaptation responses (Berry, 1997). John Berry, who is one of the key investigators of the stress and coping approach, expands on Lazarus-Folkman's 'Stress and Coping Theory' from the field of psychology to propose an elaborate 'Stress and Coping Framework' on sojourner's cross-cultural adaptation, see Figure 4 (Berry, 1997, 2005; Ward, et al., 2001).

Berry's (1997) framework views sojourner transition as an acculturation process. Acculturation is the process of continuous contact between individuals of one cultural group with individuals from another cultural group resulting in changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both of the groups. This model considers acculturation experiences (also known as stressors) as a series of stress provoking life changes that requires sojourners to react with coping responses in order to negotiate long term adaptation in the place of sojourning.



**Figure 4. Stress and Coping Model. From Immigration, acculturation and adaptation, by J. W. Berry, 1997, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), p.15. Copyright by J. W. Berry.**

Berry's (1997) model accounts for both societal and individual influences on the acculturation process. These macro and micro variables are consistent with evidence which support the role of personal characteristics (G. H. Kim, 2006; Tan & Winkelman, n.d) and also the influence of society (G. H. Kim, 2006; J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007) in attributing to the level of stress and degree of acculturation satisfaction perceived by international students. Along this line of research, social support has been found to be an important pillar of coping mechanism adopted by international students to manage acculturation stress (e.g. Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1985; L. Brown, 2009; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2010). In other instances, a few studies describing the different coping styles applied by international students (e.g. Cross, 1995; McClure, 2007; Tan & Winkelman, n.d) support the relationship between coping styles and adaptation to acculturation stress as proposed by Berry.

Studies on stress and coping aspect of international student's sojourning have often measures the adaptation outcomes in terms of the level of satisfaction felt by sojourner during the acculturation process. The existing studies provide evidence about the

different components and the different links of the acculturation process as captured by Berry's (1997) Stress and Coping Framework.

### **3.3.2 Culture Learning Approach**

Another prominent area in culture shock research is the culture learning approach. Different from the stress and coping approach which is more reactive, culture learning research argues that the anxiety faced by sojourners is largely due to their lack in social and interpersonal skills to operate in the new society. Culture learning can be proactively acquired in preparation for the anticipated barriers which hampers effective communication with members of host country. Adaptation, therefore, is a form of acquiring skills that are relevant to the way of life in the new, unfamiliar community.

The culture learning lens postulates that appropriate intervention of preparation, orientation and acquisition of culturally relevant social skills will help sojourner adapt to the new environment. This learning of culture specific skills branches off from Argyle's study on social behaviour (Bochner, 2003; Ward, et al., 2001). Argyle (1982) highlights that while people interact with members of other cultures, intercultural communication is at work. Building on his works on social interaction studies, Argyle (1982) illustrates the cultural differences that exist during intercultural communication which could stem from the difference in language, non-verbal communication (e.g. gesture, facial expression, mutual gaze), culture specific rules (e.g. meaning of gift, protocol on receiving guest, notion of time), context of social relationship, motivational expression, or ideology.

A popular niche of research under the culture learning approach is intercultural communication training (Ward, et al., 2001). Intercultural communication training research has been extensive, resulting in the development of many intercultural communication theories. A helpful reference of a collection of 26 theories on intercultural communication can be found in Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida and Ogawa (2005). Based on a general review of literature within this niche of research, a few of the more notable theories identified are:

- i. The Five Cultural Dimensions of individualism-collectivism, low-high uncertainty avoidance, low-high power distance, masculinity-femininity, and long- versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede provides



empirical evidence that these cultural dimensions are manifested in varying degree in the social life of different nationalities. Hofstede promotes the use of this model as a reference for training based on the identified cultural dimensions of the specific cultural group.

- ii. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity was founded upon longitudinal observations of students' intercultural interactions (Bennett, 1986). This model informs that a sojourner's intercultural competence increases when one transits from single culture awareness (based on culture of origin) to greater awareness and acceptance of cultural difference. This change in sojourner's awareness is known as a development from a stage of ethnocentrism to a stage of ethnorelativism.
- iii. The Contextual Model of Interethnic Communication is built on the principles of encoding and decoding of messages which transpired during communication (Y. Y. Kim, 2005). This model proposes that communication behaviour is influenced by 1) the context of the identities of communicators, 2) the context of the specific social relation in which the communication is taking place, and 3) the context of the macro social environment. Each of these three contexts influences the behaviour of message exchanges; determining the degree of friendliness or offensiveness in the message sent and interpreted.
- iv. The Communication Accommodation Theory highlights that communicators use linguistic strategies to gain approval or to create distance with others (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005). This theory posits that the historical relationship between two groups forms the basis of the communication. Within this historical background, an individual's orientation towards the conversation operates to determine whether a converging or a diverging behaviour is used. The behaviour tactics are continuously evaluated as a feedback to shape subsequent orientation towards the conversation.

Apart from the mentioned theories which look at different aspects of culture learning in depth, research has also been taken on a broader perspective of social interaction. This more general approach provides assessments on sojourner's adaptability behaviour which helps to inform on the level of difficulty of culture learning. Examples of

instruments used to measure cultural learning based on social interactions are the Social Situations Questionnaire (Furnham & Bochner, 1982), the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999), and the Social Axioms Survey (Leung, et al., 2002).

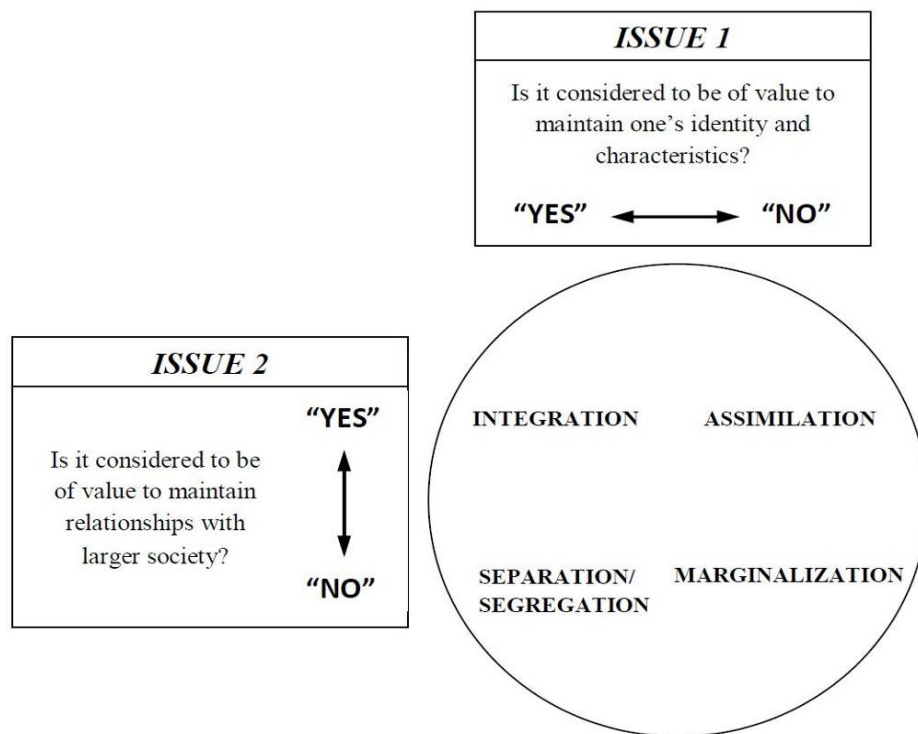
### **3.3.3 Social Identification Theories**

Social identification theories have emerged as the newest of the third genre of culture shock research (Ward, et al., 2001). Unlike the stress and coping approach and the culture learning approach which investigate external factors influencing acculturation, social identification theories examine the workings of the internal cognitive processes which the sojourners experience. This third approach is concerned with sojourners' perceptions, expectations, attitudes or values. These intrinsic characteristics are explored around the premise of intergroup relations by observing the social interactions between sojourners and members of the host community. These social interactions, peppered with the elements of culture shock, causes sojourners to enter into a process of cognitive questioning of one's self-concept.

Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory is a strong influence on the cognitive approach to international student research (Li & Gasser, 2005; Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003; Terry, Pelly, Lalonde, & Smith, 2006). The Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that individuals are members of certain social group and they tend to perceive the group they are affiliated to more favourably than other groups. SIT research explains the existence of stereotyping mentality by international students of members of the host country, and vice versa (Li & Gasser, 2005), and discriminatory feelings perceived by international students (Schmitt, et al., 2003).

Looking from a different perspective, Berry's (1993, 1997, 2005) acculturation strategies leverage on the concept of social identity as maintenance of one's cultural identification. According to Berry (1993, 1997, 2005), sojourners go through a decision-making process to deliberate between the benefit of keeping one's inherited cultural values and the advantage of adopting the cultural values presented by the host environment. This toggle between cultural identities causes sojourners to take on one of the four adaptation responses of integration, assimilation, marginalization or separation, see Figure 5.

Growing out of the monocultural focus of SIT and Berry's dualistic notion on cultural identity maintenance, the recent development on social identification theories is pluralistic in flavour. The sense of an individual's cultural identity is no longer a pure heritage of one's national or ethnic background, but a person's cultural identity is a complex integration of cultures adopted from different sources (Y. Y. Kim, 2001, 2008). The progress in mass communication and transportation is exposing societies to the influence of foreign cultures without having to leave home. In contrast to the dualistic cultural identity maintenance which suggests a win-lose situation of the cultures in contention, Kim's (2001, 2008) concept of "intercultural personhood" promotes an intercultural orientation which "can help to hold together, integrate, and elevate diverse cultures" (2008, p. 367). Applied in the studies on international student, Kim's intercultural personhood model revealed sojourning adaptation as a dynamic intercultural growth process (Milstein, 2005; Pitts, 2009).



**Figure 5. Acculturation Strategies.** From *Immigration, acculturation and adaptation*, by J. W. Berry, 1997, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), p.10. Copyright by J. W. Berry.

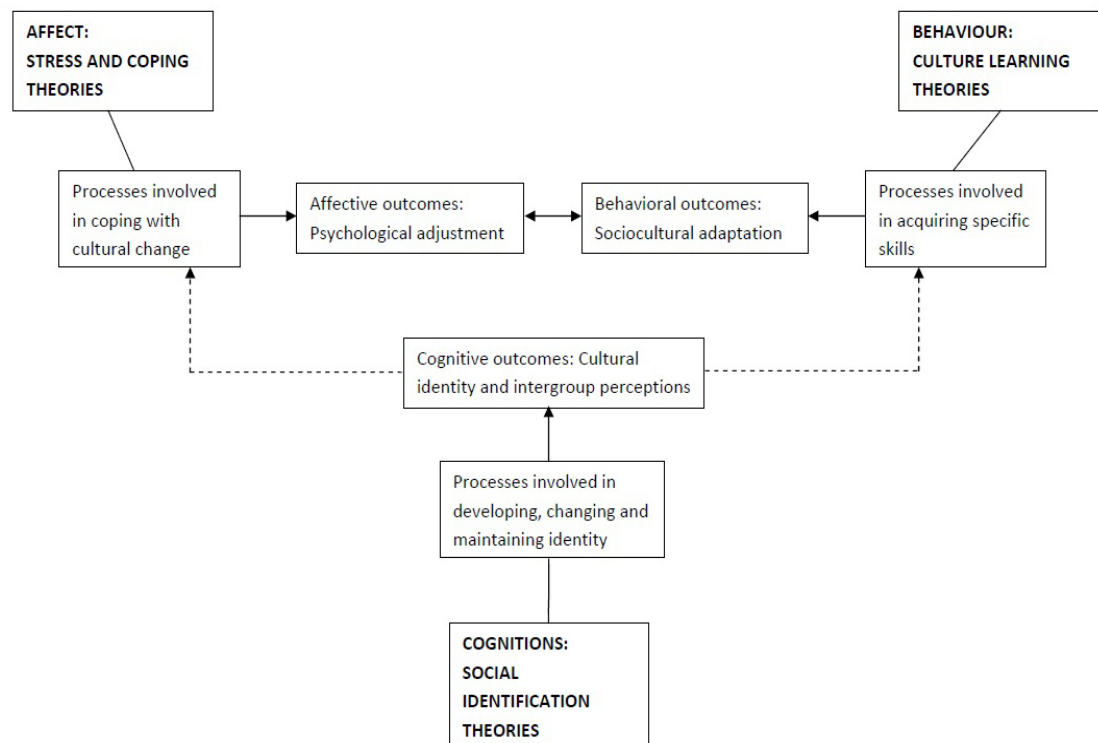
As a whole, social identification theories look at two fundamental questions confronting a sojourner's culture shock experience: 1) "Who am I?" and 2) "How do I relate to the

new environment around me?” These questions arise from the unsettling cross-cultural interactions which challenges one’s existing self concept and perceptions towards members of the host society. Findings in this area of study often help to inform the formulation of coping strategies and the development of culture learning programmes.

### **3.3.4 ABC Model of Culture Shock**

Essentially, these three strands of contemporary approach in culture shock research complement one another. Ward et al. (2001) have weaved together all three components into a comprehensive theoretical model, the ABC Model of Culture Shock, as shown in Figure 6. “ABC” is the acronym for the “affective, behavioural, and cognitive” approach in culture shock studies. This elaborate model promotes interventionist approach to address sojourner’s transition process. This model categorises the stress and coping research as a type of affective engagement that will influence how a sojourner’s feeling is moderated during transition. While the sojourner’s culture learning approach is classified as behavioural changes that sojourner can adopt to lessen the effects of culture shock. The final component, the cognition, represents the social identification theories which deal with sojourner’s perceptions and way of thinking with regards to self and other’s identities in an unfamiliar environment. By bringing all the diverse body of theories together, Ward et al.’s (2001) theoretical model is a bold attempt to synthesise the broad range of culture shock research into a single framework.

However, Ward et al. (2001) are careful to qualify that it is difficult to consider these respective components apart as they can all be experienced concurrently by sojourners. This entanglement can be observed from the evidence presented in some of the studies on international students. For example, in Jackson’s (2005) ethnographic study on fifteen international students, a hug given by the host mother to one of the male international student as a gesture of appreciation was considered an embarrassment by him because cross gender hugging was not common among the Chinese culture. A behavioural expression of hugging was not simply taken as a matter of learning a new social skill, but the student was attributing his cognitive concept of ethnicity for the cause of his embarrassment. This is an example of the overlap between the behavioural and cognitive experiences that occurred concurrently during a cultural exchange. Therefore, it is difficult to conduct empirical testing to evaluate the degree of correlation between each of the components in the ABC Culture Shock Model (Ward, et al., 2001).



**Figure 6: The ABC Model of Culture Shock.** From *The psychology of culture shock* (2nd ed.) by C. Ward, S. Bochner, and A. Furnham, 2001, East Sussex, England: Routledge, p.275. Copyright by C. Ward, S. Bochner, and A. Furnham.

Nevertheless, ABC Model of Culture Shock can provide a broad based framework on international student's possible experiences when encountering a new culture. With an understanding on culture shock experience of a sojourning student, we will now move the discussion to the concept of marae. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, culture is a notion of manifestation of a specific group of people. Therefore, it is crucial at this juncture to provide a literature review of the culture specific context which the international students of this study experienced.

### 3.4 The Concept of Marae

The New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage's *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* highlights, "Māori culture is a key element of the New Zealand identity" (Wilson, 2009). As an introduction to the local culture of New Zealand, the AUT international students are given an opportunity to experience Māori culture based on the concept of *noho marae* (overnight stay at the marae). Marae is a common feature shared by many Polynesian cultures (Mead, 2003). However, the concept of marae may differ

slightly between Polynesian cultures. In New Zealand context, according to Higgins and Moorfield (2004),

The marae is the place where *hui* (meeting or gathering) and most important events of a Māori kinship group take place. Welcoming and hosting visitors, weddings, birthday celebrations, political meetings, *kapa haka* (performing group) practices, religious services, educational conferences and *tangihanga* (rites for the dead) are examples of events that are likely to be held on the marae. (p. 73)

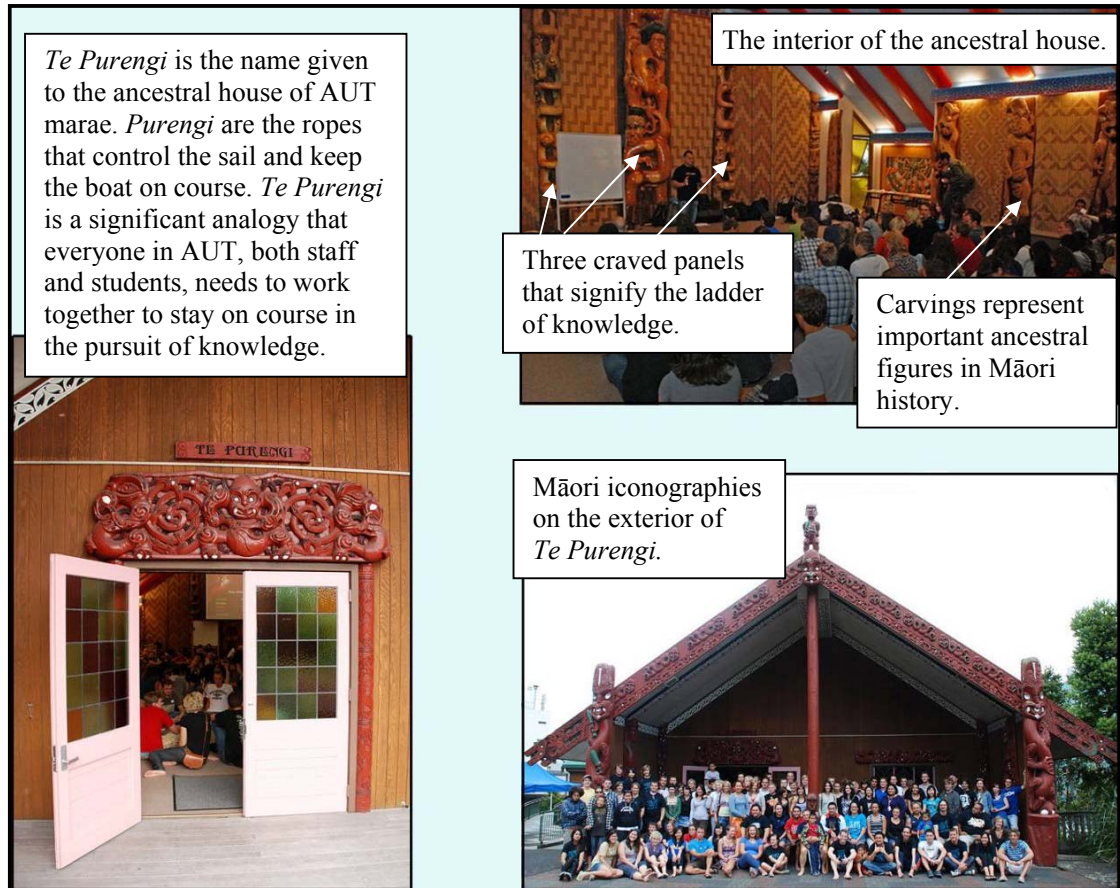
As a physical place, the site of the marae has changed over time, leading to the distinction of traditional marae and modern marae (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004; Mead, 2003; Salmond, 1976). The traditional marae site comprises of a collection of separate buildings which form the components of a marae. The basic building blocks are a meeting house, a dining house, a toilet building, and shelters for the visitors. The traditional marae is also classified as a marae which belongs to a kin group, which is either a *whānau* (extended family), *hapū* (clan) or *iwi* (tribe). The modern marae refers to a complex of fewer buildings but houses all the functionality of a traditional marae. Unlike the traditional marae which are often located in the countryside, modern marae are found in more densely populated towns and cities (Salmond, 1976). The modern marae are often owned by institutions such as universities, schools, churches, clubs or corporate entities. Whether it is a traditional marae or a modern marae, Māori principles practiced on the marae remains intact (Mead, 2003).

Of greater importance than being just a physical site, the “marae is an institution that is a vital part of the Māori culture” (Mead, 2003, p. 96). The marae expresses special essence and values of the Māori people. Tauroa and Tauroa (1986) capture the quintessence of the marae with much cultural pride and esteem as follows,

The marae is the *wahi rangatira mana* (place of greatest prestige), *wahi rangatira wairua* (place of greatest spirituality), *wahi rangatira iwi* (place that heightens people’s dignity), and *wahi rangatira tikanga Māori* (place in which Māori customs are given ultimate expression). (p. 17)

The marae is the place where Māori culture is kept alive (Mead, 2003; Salmond, 1976). For example, Māori artefacts and iconography are visible around the marae premise. These cultural features ranging from the architectural structure of the meeting house to the craftworks and to the names attached to every building block, each embodied a cultural meaning. People visiting the marae for the first time will not only see these

attributes, but they will gain greater cultural insights from having the significance of the features of the marae described to them. These artefacts and the specific iconography also express stories and values associated with the Māori culture and remind people of genealogical connections and represent a sense of place and belonging. Figure 7 illustrates some of the cultural expression from the AUT marae.



**Figure 7. Ancestral House of AUT Marae.** Adapted from *International Student Noho Marae: AUT University Photos (Facebook Group)*, by M. Eklund, 2010. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=129071528840&v=photos> Copyright 2010 by M. Eklund. Reprinted with permission.

Another expression of Māori culture lies in the *tikanga* (customs or protocols) that are practiced by everyone on the marae. This applies to both *tangata whenua* (members belonging to the group who owns the marae) as well as visitors to the marae. Visitors are welcomed through the *tikanga*, guided through the *tikanga*, and expected to observe the *tikanga* while at the marae. Examples of *tikanga* that visitors will experience from the time entering the marae to the time leaving the marae are: *pōwhiri* (the welcome

ceremony), *hongi* (greeting by pressing of noses), *poroporoaki* (farewell ceremony), and *tikanga* in the meeting house (rules for social behaviour in the meeting house such as no eating and drinking, do not step over sleeping bodies, and no sitting on pillows).

For every event organised at the marae, such as the ISNMW, there is a marae committee organising the event who “are charged with maintaining the *mana* (prestige) of the marae” (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, p. 35). The committee is expected to extend *manaakitanga* (hospitality) as part of the observance of the *tikanga* (Mead, 2003; Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986). The expression of *manaakitanga* is strongly motivated by “the Māori values of *manaaki* (caring for), *aroha* (love) and *turangawaewae* (a place to belong)” (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, p. 35). The host of the marae event takes pride in making sure that their visitors are well taken care of, such as having lots of food and having a place to sleep overnight. Although the work to organise a marae event is time consuming and laborious, this work is carried out by volunteers in accordance to the Māori culture (Mead, 2003; Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986).

The marae is emblematic of both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the Māori culture. The marae is a place where Māori principles are practiced, preserved and passed on based on the observance of *tikanga* and symbolism embedded within the physical structures. This review on the concept of marae will provide the important understanding required in the validation of Māori cultural encounters experienced by the international students at the ISNMW.

Therefore, combined with the Concept of Marae, the ABC Model of Culture Shock and Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s (1952) definition of culture have been drawn upon to aid in the formulation of this research. The literature review on culture presented in this chapter coupled with the background understanding on the international student community reported in chapter two provide scholarly underpinnings for launching this research. Similarly in the next chapter, we will examine the theoretical qualitative research design used in this study to enable rich data of individuals lived experience to be gathered so as to ascertain the cultural exchanges that took place and to identify factors present in the experience which influence international students’ social adjustment and perception of New Zealand.



## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical groundings that inform this research design, and the research practices carried out in accordance to the methodological understanding adopted. A note before moving on to the methodological details, I want to highlight the ontological position of this study. Constructivism, one of the ontological views under the umbrella of qualitative research, is the view of reality embraced in this study. Ontology pertains to the researcher's position about what is accepted as reality, thus the kind of knowledge that can be known from conducting a research investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Regarding constructivism (also known as naturalistic inquiry) in the field of educational research, Creswell (2005) explains,

The central perspective of (naturalistic inquiry or constructivism) emphasized the importance of the participant's view, stressed the setting or context (e.g., a classroom) in which the participants expressed the views, and highlighted the meaning people personally help about educational issues. (pp. 42-43)

This ontology is not without its critics. Meyer (2009), a critic of constructivism in the field of educational research, points out the danger of having unlimited liberty over the acceptance of what is considered as knowledge. Meyer (2009) cautions that constructivism opens up the possibility for anyone's claim, such as one's hallucination or fanciful imagination, to be declared as knowledge. To Meyer (2009) an individual's perceived truth cannot be taken as an empirical justification to the construction of new knowledge.

While we cannot simply adopt every participant's claim as knowledge, but I have found the philosophy of constructivism useful and appropriate for this study involving multiculturalism. I believe that the realities as perceived by my fellow international students originating from diverse cultural background are valid and to be acknowledged; whether each of their perceived reality diverge or converge from one another. Based on my experience relating to people from various cultural backgrounds, I realised that different perceptions among individuals arise from the cultural and life experiences that influenced the respective individuals; each person has his or her own experiential justification for holding his or her perception of reality on a particular matter. More importantly, established education and social science researchers such as Creswell

(2005), Davidson and Tolich (2003), Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 2005b), and Punch (2009), have gone before me to support this ontological assumption.

I believe any research design, regardless of the ontological position and the methodological approach adopted, needs to be transparent and detail in its reporting so that readers can examine the justification of the knowledge claim made in the study. Therefore, in the rest of this chapter, I will first give an overview of the research methods used in the field of education and social sciences, followed by the rationale for the choice of qualitative research method adopted. The discussion on the theoretical grounding will present the epistemological assumptions, the intentions, and the characteristics of the research methods used in this study. Guided by the theoretical framework discussed, the research practices, the research setting, the ethical considerations, the data collection mechanism, the data analysis process, and the goodness and quality criteria will be presented in detail. This chapter will conclude by addressing the design limitations of this study.

#### **4.1 Choice of Research Methods**

It is important to establish the methodological grounding of the methods used in any study, including this one. Research methods are meant to “bring us closer to what it is we are trying to understand” (Huff, 2009, p. 182). According to Huff (2009), research methodology is “the principles behind the set of methods used” (p. 182) in a study. Without establishing the methodological grounding, a researcher may potentially be doing a fruitless and meaningless study. Different methodologies are grounded by different theoretical assumptions that provide the reasoning and understanding on how a particular method is used to uncover information. Huff (2009) explains, “The method and how it is used (in research) are part of the warrant that justifies the leap from data to claim” (p. 181). Thus, it is important for me, as a researcher, to have an understanding of the research methodologies used in my field of study that have been recognised as theoretically sound and robust in practice.

In education and social sciences research, there are two widely acknowledged macro categories of research methodologies; they are the quantitative research methodology and the qualitative research methodology (e.g. Creswell, 2003, 2005; Huff, 2009; Punch, 2009). In recent years, mixed method research, the research design of combining both the quantitative research method and the qualitative research method in a single study,

has emerged as a new segment of research methodology with its own right of place (Creswell, 2003, 2005; Huff, 2009; Punch, 2009).

**Table 2.**  
***Comparison of Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods of Inquiry***

	<i>Qualitative</i>	<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Mixed</i>
Typical research goals associated with the research method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation (how or why things happen)</li> <li>• Detail (adding detail and depth to abstract theoretic explanation)</li> <li>• Empathy or interpretation (connecting abstract ideas to human experience)</li> <li>• Exploration (seeking unacknowledged antecedents, unanticipated consequences)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inference (from sample to population)</li> <li>• Prediction (past to future)</li> <li>• Description (patter in large data sets)</li> <li>• Hypothesis</li> <li>• Testing (increasing confidence in a theoretic explanation)</li> <li>• Generalization (expanding the range of a theoretic explanation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative to qualitative (make quantitative results more understandable)</li> <li>• Qualitative to quantitative (understand broader applicability of small-sample qualitative findings)</li> <li>• Concurrent (robust description and interpretation)</li> </ul>
Ideals achieved by deploying the research method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich description</li> <li>• Meaning</li> <li>• Qualified arguments</li> <li>• Context-specific descriptions</li> <li>• Reflection</li> <li>• Connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectivity</li> <li>• Neutrality</li> <li>• Replicable procedures</li> <li>• Discovery of causal laws</li> <li>• Abstraction</li> <li>• Precision</li> <li>• Rigor</li> <li>• Verifiability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Compensating strengths</li> <li>• Canceling weakness</li> <li>• Inclusive outcomes</li> </ul>
Critique of the research method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjectivity</li> <li>• Sloppy observations masquerading as interpretation</li> <li>• Intrusion of the researcher in all representations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversimplification</li> <li>• Unacknowledged subjectivity of definitions and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shallow application of intrinsically incompatible methods</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from *Designing research publication*, by A. S. Huff, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 184-185. Copyright by A. S. Huff.

**Error! Reference source not found.**, adapted from Huff (2009), gives an overview comparison between the three categories of research methods. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the type of research goals that are typically associated with the respective research methods. A research method steers the nature of information that will be generated from the research process. Hence, a researcher having certain research goals will select an appropriately fitting method to enable his or her study to meet the research objectives set. For example, a research goal of uncovering greater depth and details to inform the current body of knowledge will necessitate a method that gathers and analyses data with rich and possibly context-specific descriptions; data that are

qualitative in nature. On the other hand, a research goal to test a theory will require a method that is able to provide information that is objective and replicable; quantifiable data will serve well to inform this kind of research objective. While mixed method research will provide data that are both qualitative and quantitative in nature, with the aim of providing data that leverage on the strengths of the combine research methods. As much as each of these research methods is effective in meeting different kind of research objectives, each of them is also criticised for its weaknesses as described in **Error! Reference source not found..**

With the differences in mind, Howe and Eisenhart (1990) contend that qualitative research method and quantitative research method are not comparable because each focuses on different study measurement that leads to different kind of evidence. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) further emphasise that the deterministic factor on the choice of research method should focus on the usefulness and appropriateness of the method to the intention(s) of the research. Upon surveying literatures on research methods (e.g. Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b; Huff, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertens, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Punch, 2009; Scott & Morrison, 2005), I agree with Howe and Eisenhart (1990) that the choice on research method(s) for a particular study hinges on the research intentions and the research questions that initiated the study. Based on this consideration, qualitative research has been adopted as the methodological approach in the present study. The rationale for this decision will be discussed in light of its match to the research intention and the research questions that motivated this study.

#### **4.1.1 Qualitative Research Methodology**

The intention set out in this study is to provide an exploratory insight into international students' experiences at cultural awareness programmes organised by an educational institution in New Zealand (refer to Chapter 1 p.7). As the literature in this area of study is scant, this research was designed to understand the first-hand experiences of the international students in an institutionally-based cultural awareness programme. Upon preliminary literature review on the subject of international students, three research questions (refer to Chapter 2 pp.19-21) were crafted to guide the exploratory intention of this project. The research intention and the three research questions subsequently served to inform the adoption of the qualitative research methods used in this study.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005a), “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). As a researcher, I am trying to “make sense of” the phenomenon of international students participating in cultural awareness programmes through the eyes of international students. Creswell (2005) highlights that qualitative research methods are suitable for studies on topics that are relatively new in a field. Secondly, qualitative research methods enable in-depth study into a subject matter. Qualitative research processes facilitate the gathering of rich descriptive data (Huff, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Punch, 2009), useful to provide researcher with substantial amount of information to investigate the research topic in great detail.

Qualitative research encompasses a variety of research strategies, such as ethnography, phenomenology, discourse analysis, qualitative case study, autobiography, grounded theory, and others (for more examples, refer to Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005a),

Qualitative research involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials...that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. (pp. 3-4)

Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) admit that qualitative research may mean different things to different qualitative researchers. But the common agreement among qualitative researchers is that they seek understanding of the world we live in *from the research participant's point of view*. In contrast, quantitative research approaches lean more towards researcher's knowledge of the subject matter than from participant's point of view. In the current qualitative study, I have adopted a hybrid of phenomenological approach and case study approach. This hybrid approach was deemed to be the methodological approach of choice that would serve well to unearth useful findings on international students' cultural experience. A discussion on each of these approaches will be provided shortly.

Although I was influenced by Denzin and Lincoln (1998, 2000, 2005b), two strong advocates of qualitative research approach, the choice for applying qualitative research

methods was not solely dependent upon their influence, or other qualitative researchers (e.g. Berg, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Liamputtong, 2009; Stake, 2005). My choice of research method was also motivated by the fact that little or no investigation carried out on the current research topic has resulted in an absence of sufficient theoretical knowledge needed to deploy quantitative research approach. Even though a follow-up quantitative research method can be useful to triangulate the findings obtained from qualitative research methods, the short one year research timeline of this study constrained the feasibility of carrying out a mixed method research. A mixed method research will require a more extensive planning time, data collection time and data analysis time, in order to produce a well carried-out and robust study.

#### ***4.1.1.1 Phenomenological Approach***

The first of the two qualitative strategies adopted to guide the research design is phenomenological approach. Phenomenological methods have been used in international student studies, such as I. Lee and Koro-Ljungberg (2007), Tananuraksakul (2009), and Westrick (2005). Apart from the field of education, phenomenological approaches have been a popular methodological framework in social sciences and health sciences (Creswell & Maietta, 2002). Phenomenology can be traced to the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell & Maietta, 2002; Liamputtong, 2009). As Liamputtong (2009) explains,

Human consciousness as the way to understand social reality was Husserl's main interest. In particular, he was interested in how an individual 'thinks' about his or her experience. In other words, he was preoccupied by 'how consciousness is experienced'. Husserl believed that 'consciousness is always intentional, that is, it is directed at some phenomenon'. (p. 5)

Husserl believed that the meaning perceived by a person concerning a phenomenon, the circumstances experienced, is the constructed knowledge that forms the reality in our society. The epistemology, the justification for what is considered as knowledge, of the phenomenological approach positions knowledge as the interpretative meaning given by people to the experiences they have in life (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertens, 2005; Scott & Morrison, 2005). The perceived meaning an individual has concerning matters in his or her daily life is valid human knowledge.

Husserl's philosophy on phenomenology has been translated into methodological approach by others such as Alfred Schutz, Harold Garfinkel, and Clark E. Moustakas

(Creswell & Maietta, 2002; Liamputtong, 2009). According to Creswell and Maietta (2002), Schutz promoted phenomenology in sociology as a methodological approach for how people develop meaning from their day-to-day social interactions with each other. Then, Garfinkel went on to extend Schutz's phenomenological method to a broader context of studying how people make meaning out of their everyday lives, not just meaning out of their interactions with one another (Creswell & Maietta, 2002). Garfinkel's approach is known as ethnomethodology. Moustakas on the other hand, introduced transcendental phenomenology, which emphasises researchers to "bracket out" their own assumptions about the phenomenon investigated to develop findings based on what research participants experience and how these participants interpret the experience (Creswell & Maietta, 2002).

Amidst the variants of phenomenological approaches in research, Creswell and Maietta (2002) highlight that researchers use Husserl's phenomenological principles to "function as general guidelines or outlines, and researchers are expected to develop plans of study especially suited to understanding the particular experiential phenomenon that is the object of their study" (p. 152). Creswell and Maietta (2002) indicate that Husserl's concept of "epoche" is central in phenomenological research approach. Epoche is the practice where the researchers bracket, keep in reservation, their preconceived ideas in order to discover the voices of the research participants concerning the phenomenon of interest. The practice of epoche brings about phenomenological data analysis process that analyse "specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings" (Creswell & Maietta, 2002, p. 151) voiced by the research participants.

I subscribe to phenomenology because I view the researcher as a person who is methodically learning from the subject of interest. I find the phenomenological principle of epoche fitting to the purpose of my study because I am an international student who had attended one of the International Student Noho Marae Weekend (ISNMW); it will be important, therefore, to bracket (put aside) my preconceived ideas of my personal cultural experience at the ISNMW to discover new insights, minimising the potential effect of my personal bias on the topic. The principle of epoche will allow me to take a step back to understand the cultural experience as a phenomenon experienced by international students from the community in general. Furthermore, phenomenological approach will enable me to make known the perspectives of the international students to

other stakeholders interested in the affairs of international students. Amongst the first to study international students' experience at a cultural-based programme, this research seek to draw authentic representation of what international students understand as cultural experience, and how they can be influenced by from their participation.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Case Study Approach***

The other methodological strategy adopted is the case study approach. Case study approach is neither purely a qualitative research method nor purely a quantitative research method. The general idea of a case study approach is the study of one or several case(s) in detail to develop as full an understanding of the case(s) in its/their natural setting(s), recognising the importance of context and the complexity within the case(s) (Punch, 2009). According to Creswell and Maietta (2002), "Case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases), over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and rich in context" (p. 162). In this current study, the ISNMW served as the context of a bounded system, and the interviewing of multiple international students who participated in different ISNMWs organised between March 2006 to August 2010 as the multiple source of informants across time; all for the purpose of collecting in-depth and rich data on their cultural experiences. The subject of international students' cultural experience is too broad a scope for any one investigation. For that reason, it is necessary for the present study to have a defined scope that will serve its exploratory purpose, and yet with the ability to discover rich findings that can serve as a point sample to encourage future research to develop the knowledge base on the topic.

The epistemology of case study approach presents knowledge as embedded within the unique characteristics (e.g. individuals, groups, event, place, time) of the case(s) studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Within the case study approach, Stake (2005) identifies three types of case study that are common in research. The first is the *intrinsic case study* that is inspired by an intrinsic research interest to understand a specific case (e.g. to find out the experience of a particular school principal, to investigate a particular conference, and to study a specific curriculum design). The second type is the *instrumental case study* where the case is not the primary interest of the researcher, rather the case functions as an instrument to scope a bounded system that enables in-depth study into a topic of interest (e.g. to study gaming addiction through studying the habits of a teenager, and to understand effectiveness of peer-mentoring through the



context of a programme in a particular school). The third type of case study is *multiple case studies* or *collective case study*. This third type is the category given when more than one *instrumental case studies* are carried out to examine a topic of interest. (For examples of past research carried out in each of these three case study categories refer to Stake (2005).)

In the current research, the type of case study adopted is the instrumental case study approach. Noted by both McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Punch (2009), instrumental case study provides insight into an issue or theme by understanding the issue or theme in-depth. An example of instrumental case study in the field of education is Elizabeth Eddy's study on *Becoming a teacher: The passage of professional status* (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Eddy studied several individuals to gain insight into the process of becoming a professional teacher. Miller and Salkind (2002) highlight that research on a single instance of a phenomenon, such as Eddy's study, "attempts to discover unique features and common traits shared by all persons" (p. 20) in the study.

As the nature of the case study approach is to investigate a topic in-depth, Punch (2009, p. 120) highlights the characteristics of case study approach as:

- having boundaries set to define the study;
- specificity of the case to give focus to the research;
- intentional attempts to preserve originality (wholes, unity and integrity) of the case; and
- multiple research methods (data collection methods) applied to gather data.

The first three features described by Punch (2009) were integrated in the current research design. However, this present study was not able to embrace multiple data collection methods due to the project's time constrain. My reasons for including the instrumental case study approach were due to its clear and well-defined context that I perceived would enhance the focus and the rigour of the study.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Phenomenological-Case Study Approach***

The combined strengths from both phenomenological and case study research strategies, coupled with their respective underlying epistemologies and intentions, are fitting to generate in-depth and context specific findings valuable in an exploratory research. As

Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) put it concerning qualitative researchers, I “deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand” (p. 4).

The phenomenological approach and case study approach both aim to uncover the hidden knowledge found within the context of the research, the former being knowledge “carried” by the participants, while the later the knowledge “embedded” within the uniqueness and complexity of the case. I found the hybrid of phenomenological-case study approach to be aligned with my desire for discovering first-hand knowledge from members of the international student community, putting aside my preconceived ideas to understand the phenomenon of international students’ cultural experience within the context of a unique programme. This research approach will help me to connect lived experiences of international students with the existing knowledge in the field.

Another common characteristic shared by both research approaches is their common goal to be relevant to the elements within the research. In the case of phenomenology, participants in the research can easily identify with the phenomenon and promote their awareness of their personal cultural experience. Similarly, case study is relevant to the context in which the research is carried out by producing findings that can be useful feedback to stakeholders relevant to the context of study. The findings of this research will be shared with the international student participants, the International Student Support Service (ISSS), and practitioners in international education.

The procedures of the phenomenological-case study approach used in this study are based on Creswell and Maietta’s (2002) phenomenological study procedures (refer to Appendix I) and case study procedures (refer to Appendix II). The following was the phenomenological-case study procedure adopted in the research design of the current study:

1. *Identify a central phenomenon to study* – the central phenomenon identified was the common meanings ascribed by international students to their cultural experience while studying abroad. The intention of this study was elaborated in Chapter 1.

2. *Study the essence of the experience based on an in-depth study of a bounded system.* The ISNMW was selected as the context for an in-depth study of the phenomenon of interest.
3. *Informed by literature review, ask relevant research questions to focus on capturing the meaning of the phenomenon within the case study defined.* The significance of the three research questions guiding the investigation of this study were described in Chapter 2 and literature review on culture in relation to international students was presented in Chapter 3.
4. *Incorporate ethical consideration in the research design and practices* – This was to ensure that this study was conducted ethically, being sensitive to the individual participant and the multicultural implications of the present research context. Approval for this research has been granted by the AUT Ethics Committee.
5. *Collect data through interviews from multiple participants* to develop rich data for in-depth analysis and understanding of the phenomenon of interest.
6. *Analyse data by identifying “significant statements”*, expressions from transcripts that capture the participants’ meanings of the phenomenon were examined.
7. *Reduce the numerous significant statements to meaning units or themes.* Overlapping and redundant significant statements were combined into fewer themes that describe the meaning provided by the researched individuals more richly. Step 6 and 7 were carried out in the thematic analysis phase.
8. *Analyse the context in which the individuals experienced the meaning unit or themes.* Bearing in mind the bounded system of the ISNMW, Chapter 5 reports the context in which this research was conducted.
9. *Make an interpretation of the meaning of the case analysis.* In Chapter 6, the interpretations of the findings were discussed based on the learning gained from the data in light of the current knowledge in the field.

The phenomenological-case study procedures above guided the methodological aspect of this study. These steps were the outcome of careful deliberation over the epistemological understanding, the characteristics, the strengths, and the weaknesses of the different research methods in education and social sciences research. From my literature survey, I conclude that there is neither a single research method nor combination of research methods that is perfect; each methodological design, including

this one, has its limitations (this will be discussed at the end of this chapter). However, the choice of phenomenological-case study approach adopted here has been rationalised to be the most fitting to the intent of the current research inquest. Upon establishing the methodological positioning of this study, the context of the research setting and the detailed account of the research practices implemented are presented in the rest of this chapter to elaborate on the phenomenological-case study procedural steps not covered in the other chapters of this thesis.

## 4.2 Research Setting

The ISNMW was selected as the context for an in-depth study on international students' experiences in a cultural-based programme. This programme was chosen because it is a programme that caters specifically to the international student community, the community of this researcher's interest. Invitation to up-coming ISNMW is announced to all new international students in every semester's AUT International Student Orientation. Being a cultural-based programme organised by the university, the ISNMW becomes an apt exploratory context to inform the gap of knowledge on international student cultural awareness initiatives taking place in New Zealand.

The ISNMW is organised by the ISSS. This cultural-based programme is supported by the Te Tari Takawaenga Māori: Māori Liaison Services and the Auckland Student Movement (AuSM) of AUT. The three-days-two-nights programme provides an opportunity for international students to participate in a weekend of Māori culture structured around the concept of marae. The ISNMW is carried out at AUT's marae complex, the *Nga Wai o Horotiu Marae*. A copy of the March 2010 ISNMW brochure has been attached in Appendix III as a sample reference of the ISNMW programme itinerary.

According to Chan (Chan, 2010), the objective of the ISNMW is “to bring together international students with Māori students and staff in order to experience a cultural exchange.” Chan (2010) elaborates,

(The ISNMW is a platform to provide) international students (with) an opportunity to learn about something that is unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. ...Through the process of undergoing the Noho Marae the (international) students become *whanau* and are able to feel that they have a ‘family’ here (in New Zealand). The Noho Marae through the close living and sharing experiences helps students to make close friends, take back positive *maumahara* (memories) of their time in New

Zealand, Māori culture and of AUT. (Other outcomes of ISNMW are that) the international students learn about fundamental tenets of *powhiri* (welcoming ceremony), learn *waiata* (songs), *haka* (a type traditional dance), *poi* (another type of traditional dance), *tititorea* (a type of stick games), elements of a *kappa haka* (*kappa* means rank or row) environment that brings them closer to understanding Māori culture and customs. (extracted from personal email communication).

Having identified the bounded system, the research practices were implemented with reference to ISNMW as the context of this in-depth study. Before I describe the research practices of data collection and data analysis implemented, I will first establish the ethical considerations guiding the current research design.

### **4.3 Ethical Considerations**

Apart from the theoretical and methodological groundings, ethical consideration was another important tenet that guides the design and practices of this study. Ethics approval from AUT Ethics Committee was applied before the recruitment of participants was carried out. The ethical considerations undertaken in this study embraced the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (principles of partnership, participation, and protection), and also the observance of cross-cultural sensitivity.

#### **4.3.1 Principle of Partnership**

The principle of partnership to act reasonably, honourably and in good faith was observed by being sensitive and showing respect to the community of international students being studied and the uniqueness of Māori culture on which this case study was based. In applying the principle of partnership, the following consultations were made during the planning phase:

- i) consulted with a knowledgeable academic, Huhana Forsyth (Lecturer, School of Education, Faculty of Applied Humanities, AUT) on research related to Māori culture in the field of education;
- ii) engaged Māori staff, Kitea Tipuna (Equity Policy Advisor, Planning Directorate, Vice Chancellor's Department, AUT) as this study's Cultural Advisor. Kitea advised on culturally appropriate *tikanga* (protocols) concerning Māori matters pertaining to the ISNMW. His consultation has helped to accurately and appropriately represent the scope of Māori culture discussed in this study;

- iii) consulted with Elberta Chan (Team Leader, International Student Support Service, AUT) on possible concerns international students may have from participating in a study on them; and
- iv) consulted with three other international students on possible concerns and benefits of this research topic to the international student community.

#### **4.3.2 Principle of Participation**

Embracing the principle of participation, participants from the international student community were invited to volunteer in this research in a non-coercive manner. Respondents who were interested to volunteer were emailed copies of the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix IV) and the Consent Form (see Appendix V). This information disseminated was meant to help potential participants to have freewill and make informed decision about their involvement. All participants who agreed to volunteer for this research completed and signed the Consent Form before any interview recording took place. The signed Consent Forms were stored in a secured place.

#### **4.3.3 Principle of Protection**

The third principle of protection was incorporated by taking an active role to consider the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of the research participants. Participants were protected from harm and deceit. The interviews were arranged in places of minimal physical risk upon agreement with the participants. At the start of every interview session, each participant was briefed on the right to withdraw participation at any point of time, even after the interview session was completed. In addition, pertinent points on the Information Sheet on participant's rights and protection were highlighted. Opportunity was also given to participant to clarify any inquiry one may have concerning the study. It was agreed upon with the participants in this study that their identities would remain confidential and pseudonyms were used in the reporting of their sharing. Furthermore, identifying features such as country of origin, course of study, and age, were removed from the transcripts to maintain the right of privacy and confidentiality of the participants. All digital interview recordings were deleted after this study was completed and the transcripts were stored in a secured place.

#### **4.3.4 Cultural Sensitivity**

In recent years, cultural sensitivity is a growing concern in research on multicultural community (Liamputtong, 2008; Papadopoulos & Lees, 2002). This study recognised

the diversity of values, beliefs, and cultures of the international participants. As a current international student myself and having worked with international students in schools, I was sensitive to possible cross-cultural issues that may arise. I tried to use common and easy to understand vocabulary when posing follow-up questions during the interviews. This practice was to minimise miscommunication that could potentially be caused by difference in interpretations of the questions due to the difference in cultural background between the participants and me. Also, I was alert to any expression of discomfort from the participants as a sign of having caused potential cultural tension from the way questions were presented. For example, in an interview with one of the Asian participants, I picked up an early sign of defensiveness when I probed on a subject three times. My intention of rephrasing the responses and using follow-up questions was to verify in-depth an interesting point shared. As I was drawing out more experiential descriptions from this participant, I observed slight impatient grunt as the participant noted that my probing seems repetitive. The participant seemed to be frustrated that my repeated probing was an indication that I did not trust the responses given. This little expression was picked up quickly and was resolved by pointing out the interesting point that was shared and how I found the response a novel idea worth exploring deeper. After this clarification, the interview proceeded with no further tension.

The three principles of partnership, participation, and protection, together with the consideration for cultural sensitivity, formed the ethical considerations that guided the design of this study. I recognised that this study was made possible only by the sharing of the personal stories by the participants who shared their experiences generously. Therefore, the ethical considerations embraced in this study were a response to the private information entrusted, and a responsibility to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

#### **4.4 Data Collection**

Base on the methodological grounding, the setting of the identified case study, and the ethical considerations that frame this research design, the research practices were planned. The discussion of the research practices will begin with the discussion on the data collection process – how the data relevant to the research questions were gathered. The data collection process in this study involved the use of in-depth semi-structure

interview as the procedure for data collection, and the practice of data sampling strategies used to determine the data source and the data size.

#### **4.4.1 In-depth Semi-structure Interview**

One-to-one in-depth semi-structure interviews were used in the data collection process. Interview is one of the commonly used research instruments in both phenomenology and case study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Punch, 2009). There are three forms of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I did not use structured interviews because of its susceptibility to the influence of power relation that could affect the participants' responses when the researcher fully directs the flow of the interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although an unstructured interview could be an ideal match for phenomenological approach because it allows unlimited freedom for the researcher-participant partnership to uncover the research topic as the conversation unfolds, I opted instead for the use of semi-structured interview. The purpose of making the interview semi-structured was to provide sufficient guidance for the participants to share within the context of the phenomenon of interest, yet at the same time allowed sufficient freedom for participants to authentically share their experiences beyond the confine of a fully structured interview.

As propose by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) on phenomenological qualitative mode of inquiry,

A semi-structured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured – it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions. (p. 27)

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) promote interview as a day-to-day conversational activity in which research participants share their social experience from their own perspectives, thus enabling originality in findings (knowledge) to be derived from how participants themselves make meaning of their experiences.



Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe the characteristic of an exploratory interview as “open, with little preplanned structure” (p. 106). An interviewer begins with an introductory question and then follows up on the answers offered by the participant in search for new perspectives and deeper understanding on the topic studied. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) depict interviewing skills as the craft of encouraging the interviewee to share without exerting the power relation to influence the responses given by the interviewee. Mindful of the importance of observing established interviewing skills, the interviewing guidelines illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.** were applied during the interview sessions.

**Table 3.**  
***Interview Guidelines***

Stage	Guidelines
Introducing the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish good rapport with interviewee during the first few minutes of impressionable first contact. This will allow interviewee to be more at ease to share their experience with the interviewer, often a stranger.</li> <li>• Introduce the interview with a <i>briefing</i> on the purpose of the interview, the topic of interview, the use of an audio recorder, the interviewee’s rights for privacy, and ask if the interviewee has any questions before starting the interview.</li> </ul>
Throughout the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of interview questions: introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, silence, and interpretative questions (for details refer to Box 7.1 Types of Interview Questions in Kvale &amp; Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 135-136).</li> <li>• Give whole attention to the person interviewed, and make it evident that you are doing so.</li> <li>• Listen – don’t talk. Listen to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) what interviewee wants to say</li> <li>(b) what interviewee does not want to say</li> <li>(c) what interviewee cannot say without help</li> </ul> </li> <li>• While listening, plot out tentatively the pattern of responses that is given. From time to time summarize what has been said and present for comment (e.g., “is this what you are telling me?”). Always do this with the greatest caution, that is, clarify in ways that do not add or distort. Never argue; never give advice.</li> <li>• Remember that everything said must be considered a personal confidence and not divulged to anyone.</li> </ul>
Ending the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask interviewee whether he/she has anything else to say on the topic, allowing interviewee an additional opportunity to bring different perspective before the interview end.</li> <li>• Conduct a <i>debriefing</i> at the end of the interview. Ask interviewee whether he/she have any question or concern to bring up. The debriefing is a follow-up of the briefing at the start to allow for the interviewee to be fully informed of his/her participation during the interview.</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Elton Mayo’s Method of Interviewing, Introducing Interview and Debriefing, by Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, *InterView: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 128-129.

In this study, each interview sessions lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. The interviews were audiotape recorded to ensure participants’ responses were accurately captured.

(But the interactive conversation for the briefing at the start of the session and the debriefing at the end of the session were not recorded.) Also, audiotape recording the interview removed the distraction of having to note-take the entire interview. This freedom allowed me, as the interviewer, to concentrate on listening and asking crucial follow-up questions during the conversations. Only short notes were taken on points of interest as a reminder to myself to ask follow-up questions.

Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) interview guidelines were used to encourage participants to voice their thoughts and feelings. These guidelines were used together with the indicative interview questions (see Appendix VI) to guide participants to share within the scope of the research topic. The initial indicative questions were prepared in consultation with two international students who participated in the ISNMW. The initial questions were revised to be more contextual and easy to understand based on their feedback. Additionally, the final revision of the indicative questions was confirmed with the input from my research supervisor.

#### **4.4.2 Data Sampling**

##### ***4.4.2.1 Convenience Sampling***

Convenience sampling (Berg, 2009; Bernard & Ryan, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) was used to recruit participants from an advertised announcement made on the AUT Student Noticeboard and the *International Student Noho Marae: AUT University* Facebook Group. Convenience sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling. This sampling strategy is solely based on the availability of respondents; there is no predetermined statistical criterion for selecting the sample (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This sampling method is limited by the non-representative sampling of the actual population. In the current study, there is a possibility of demographic bias in the proportion of gender, nationality, and course of study represented among the participants recruited.

Nevertheless, convenience sampling is a common sampling method used in qualitative research (Berg, 2009; Bernard & Ryan, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Convenience sampling is an ideal method for gathering preliminary data inexpensively within a short timeframe (Berg, 2009). I adopted convenience sampling because of the transitory nature of the international students flow in the university and in New Zealand. Many past participants of the ISNMW had left New Zealand after their studies at AUT. Recruiting participants who are not physically present in New Zealand poses

uncertainty on the response rate. It may have been possible to introduce alternative data collection methods such as web-based interview or email interview (Gillham, 2005), but the fact that these are still relatively new instruments in research did not encourage me to abandon convenience sampling. In addition, convenience sampling was my open-ended approach to extend inclusivity in this research to recruit international students representing as many different countries as possible. This open approach was intended to gather data with culturally diverse perspectives from among the international students.

#### ***4.4.2.2 Snowball Sampling***

The other sampling strategy applied in this study was snowball sampling (Berg, 2009; Bernard & Ryan, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Snowball sampling is another non-probabilistic sampling method. This method is based on chain effect driven by participant referral of other people who have characteristics matching the recruitment process (Berg, 2009). Starting with a few participants, the sample will begin to snowball to more participants. However, the snowball sampling has its drawback, Bernard and Ryan (2010) describe,

(P)eople in a subpopulation who are well known have a better chance of being named in a snowball procedure than are people who are less well known, and people who have large networks name more people than do people who have small networks. (p. 368)

During the initial participant recruitment phase using convenience sampling, I faced the challenge of having only two volunteers responding to the announcements. Besides the two volunteers, no one made any inquiry on the study. This may have been due to the inactivity of students to response to general announcement that they perceived as not crucial to them, or the unwillingness of students to response to someone whom they do not know personally. Because of the low response rate, snowball sampling was considered as an additional sampling strategy. The recruitment process was complicated by the relatively small population size of international students who participated in the ISNMW (based on my experience at the March 2010 ISNMW, an estimation of about 100 international students participate in each semester's ISNMW). In addition to the transitory characteristic of international students, the population of past participants of ISNMW was relatively small. According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), the challenge of recruiting from a small group of people, can be aided by adopting snowball sampling. Snowball sampling leverage on the existing relationships within the small community to

encourage people to volunteer their participation in research. In the current research, initial participants were asked to promote by word of mouth to other international students they knew had participated in the ISNMW. Subsequently, ten more volunteers were recruited for the interviews.

#### ***4.4.2.3 Sample Size***

Based on her experience in qualitative research, Morse (1994) suggests a minimum of six interviews is needed to sufficiently collect in-depth data for phenomenological studies. Thus, I aimed to recruit between six to ten participants at the beginning of this study. During the initial stage of recruitment based on the strategy of convenience sampling alone, I was concerned that I would not be able to even recruit six participants. After the snowball sampling technique was deployed, I eventually decided on recruiting twelve international students for this research.

The sample size of twelve was determined based upon Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) empirical evidence on data saturation. In their study, Guest et al. (2006) show that the first twelve in-depth interviews out of a total of sixty interviews will be able to achieve a very high level of data saturation, 87.7%. The subsequent forty eight interviews provided very low yield of new findings. Therefore, informed by Guest et al. (2006), this study interviewed twelve international students to achieve a substantially credible amount of data given the one year research timeframe.

### **4.5 Data Analysis**

After the data were collected from the participants, data analysis was carried out so that the data would be meaningful in relation to the three research questions. The analysis process encompassed the transcribing of raw interview data into text data, and the use of thematic analysis to identify emerging themes.

#### **4.5.1 Transcribing the Interviews**

The data collected from the interviews were audio recordings saved in digital format. Some researchers may choose to listen to the audio recording to begin the analysis process immediately (Creswell, 2005). However, I found it easier to work on text data rather than working on audio format because text data allowed for note making, and flexibility to extract and organise segments of data. In this research, the audiotape recorded interviews were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. Gillham (2005)

explains, “Transcription is the process of producing a valid written record of an interview” (p. 121). The transcription was done by me, no transcriber was engaged. By not engaging people (who are not part of this research) to be in contact with the interview data, I was able to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as governed by the ethical principles outlined in this research. Also, as the researcher conducting the interview, I was familiar with the conversations that took place during the interview. When I transcribed the audio recording shortly after each interview, the conversations were still recent on my mind; familiarity with the conversations helped to maintain accuracy and also quicken the transcribing process. Conversely, a transcriber, who is not the interviewer or the researcher, may face difficulty transcribing some of the ISNMW descriptors that were unique to the present research context.

Computer software, such as ViaVoice and Dragon Naturally Speaking, was initially considered to be used to help in the transcription process as this did not pose any confidentiality issue. However, Gillham (2005), who promotes the transcriber to be the same person as the interviewer, highlights the drawback of using computer software. Computer software needed to be configured to recognise each speaker’s voice accurately. This drawback would complicate the transcription process because the international students interviewed came from many different countries; each speaking English with different accents, thus, requiring every interview to be configured differently in order for the automated voice recognition software to work well. In the early stage, I tried to use ViaVoice to help in the transcription. Instead of assisting the transcription process, I found the usage of computer software posed technical complications that threatened accuracy in transcription, and potentially delaying the research. Thus, computer software was not used.

Additionally, Gillham (2005) indicates that if the interviewer who is also the researcher of the study does the transcription, this will help prepare the researcher for the analysis phase of the research. During transcription, the researcher is in fact doing a preview of the transcripts in preparation for the analysis phase. The researcher will listen to the interview tapes repeatedly, further enhancing the familiarity of the researcher with the data, thus facilitating the data analysis. While transcribing the data, I was able to get the general sense of each of the interviews conducted.

As a safe guard to the data integrity of the self-transcribed interviews, transcripts were verified by the participants. In the current study, copies of the transcribed interviews were emailed to the respective participants for checking. This email correspondence gave the participants the opportunity to withdraw or correct statements that did not accurately reflect what they intended to say.

#### **4.5.2 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was the data analysis method used to analyse the transcribed data. Thematic analysis is an established data analysis technique used in qualitative research (e.g. Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Ryan and Bernard (2003) say,

(D)iscovering themes is the basis of much social science research. Without thematic categories, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain. If researchers fail to identify important categories during the exploratory phase of their research, what is to be said of later descriptive and confirmatory phases? (pp. 85-86)

Thematic analysis identifies recurring and also distinctive subject matters (themes) from the data gathered. Even though thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research, most of the literature does not elaborate on practical techniques for identifying themes. Based on their study on qualitative researchers' way of identifying thematic analysis, Ryan and Bernard (2003) discovered eight techniques researchers used to identify themes. These eight techniques are:

- i) Repetitions – Themes are identified based on their recurring appearance in the data set. The more frequently an idea or concept occurs in the text, the more likely it is a theme.
- ii) Indigenous typologies or categories – This is to look for local terms that may sound unfamiliar or use in ways unfamiliar to the researcher. These terms are often common descriptors used by the research participants in their day-to-day conversations.
- iii) Metaphors and analogies – It was observed that human sometimes describe their thoughts in the form of metaphors and analogies.
- iv) Transitions – Similar to written materials in general, transition indicators (such as transition words or starting of new paragraph) can serve as indicators of change to start a new topic.

- v) Similarities and differences – Further insights on a theme can be investigated by comparing the similarities and differences described by the participants discussing similar topic. The degree of similarities and differences on a topic helps to inform on the strength of a theme and also to identify sub-themes.
- vi) Linguistic connectors – By looking at linguistic connectors, such as “because”, “but”, and “non-”, is a quick way to scan for possible themes. Linguistic connectors are participants’ ability to express their meaning on the topic.
- vii) Missing data – Instead of looking for the obvious, researcher should also ask, “What is missing?” from the data. This way of looking for theme is based on the assumption that people who are familiar with a topic often abbreviate information because some mundane information are taken for granted as “known by everyone”; people develop familiarity with information and assumed that these information are also known by others to the degree they know them, thus there is no need to be explicit with these information. However, it is cautioned that some missing data may be caused by the reluctance of the participants to response to the interviewer, and not due to a commonly known subject matter.
- viii) Theory-related material – While looking for meaning from participants’ perspectives, researchers look for understanding on how qualitative data relate to existing theoretical knowledge. Identifying themes using this technique helps to connect the study to current theories and develop the knowledge in the field. The drawback of this technique is being over-reliance on prior theoretical knowledge at the expense of missing out fresh revelation from the data. Thus, researchers are urged to be careful not to just look for theoretically based evidence, but also to keep an open-mind to surprising evidence.

The thematic identification techniques applied in the current study were informed by the first seven of Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) eight techniques. The last thematic identification technique of theory-related material was not applied in this study’s analysis process in staying true to the phenomenological principles that guided this study; my knowledge on theoretical assumptions and preconceived ideas were bracketed when themes were mined from the data.

In the present study, significant statements were identified after a first impression reading of all the transcripts. A preliminary list of codes was developed from the

significant statements identified from the first impression reading. Another two subsequent readings were carried out to tag the words or phrases that match the preliminary code list, the significant statements and other related expressions were highlighted (tagged) in the transcripts. New codes were also added as new significant statements were identified in the two subsequent readings. An interval day between the readings was used so that my mind will be refreshed when the subsequent second and third readings were taken. This short break was taken to increase the possibility of identifying new possible themes when I analysed the transcripts in separate readings.

Then the transcripts were “cut and sorted” manually to organise the numerous significant statements to form themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Thematic analysis can also be done with the assistance of computer software such as NVivo (for more details on NVivo, refer to Bazeley, 2007). However, I opted to do the analysis manually to further deepen my familiarity with the research data (Grbich, 2007), thus enhancing my understanding on the topic under study. The cut and sort process first cut the coded (highlighted) expressions from the transcripts to a fresh new document, and then the extracted expressions were sorted to identify emerging patterns from arranging and rearranging these expressions. Bernard and Ryan (2010) promote the cut and sort method as a versatile thematic analysis approach dealing with verbatim text to identify emerging major themes and sub-themes. I found the cut and sort technique very suitable for phenomenological research. Cut and sort method of manipulating data allowed me to extract expressions and even lengthy narrations in the form of a block of text. According to Grbich (2007), the practice of preserving lengthy data intact “keep them (the data) within the context of the overall interview data... in order to avoid decontextualisation” (p. 33). In this way, I was able to maintain rich description of the narrations and authenticity in the verbatim presented in this study. At the end of the thematic analysis process, there were seven themes identified on factors promoting cultural experience, four themes on factors in the cultural-based programme contributing to international student social adjustments, and three themes on the influence of a cultural-based programme on international students’ perception of New Zealand. These themes will be reported next in the Chapter 5.

#### **4.6 Goodness and Quality Criteria**

In this next segment, I will address the goodness and quality criteria of this qualitative research in order for it to be seen as credible (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). However, the



setting of goodness and quality criteria in qualitative research is not as straightforward as in the measure of credibility in quantitative research. This did not come as a surprise to me having understood that quantitative studies are founded mainly upon positivism while qualitative research represents multiple ontological views (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In fact, I would be sceptical if anyone would claim a definitive set of criteria to evaluate the goodness and quality of qualitative studies. As described earlier, qualitative research is an umbrella of a variety of empirical research approach, and qualitative research may represent different meaning to different qualitative researchers.

In quantitative studies, the ontological position of positivism is to assume reality as purely objective and can be fully discovered. Reliability and validity criteria are important considerations in quantitative research. Different from quantitative study, qualitative research represents multiple ontological views (for example, postpositivism<sup>1</sup>, critical theory<sup>2</sup>, and constructivism). Within each qualitative research ontological views, its community of researchers works on what is commonly agreed as goodness criteria within their field (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For example, under postpositivism, goodness criteria are internal validity, reliability, and objectivity. As for critical theory, the criteria of historical situatedness, erosion of ignorance, and action stimulus are important. (For more details on these ontological views and examples, refer to Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Therefore, critically discussing the notion of goodness in qualitative research, Peshkin (1993) contends,

No research paradigm has a monopoly on quality. None can deliver promising outcomes with certainty. None have the grounds for saying “this is it” about their designs, procedures, and anticipated outcomes. ...I conclude that there is no prototype qualitative researchers must follow, no mold we must fit in, to ensure that we are bound for the right track. (p. 28)

Instead of specifying a certain set of procedural based criteria, Peshkin (1993) emphasises on the importance of judgment call of qualitative researchers in deciding

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<sup>1</sup> Postpositivism assumes that reality can be objectively known, but not fully known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Critical theory assumes that reality is apprehendable within historically situated structure (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

and framing appropriate research design to produce outcomes justifying the qualitative study conducted. Established qualitative researchers, Lincoln and Guba (2000) resonate with Peshkin (1993) in acknowledging the complexity of ensuring the goodness in qualitative research given the myriad expressions of qualitative methodologies. Lincoln and Guba (2000) offer concerning qualitative research,

We do not believe that criteria for judging either “reality” or validity are absolutist, but rather are derived from community consensus regarding what is “real”, what is useful, and what has meaning (especially meaning for action and further steps). We believe that a good portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those phenomena. (p. 167)

At a glance, it may seem that Peshkin (1993) and Lincoln and Guba (2000) do not advocate any criteria for ensuring the goodness of qualitative research at all. However, taking a closer look, they are in fact pointing to the credibility of the qualitative researcher as a benchmark. The assessment of goodness is a judgment call made by the researcher’s selection of the methodological approach to study what he or she justify as useful and meaningful, and in keeping accountability to colleagues in the field of knowledge.

In associating with the credibility of the qualitative researcher within constructivism (also known as naturalistic inquiry), Guba and Lincoln (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) offer the notions of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* for assessing goodness and quality. Guba and Lincoln also operationalised the measurement of *trustworthiness* in the form of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. Since Guba and Lincoln, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been used in studies on international students (e.g. Mattila, Pitkälä, & Eriksson, 2010; Melles, 2004; Pitts, 2009), and the principles of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* have been acknowledged as acceptable standard for qualitative research in education (e.g. Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Mertens, 2005). Therefore, I adopted *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, and *authenticity* as yardsticks to ensure the goodness and quality in this current study.

#### **4.6.1 Credibility**

Credibility is the measure of establishing the truth value of the findings reported and the interpretations made in the study. Credibility in this study was established through

member checks and triangulations. Participants received the interviews transcripts for validation and the findings were shared with the participants. Participants were invited to comment on the documents during the correspondences. Interpretations of the findings were triangulated with my research supervisor who is knowledgeable on international students and cross-cultural research, and possesses professional counselling experience working with international students. The interpretations were also triangulated by current knowledge in the field.

#### **4.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability pertains to the evaluation by the readers on the sufficiency of the findings and interpretations presented as understandable and reasonable. Therefore, it was necessary for the context of the present study to be described clearly and in detail. The broad literature review and rich descriptive methodological chapters were intended to assist readers to associate the circumstances surrounding this study and to evaluate the relevance of this research's findings to the topic of international students' cultural experience.

#### **4.6.3 Dependability**

The dependability criterion ensures that the research practices have been carried out in a traceable and reliable manner. My research supervisor served as auditor to the methodological decisions in the course of this research. Additionally, I conversed dialogically with other AUT academics to improve my research design. During the planning phase of this research, I kept a journal on my ideas, thoughts and decisions pertaining to this study. Accounts on the rationale for the research questions, the inclusion of snowball sampling method in addition to convenience sampling, and the decision to recruit twelve (two more than the initial recruitment target), were research decisions recorded in this report.

#### **4.6.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is used to establish neutrality of the study; that the reality of the data and interpretation has not been distorted by the researcher. This criterion was ensured by the transparent reporting of the methods applied, and the extensive inclusion of verbatim in the findings. The thorough writing on the methods made it possible for readers to verify that the present research practices were founded on established practices in the field.

The open manner of data reporting was an avenue for readers to confirm the findings and the interpretations have been neutrally derived.

#### **4.6.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity locates the constructivist assumptions that interpretations made in a research are based on socially constructed meanings that are significant to stakeholders and are useful understandings that can be acted upon in the future. Firstly, this criterion was achieved with the identification of stakeholders of the current study. Some of the stakeholders identified were the New Zealand Ministry of Education, AUT International Students Support Services staff, Māori cultural advisors and international students. Information gathered from these stakeholders was used to guide this study. Secondly, authenticity of this study was ensured by fair representation of contradictory responses offered by different participants. For example, some of the research participants reported that their perceptions of New Zealand had been positively influenced by the ISNMW, but some of the participants did not agree. The authenticity of the respondents' data has been fairly presented regardless of conflicting findings. Also, some significant themes have been derived from single participant's comment as an inclusive reporting of all meaning making by all international students involved in this study. Lastly, as a phenomenological researcher, I was conscious to bracket my preconceived assumptions during the data collection and thematic analysis process. I was aware of the bias position I may impose due to my personal sojourning experience as an international students, and previous professional association with international students. The findings were presented in the most "raw", contextual and transparent form possible for stakeholders' and readers' examination.

Goodness and quality measures have been carefully considered to preserve the rigour and integrity of this qualitative research. The elaboration on why the *trustworthiness* (expressed through *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*), and *the authenticity* criteria were adopted, and how these criteria had been observed were provided to assure readers that the current study has been conducted in the standard of qualitative researcher. Nevertheless, this study was not perfect and I acknowledged that there were a number of limitations.

## 4.7 Limitations

Whilst it was hoped that established methodological foundations have guided the careful planning of this research design, some limitations to this study need to be noted as described:

### 4.7.1 Limited Authenticity

In relation to the goodness criteria of authenticity, Guba and Lincoln (1989) detail the measurable for authenticity into *fairness*, *ontological authenticity*, *educative authenticity*, *catalytic authenticity*, and *tactical authenticity*. In the present study, *fairness*, that which concerns the fair and balanced representation of all stakeholders, was rigorously observed. However, the other four authenticity criteria were not observed, limited by constraints that existed in the study.

*Ontological authenticity* refers to the ability of the research to raise the level of awareness among the research participants in relation to the research topic. Even though, participants may possibly have a heightened level of awareness by sharing their personal experiences during the interviews, *ontological authenticity* could not be definitively ascertained. A few narratives did explicitly indicate that some of the participants were aware that they had been personally enriched by their exposure to Māori culture during the ISNMW. But these articulations were inconclusive to determine whether the awareness of the topic was being enriched during the interview sessions or prior to the interview sessions. This criterion could have been satisfied using additional data collection methods to triangulate the interview data presented in this report. However, due to the short timeframe of this study, it was not feasible to deploy the additional methods.

Guba and Lincoln's (1989) third authenticity criteria, *educative authenticity* assesses participants' appreciation of differing reality construction by other participants whose perceptions are different from theirs. The current research was not able to observe *educative authenticity* because the data collection instrument was one-to-one interviews that maintained confidentiality; there was no opportunity for the participants to interact with one another or exchange views. The nature of the current research design did not fit into this criterion.

Similarly, *catalytic authenticity* and *tactical authenticity* both could not be established. This study was not aimed at promoting any post-study action by the participants; this study was meant to provide an informative gap in the current understanding of the research topic. *Catalytic authenticity* pertains to post-study actions taken by participants in relation to the findings of the study as valid measure of the relevance of research findings to the participants. *Tactical authenticity* can be seen as an extension of *catalytic authenticity*. *Tactical authenticity* refers to the degree of significance the post-study actions have contributed positively to the participants' livelihood. This present research was not able to justify authenticity fully, apart from the criterion of fairness, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) outline.

#### **4.7.2 Limitation in Generalisability**

In an effort to conduct an in-depth investigation, the present research was conducted on a particular group of international students who participated in one of the university-based cultural programmes. International students who participated in other cultural-based programmes in the same university may not have similar perceptions of cultural experience reported here because of the different characteristics of the other programmes. Other cultural-based programmes have their own programme objectives, activities, and duration. It was noted in one participant's response, the ISNMW was unlike most programmes at AUT that were usually two hours long. Thus, generalisations across a range of diverse cultural-based programme participated by international students will not be sufficient to address the complexity of such investigation.

#### **4.7.3 Issue with Diversity of Participants**

Another limitation of this study arose from the diversity of the research participants. It was desirable that the sampling of international students represents as many different nationalities as possible so that the findings resemble a close representation of the diversity of the international student community. However, this diversity posed some cultural distance between me as the researcher-interviewer and the participants who were from different countries of origin. So as to maintain consistency of language, only English was used in all the interviews.

Irvine, Roberts, and Bradbury-Jones (2008) content that "research studies involving diverse language speakers, data collection, transcription and analysis is best undertaken

in the preferred language of the respondents, using native researchers; or insiders” (p. 46). In agreement, cultural researcher, Liamputtong (2008) explains that the use of the native language of the participant serve to narrow the social and cultural distance between the interviewer and the participants. As the scale of this study is small and exploratory in nature, I did not hire interpreters for this study. By getting assistance from interpreters, the data collected in this research may have the possibility of drawing even deeper socio-emotional insights that could be expressed more easily in participants’ own languages.

However, based on their experience of cross-cultural qualitative research in Japan and United Kingdom and with bilingual research participants of Welsh and English, Irvine, et al. (2008) note that in the event that interpreters are not available, “it would not be appropriate to abandon good quality research and deny the opportunity for individuals to engage in research that might offer insights that could improve people’s future well-being” (p. 46). Thus, bearing in mind this weakness, this exploratory study was carried out with the hope of an insight sufficient enough to encourage more elaborate studies on the topic.

#### **4.7.4 Short Research Timeframe**

This study was also limited by the one year research timeframe. With longer research duration, it would be possible for this study to introduce pre-programme interviews and journaling to observe how cultural experience evolved during the course of international students’ participation at the ISNMW. These two methods of data collections would provide additional angles to triangulate the interviews carried out in this study. The present research has limited triangulations that were based on supervisor’s input and current literatures.

#### **4.7.5 Researcher’s Bias**

Although much effort was given to ensure that I bracketed my presumption and bias, this study may still be at risk of researcher’s bias. As this is a one member research project, the research data was handled by a single person. Ryan and Bernard (2003) point out that two analysts handling the same set of data may conclude a number of varying categories during the process of thematic analysis. It is advisable for data analysis to be carried out by a few analysts so that the final list of thematic findings produced is guarded against single researcher’s bias. Therefore, it is only appropriate for

me to highlight the possible influence that I may have extended to this research. This study may be exposed to insider's bias because I am a member of the international student community. Even though cultural insider may be more sensitive and responsive to attend to the research participants (Liamputtong, 2008), I may have interpreted the findings based on my personal sojourning experience. Also, as a former participant of the ISNMW myself, I may have overlooked familiar expressions in the participants' responses which I have taken for granted as a commonly known fact. Being a former ISNMW participant enabled me to better understand the context specific terms in the data, but my own ISNMW experience may have also caused me to miss out some pertinent points.

Drawing together the ontology of constructivism, the phenomenological-case study methodology, the research setting, the data collection vehicle, the data analysis process, the goodness and quality assurance, and the design limitations, I hope this chapter will help readers to envisage how this research was conducted and how the theoretical understandings across the current research process has been weaved together. The findings that were a result of the research design described will be presented in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the data gathered from twelve interviews with international students who participated in the International Student Noho Marae Weekend (ISNMW) between March 2008 and August 2010. These empirical data were collected based on the foundational knowledge and practices as described in the previous chapter. Reflective of the diversity of the international student community in AUT and New Zealand's institutions of higher education, the participants came from a number of countries. This chapter will begin with a brief description of each participant to provide a helpful context of the findings reported in this chapter. Then the data will be exhibited in the three subsequent sections, displaying the responses based on the three research questions which framed the investigation of this study. Substantial verbatim extracted from the interview transcripts will be quoted to capture the perceived experiences of the participants, as consistent with phenomenological methodology. Thus, some variation in terms of expression and informal language forms will be present in the excerpts. The responses gathered from the interview participants were wide-ranging as a result of the openness and breath of the interview questions used to facilitate the exploratory nature of this study. Nonetheless, emerging themes were identified after a few rounds of reading through the data.

### **5.1 Participants' Background**

Among the twelve international students, there were six male and six female participants. The participants who volunteered for this research hailed from seven difference countries across Asia and Europe. These seven countries represented some of the diverse international students who were at the ISNMW. To give an idea on the diverse background of international students at the ISNMW, based on secondary data of two videos summary of ISNMW, one on the March 2010 ISNMW (Quero, 2010) and the other on the August 2010 ISNMW (Schwaiger, 2010), international students from sixteen countries were counted in the ISNMW March 2010 and international students from thirteen different countries were recorded in the August 2010 ISNMW. The programmes of study being undertaken by the participants represented a range of majors and levels of qualifications offered at AUT. Students from different faculties (including Health and Environmental Sciences to Applied Humanities to Business and Law), and from different level of academic studies (ranging from bachelor programmes,

postgraduate diplomas, master's programmes and doctoral programmes) were among the participants.

The countries of origin and the programmes of study of the participants are not mentioned in this report to preserve participants' confidentiality. The international students were only referred to, at large, by the continents they came from, Europe or Asia. Keeping participants' identities confidential was one of the research practices that upheld the ethical considerations outlined in the present study. Confidentiality of the participants was further ensured with the use of pseudonyms when referring to the participants in this report. One to two syllabus names were randomly chosen and assigned to each participant to mask their identities.

The interviews began by introducing myself to the international students. The introduction was intended to build an initial rapport with the participants and help them to be at ease for the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Then, the volunteers' rights, as entailed in the ethical consideration of this study, were reiterated to the participants before the interview began. This opening practice also allowed participants time to raise any concern they may have on the interviews. The interview proceeded with an invitation to the participants to briefly introduce themselves, their reasons for coming to New Zealand to pursue their studies, and what motivated them to participate in the ISNMW. This background information is presented below using pseudonyms to introduce each participant who contributed to this study.

### *Sam*

Sam, a European, participated in the March 2010 ISNMW. It was shortly after he enrolled in a postgraduate programme with AUT as a new international student. This was his second time in New Zealand. During his first visit to New Zealand as a tourist, he stumbled upon the opportunity to further a programme of study which he was interested in. The interview with him was conducted four months from the time of his participation at the ISNMW. He signed up for the ISNMW because he was interested to experience new culture. As he put it, *"I have a few principles, one of the principles is actually, 'Wherever I go, I would do some cultural things.' Like every big European city, I would go to the art gallery. It is some kind of a habit."* Also, he cited his *"previous contact with Māori people"* when he was a tourist as a contributing factor to his

participation in the ISNMW. He had been in New Zealand for four months at the point of interview, not taking into account his previous recreational trip to the country.

#### *Sarah*

Sarah, from Asia, came to New Zealand for the first time when she took up a postgraduate programme with AUT. She came to New Zealand to seek out a “*new experience*” that was different from her undergraduate study completed in another Western country. Her consideration to study in New Zealand was also influenced by the fact that New Zealand was relatively close to her country. She participated in the ISNMW because she “*wanted to know more about Māori culture... and to make new friends.*” She participated in the ISNMW in March 2010. At the time of interview, it was about four months after her experience at the ISNMW.

#### *Becky*

Originating from a country in Asia, Becky participated in the March 2010 ISNMW. At the time of interview, she had been sojourning as an international student in New Zealand for around six months. She made her decision to come to New Zealand because she “*heard some stories about her friends (in New Zealand), these stories sounded really interesting. ...and I did not want to go to America or any big country.*” Having reasons similar as Sarah, Becky was motivated to join the ISNMW because she “*wanted to know about Māori culture. Also, I wanted to meet new people.*” Furthermore, Becky commented that her participation in the ISNMW would allow her to know about other cultures through the acquaintance of “*new friends from other countries.*”

#### *Dave*

Dave arrived in New Zealand in February 2010 from a European country. He participated in the ISNMW in March 2010 because “*everybody told us that we need to go there.*” The “everybody” he referred to were the international students who participated in the previous ISNMWs and the International Student Support Services (ISSS) staff. Through the ISSS announcement, Dave knew that it would be a cultural-based programme. He had the impression that the ISNMW was one of the events international students should not miss. Dave chose New Zealand as a study destination because “*it was far away from home.*” At the point of interview, it was about six months after he participated in the ISNMW as a new international student in AUT.

### *Jon*

Jon, also from Europe, came to New Zealand in February 2009. At the point of interview, he had been residing in New Zealand for more than one and a half years. He came to New Zealand because he *“wanted to study in an English speaking country. ... (after he) ‘googled’ a little bit, (he found New Zealand as) quite interesting... beautiful land and people are extra nice.”* His motivation to sign up for the ISNMW also stemmed from his internet search on New Zealand. As he enthusiastically put it,

Before I came to New Zealand, I ‘googled’ New Zealand... on Facebook, and on YouTube, and I found the ‘haka’ video. And I thought that was impressive, it is such a good way to motivate yourself and just to express yourself. I was really really excited to learn more about it. And then they told me at the (International Student) Orientation that at the Noho Marae the students learn the ‘haka’, so it was clear for me to go there.

Jon was a participant at the March 2009 ISNMW.

### *Dan*

A European, but of a different nationality from Jon, Dan had been residing in New Zealand longer than Jon. At the time of interview, Dan arrived in New Zealand two and a half years ago. His drive to grow independent from his family in Europe brought him to New Zealand. As he elaborated,

I have not lived on my own before. Thus I went to look for a country which speaks English as a main language, that will be easier to adapt to a new culture. New Zealand is quite Western, so, that wouldn’t be too big a change to try out and to begin with. ... (I) read about a Kiwi cartoon and it was quite funny, thus it seems that some of the features in the cartoon would be quite good to experience.

Dan did not sign up for the ISNMW in the first semester of his study in New Zealand. In his second semester at AUT, he attended the August 2008 ISNMW. Dan explained that,

I haven’t actually heard about it (referring to the ISNMW). Cause my friends (in the first semester) they didn’t go for it. But in the second semester, I had other friends, they went for it, so I went for it. (The university) do a lot of other trips... but Noho Marae they make it very optional, and it is not like something that you have to do, which I think you really should do. Then the second semester I found out what it really was and I went for it, and for the *haka*.

### *Estee*

Estee was an international student from Asia. She had been in New Zealand for around

one year at the point of interview. She came to New Zealand to pursue her postgraduate study because members of her family were in New Zealand. She also attributed her decision to study in New Zealand as, *“The immigration process, the paper work, is less compared to other countries.”* Estee participated in the ISNMW in August 2009. *“As a new (international) student, I got an email from Elberta, the advisor at the ISSS,”* she related her reason for participating in the ISNMW, *“...(The description of the ISNMW) was pretty impressive. It said they will be teaching us about Māori culture, the different type of dances and all. It sounded interesting to me at that time.”*

#### *Eva*

For Eva, who was from Asia, her motivation to participate in the ISNMW was also influenced by the announcement made by the ISSS. The announcement she received was not through email, it was made at the International Student Orientation where *“they showed us pictures (of the ISNMW) which looked interesting.”* Eva also contributed her decision to join the ISNMW to peer influence. She said, *“I had a lot of friends who were going as well, so yea, it seems a cool weekend to go to.”* Eva joined the ISNMW in March 2008 when she first enrolled at AUT. She took up a programme in AUT because *“New Zealand is an English speaking country. I have been to the Europe and American continents, thus I came to New Zealand to visit a new place where I didn’t know anyone.”*

#### *Josh*

Josh was an international student from a different Asian country than the participants introduced previously. He arrived in New Zealand three weeks before the interview. He came to New Zealand through an academic programme in which his *“university back home has cooperation with AUT.”* As a new international student, he signed up for the ISNMW conducted in August 2010. Josh related his motivation to join the ISNMW as such,

At first I watched the (promotional) video at the (International Student) Orientation, it seems good. I thought that it (the ISNMW) would be in a Māori village... since it only cost sixty (dollars) a weekend, so we (three of my flatmates and I) thought that is a very good price. ... (At first) I was disappointed since it was not a Māori trip, but it is in the school. ... But after I have attended the Noho Marae, I ground that the programme was a very good.

### *Abe*

Abe, a European international student, has an interest to experience new cultures. Abe had a similar wrong impression as Josh which led him to sign up for the ISNMW. Abe recalled,

*It was at the International (Student) Orientation... they (the ISSS staff) were just talking about that we were going to learn about Māori culture and eat a lot. So lots of food, that was kind of a good thing. I really love culture and learning about new people and ways of doing stuffs and kind of that. So I was really excited about it. I thought we were going camping somewhere outside the city. ...but it was pretty good. The cultural thing just motivated me to go.*

Abe attended the ISNMW in August 2008 when he was in New Zealand for an exchange programme at AUT. Unexpectedly, after he was conferred his basic degree back in Europe, he returned to New Zealand to pursue postgraduate study at AUT because, *"I love the country."*

### *Jack*

Jack, also from Europe, participated in the recent ISNMW in March 2010. However, he was not a first time visitor to New Zealand although he joined AUT for only six months at the point of interview. Jack, like Abe, is a returning international student in New Zealand. Jack first arrived in New Zealand in early 2007 as an international student in another university as a study abroad student. Jack shared, *"I applied for postgraduate sports management course, with options in UK, Australia and New Zealand. I felt more confident in coming back to New Zealand since I really like New Zealand."* Once Jack enrolled with AUT, he *"knew a lot of people who had been there (the ISNMW) before...they (international students and ISSS staff) kind of like told me to go. It looks pretty interesting, (so I went to the ISNMW)."*

### *Ann*

The final participant, Ann was from Asia. She had only been in New Zealand for three weeks at the point of interview. She came to New Zealand as an exchange student because *"New Zealand is known for its nature. ...one of her family member was studying in Australia, thus nearer to visit. Although I had considered Australia, the opportunity for exchange placement to Australia was limited."* She traced her participation at the August 2010 ISNMW to the influence of a student from her home university who previously came to AUT. She described,

My classmate who came here last year, he suggested to me to come to the Noho. ...He was an exchange student here last year. He suggested that I attend because he thinks this (programme) can (allow me to) experience more and to learn more about the culture in New Zealand.

The relevance of presenting the background information of each interview participants is to provide some degree of familiarity to the voices of the international students echoed in this chapter. Informed by the theoretical position of the phenomenological-case study approach, the interpretative meaning described by these twelve international students on 1) the perceived cultural awareness experience at the ISNMW, 2) the perceived influence of the ISNMW on their social integration, and 3) the perceived influence of the ISNMW on their perception of New Zealand, are presented in the following three sections.

## **5.2 Cultural Awareness Experience at the ISNMW**

A sojourner's increased awareness of culture apart of his or her own, and increased appreciation of the different culture are both indicators of the person's growth in cultural awareness (Bennett, 1986; Ward, et al., 2001). Demonstration of cultural awareness is an indication of having intercultural competency that can assist sojourners, such as international students, to negotiate their cross-cultural experiences in a new environment (Bennett, 1986). Studies have indicated that international students' ability to manage the difference between one's own culture and the host culture would help in their living and academic adjustment in the host country e.g. (L. Brown, et al., 2010; Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010).

In view of the importance for international students' cultural awareness of the local culture, this study will first establish whether cultural awareness experience took place at the ISNMW, before the findings on factor influencing international students' cultural awareness is presented. Moreover, by first examining that cultural awareness experience had taken place at the ISNMW, this study was able to further examine the choice of selecting the ISNMW as a suitable case of cultural awareness initiative, not just based on the stated programme objective of the ISNMW alone. Thus, this section of findings will first present trivial yet essential data on the evidence of cultural awareness experience follow by data relating to the ISNMW's influence on international students' cultural experience.

### 5.2.1 Evidence of Cultural Awareness Experience

In search for tangible evidence of cultural awareness experience taking place, the transcripts were mined for expressions which suggest participant's encounters with elements of Māori culture. Interestingly, the data collected from all twelve participants showed strong evidence of cultural awareness experience after their ISNMWs. In response to the questions i) to recall individual's participation experience at the ISNMW, and ii) to imagine what were the comments one would give to a new international student inquiring about the ISNMW, each participant either confirmed an increased awareness of Māori culture, or expressed an increased appreciation of the culture.

Even though Sam had prior contact with Māori before the ISNMW, he had novel encounters of Māori culture, he found his experience interesting and insightful. He stated:

It was a nice, very interesting welcoming ceremony. ...the welcoming ceremony which they (the ISNMW Organising Team) had well prepared, lots of people were there, singing and all that like a ceremony - very nice mood at that moment. ... (I) slept at the marae. ... I would recommend it, for sure. And say, the programme is nice, and also to get a cultural insight.

Similarly, Sarah, Jon, Josh and Jack also articulated their participations at the ISNMW as an "interesting" cultural experience to signify cultural encounters that they did not experience before. Josh additionally related his learning of the *haka*, Māori war dance, during the programme. Eva and Ann also both concurred to have learnt some aspects of Māori culture (such as singing, dancing and playing games) in their own experience.

Initially, Abe confessed, "*Oh the main thing was the haka. ... All I remember was the haka, mainly.*" As the interview progressed, he shared a deeper sense of cultural awareness gained and indicated appreciation of the cultural practice of *hangi*. He said,

I understand the ways of doing things, well Māori wise, differently and more broadly than what I would have done if I haven't gone there (the ISNMW). Sometimes when I travel around (New Zealand), I see people digging and putting lambs down the earth to cook them, I do understand why. (Once) on (a) travel channel, they were like doing that and I was like going to my mom, that was when I was back home, and said, "Hi, come and look, they are making *hangi*!"



As for Jon and Dan, they were particularly fond of the Māori song, *Pokarekare Ana*, which they learnt at their respective ISNMWs. Dan shared his embrace of this cultural element,

I am not a big singer, but I hear myself singing *Pokarekare Ana*. For example, when I was back home, I'll hear myself singing it or randomly think of it just like that. You can only do that when you come to a weekend like this.

Furthermore, Dan offered that the ISNMW had been for him “*a unique chance to see the culture that sort of defines New Zealand.*”

The ISNMW had been to Dave an experience of “*getting contact with this culture.*” As for Becky, she got to “*experience for myself*” Māori culture at the ISNMW. In another instance, Estee commented, “*it (the ISNMW) was such a good experience.*” All twelve international students had expressed some form of cultural awareness experience at the ISNMW and showed indications of their knowledge of Māori culture had been enriched.

#### ***5.2.1.1 Māori Cultural Elements Experienced***

The narrations were scrutinised for words which describe symbolism of Māori culture based on Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) definition. The evidence of descriptors of Māori cultural attributes found in the narrations of the international students would substantiate the tangible cultural knowledge acquired by the international students due to their participations at the ISNMW. Being enriched with new cultural knowledge is one of the way in which cultural learning is deemed to have taken place (Bennett, 1986; Ward, et al., 2001).

It was found that all twelve participants articulated between three to eleven cultural iconographies representing Māori culture, with a median of five cultural elements. Some of the commonly mentioned cultural features were the notion of *whanau* (a place to belong), singing Māori songs, and performing the *haka* by the guys. The other cultural aspects mentioned varied widely among the international students. This range of cultural elements was invaluable to piece together the picture of Māori cultural experience offered by a university cultural awareness event such as the ISNMW. Informed by the concept of *marae*, the cultural attributes identified from the international students' verbatim is attached in Appendix VII. The finding samples in Appendix VII indicate that the international students' experience of Māori culture could

be categorised, based on the concept of marae, in terms of 1) the learning on Māori cultural artefacts, 2) the observation of *tikanga* being practiced, and 3) the sentiments felt as a result of the demonstration of Māori values by the host. A summative collation of the types of identified cultural elements and the number of times discovered in the transcripts are offered in **Error! Reference source not found.**

**Table 4.**  
***Māori Cultural Elements Mentioned During the Interviews***

Aspects of Māori culture	Expressions of Māori culture	Number of times located in transcripts
Māori artefacts or iconography	Hangi	4
	Stick game	3
	Songs	9
	Dances (general)	7
	• <i>Haka</i>	8
	• <i>Poi</i>	3
	<i>Te reo</i> Māori (Māori language)	2
	Artwork	1
Māori <i>Tikanga</i> (Customs or Protocols)	Host observance of <i>tikanga</i> - <i>Manaakitanga</i> (Hospitality)	
	• Provides lots of food	4
	• Ensures a welcoming atmosphere	6
	• Shows warmth and great hospitality	3
	<i>Pōwhiri</i> (Welcome Ceremony)	1
	<i>Poroporoaki</i> (Farewell Ceremony)	1
	<i>Tikanga</i> in the meeting house	1
	Sleeping in the marae	4
Māori values	<i>Manaaki</i> (Caring for)	4
	<i>Turangawaewae</i> (A place to belong)	10
	<i>Aroha</i> (Love)	0
<b><i>Total mentioned of Māori cultural elements identified</i></b>		<b>72</b>

It was important to note here that a closer look was taken in particular to Sam's, Jack's and Dan's interview transcripts concerning the reporting of this aspect of the findings. A more detailed scrutiny was taken to ensure that these three participants had tangible cultural awareness experience at the ISNMW, and the articulations of their awareness of Māori culture were not solely based on any Māori cultural contact they may have prior

to the ISNMWs. Looking at the first case, Sam shared that he had previously been in contact with Māori when he came to New Zealand as a tourist. From his interview, Sam elaborated in detailed his experience of learning the *haka* with no comparison of past experience of learning the *haka* before the ISNMW. He commented the learning process had been “*too quick*” although he said “*it was a great experience (for him) and I wanted to have it of course. I was glad of having the chance to participate and learn it.*” This showed that Sam was new to the learning of *haka* which took place at the ISNMW.

Next, was to study Jack’s transcript because he first came to New Zealand in 2007 in an earlier educational sojourning before he joined AUT and the ISNMW in March 2010. Jack highlighted that, “*I knew a lot about Māori culture before I went to the Noho Marae.*” But he also said that “*So everything was not completely new.*” Jack articulated that he had encountered Māori artefacts and iconographies at a visit to “*a Māori community at Rotorua*”. However, Jack indicated that, “*You just got this group feeling, like in the whanau*” which he did not experience at the visit to Rotorua as “*a spectator*”. It seemed that despite having gone for a Māori cultural visit in the past, he was able to encounter intrinsic aspect of Māori culture during his participation at the ISNMW.

Finally, Dan signed up for the programme during his second semester of study in New Zealand. He did not join the ISNMW as a newly arrived international student. He commented that,

You hear about the Māori, they are in New Zealand. But they are not really a big population as such you don’t really have too big a chance to understand their culture. ... It is just a unique chance to see the culture that sort of defines New Zealand. You don’t really get to see that if you don’t go to the Noho. ... It is a lot easier when you have someone teaching it the way they do. I am not a big singer, but I hear myself singing *Pokarekare Ana*.

From Dan’s narration, it seemed that he did not have opportunity to encounter with Māori culture during his first semester in New Zealand. An indication that he had gained new insights of the culture was his ability to sing the Māori song *Pokarekare Ana* which was taught at the ISNMW.

Sam’s and Jack’s narrations revealed that despite that they both had contact with Māori culture before the ISNMW, their awareness of the cultural elements were further enriched by their ISNMW participations. Jack and Dan both did not attend the ISNMW as a newly arrived international student during his first semester, nevertheless, their

knowledge of Māori cultural elements had increased after attending the ISNMW. As for the rest of the participants, they had their very first contact with Māori culture during the first few weeks of their enrolments as new international students in AUT. (The ISNMW is organised in the first month of the semester, which is either in March or August.)

Therefore, the evidence in this study showed that the participants had an increased awareness of Māori culture due to the ISNMW, even though two of them had prior contact with Māori culture and two of them had resided in New Zealand for more than one semester before participating in the ISNMW. (The rest of the participants did not give any indication that they may have prior contact with Māori culture before the ISNMW.) This confirmed the ISNMW as a suitable case of cultural awareness initiative, and all the twelve participants interviewed had tangible experience of Māori culture. These were supported by both the excerpts indicating their contact with the culture and their ability to express Māori cultural elements during the interviews conducted after their participation at the ISNMW.

## **5.2.2 Factors Contributing to Cultural Awareness Experience**

Going beyond the surface task of identifying the cultural elements, the semi-structured interviews applied within the phenomenological framework enabled the international students to share freely and broadly about their experiences. These advantages of the semi-structured interviews led to the unearthing of themes on the factors present in the ISNMW which contributed to its effectiveness in promoting cultural awareness among the international students. Narrations from the participants shed light on the characteristics of the ISNMW which influenced their cultural encounters. These findings were found naturally weaved within the stories told by the international students as they talked about the ISNMW.

### ***5.2.2.1 Hands-on Activities***

A prominent theme which surfaced was the activity-based structure of the ISNMW. This theme was brought up frequently during the analysis of the interview transcripts. Seven of the participants highlighted the hands-on involvements they had during the weekend. Interestingly, seven international students contrasted their experiential encounters with other methods of gaining cultural knowledge.

### *Contrasted against the Media*

Becky compared her activity-based learning at the ISNMW with information obtained from the internet and from the movie. She said,

I think it is much easier for me to come to the Noho and experience for myself than reading from the internet. Sometimes information from movie and internet don't feel real...doing activities and talking to people make it (the culture) feels real.

Dan held the same opinion as Becky. He highlighted that some elements of Māori culture could not be learnt from the internet, regardless of how animated the information presented may be. Dan explained based on his experience of learning the *haka*,

Just like the *haka*, you can't learn the *haka* just by watching it on YouTube, you have to put the time, the effective time (to practice). If you don't come and do it, you won't be able to learn it the same way. It is a lot easier when you have someone teaching it the way they (Māori at the ISNMW) did.

### *Contrasted against Reading*

Additionally, Dan compared his learning experience with reading. He said,

You can't just read, you have to experience. ... You just can't read about it and say you know the culture. ... Experience, not just read it like you could anywhere. I mean, if you (want to) read (about) it, you can stay in your own country and read it, it won't tell you what it actually felt like.

Dan's phrase "*what it actually felt like*" resonated with Becky's "*make it feels real*". There was a sense of affective engagement experienced by Dan and Becky that were beyond their cognitive comprehension of Māori culture.

Ann also distinguished her experience at the ISNMW from learning about culture through reading. Ann, who read a travelling book before her arrival in New Zealand, commented,

The book introduces some New Zealand cultures and one of them is the Māori. ... You will only learn some cultural information but you cannot join in the activities. But at this weekend you can sing together, you can know their dance (steps). It is quite a different (learning experience). You cannot learn from a book.

Ann elaborated that the ISNMW allowed her to be involved in the cultural element of dancing which was beyond factual information.

*Contrasted against Visits to Museum or Tourist Centre*

Josh and Dave pointed out the ISNMW had presented them with a greater depth of knowledge about Māori culture. Dave expressed, *“When you go to the museum, everything is quite theoretical... This one you are more involved.”* In support of this, Josh differentiated the act of watching a cultural performance with that of having to perform the cultural performance himself. He said, *“I watched Māori performance (at the Auckland Museum) just like that, I don’t think that was interesting. But (at the ISNMW) I learnt to perform that performance.”*

Jack also expressed similar sentiment as Josh and Dave. Jack’s comment came in light of his visit to a tourist centre, a Māori village which opened for tourists to have a taste of Māori culture. He commented,

I have been to a Māori community in Rotorua before. I have been to the marae there. ... I stayed for one night. There were dinner and some songs and they did the *haka*. (I was) more a spectator than a participant. Here at the Noho Marae, I was a participant, you were a spectator there.”

As for Sarah, she shared,

I had a very superficial sort of exposure and understanding of Māori culture. It was pretty much like you go to the museum, you see the display and that’s it... when you go to the Noho Marae, you understand that, “It is being (done) because..”, you know why it is being done, and ... these are the things that you don’t really know.

Josh, Dave, Jack and Sarah’s descriptions supported that the activity-based ISNMW was a more effective cultural learning platform because it incorporated the international students into the cultural performances. The international students expressed that a spectator’s perspective was shallower than a performer’s perspective when they were involved in presenting the cultural performances themselves.

*Contrasted against Attending a Lecture*

On the other hand, Sam appreciated the hands-on experience at the ISNMW as a more meaningful way of getting to know about a culture. He imagined that if a lecturing format was used to organise to introduce culture, his cultural experience would not have gone beyond gathering of information. Sam speculated,

(If) otherwise, we had all just sat together in a weekend of lecture, (it) may be (a) nice lecture, may be (an) inspiring lecture, or may be just informative like

information stuff... I could have imagined... (But) doing things practically was (great), it was a great weekend. It wasn't just telling you something (like), "The Māori do this and that, they eat this and that". (Rather,) it was a hands-on approach – which was positive.

The activity-based structure of the ISNMW has been credited for deepening international students' cultural awareness. The participants quoted in this theme contended strongly for having deeper insights of Māori culture by bringing in contrasts against other means of cultural exposures.

#### ***5.2.2.2 Opportunity to Immerse in the Culture***

##### *Easy Accessibility*

International students at the ISNMW were immersed in an environment of Māori culture throughout the weekend. The duration of ISNMW was unlike most other non-academic events in AUT. According to Eva, "*Most of the events are like a two hour concert or something.*" The ISNMW was an event conveniently reached by the international students. In Eva's own words,

You know having the whole ceremony, meeting all the Māori and learning their culture and sleeping in the marae, that kind of stuffs you can't do in too many places. ... You do not need to make an effort to go and learn, they are really so open and it is all organised for you.

Although there were other opportunities around New Zealand to experience this local culture, Ann said, "*It is difficult to learn (the culture) outside this activity. ... It is possible (to learn from outside the ISNMW), but you will need to find (the opportunity) on your own.*" Becky may have hinted on one of the cause of inaccessibility when she said, "*If I want to know Māori culture, there are fewer sources to get to know about them.*" And, Dan highlighted the convenient reach of the ISNMW as a way to know the culture of a relatively small population of people in the country. He said,

You hear about the Māori, they are in New Zealand. But they are not really a big population as such you don't really have too big a chance to understand their culture. ... You don't really get to see that (the culture) if you don't go to the Noho.

This accessibility of cultural immersion could be summarised in Sarah's words, "*The Noho Marae would be a good sort of platform to participate in because it is short and sweet and within your own university.*"

### *Significant Presence of Māori Facilitators*

The second sub-theme which emerged highlighted the people element in the ISNMW. The observable presence of Māori at the ISNMW contributed to the learning of Māori culture. When Estee was probed on how the ISNMW had enriched her cultural experience, she commented, *“In every sense, especially, the Māori are the people who organise it.”*

In a separate account, Eva said, *“If you just travel around the country, you don’t learn stuff like that (family oriented-ness observed among Māori) unless you live with their indigenous people and spend time with them and ask them.”* Māori at the ISNMW provided an insight into the intrinsic aspect of Māori culture. As Sam mentioned, *“But you also get to experience this bunch of Māori people as well. And you could see how they would work together and how they would function together and that was really impressive.”*

### *Overnight Stay*

The next sub-theme was mined from a single participant. Even so, qualitative research attributes equal importance on the information provided by every participant. Sarah made the comment, *“I had a very superficial sort of exposure and understanding of Māori culture (before the ISNMW). ...The idea of camping is also very interesting, a two nights stay, which is just nice, you get the sense of the spirit.”* Her experience of the overnight stay has contributed to her learning of the intrinsic elements of Māori culture.

### **5.2.2.3 Role of Organising Staff**

The next emerging theme was on the AUT staff who organised the ISNMW. This was sectioned out as a theme on its own because the AUT staff involved in organising the weekend constituted of both Māori and non- Māori members. It was also important to note, additional Māori who were not staff or students of AUT, were invited to volunteer to support the running of the ISNMW.

Jon, grateful of his experience at the ISNMW, acknowledged the staff’s contribution by saying,



I think this group of people (the staff), like El<sup>3</sup> and her team, they are doing such a great job and that is really special. I am happy to experience that. I am sure I can't experience something like that to that extend that I had there.

The ISNMW organising staff were mentioned by two other participants. Estee said, “...the staff (are) very very very friendly and hospitable and always smiling, they make you feel not left out, but as a part of family.” And Josh commented, “The Māori staff are very good and very passionate.” These positive comments on the staff seemed to contribute to the students' positive cultural experience at the ISNMW.

#### **5.2.2.4 Friendly Social Atmosphere**

A favourable social environment appeared as one of the emerging factors which contributed to the effectiveness of the cultural experience promoted at the ISNMW.

Dave attempted to describe this environmental condition during his interview. He said,

More than going to Te Puia and just watch some commercial *haka*, you are more familiar here. ... I heard from lots of friend who watched it in a more commercial way somewhere else. But here it is more familiar, you get to know people. ... Yea, it is the familiar contact with the people here. Here the contact with Māori is just different. As I said before, in Te Puia or something like that, it is commercial. They just show you what they know and show the dances and maybe teach you a little bit, but not that familiar.

Dave's repeated mention of the word “familiar” was directed to the ability to “*get to know people*”. This suggested a social atmosphere that was conducive for the people at the ISNMW to mingle with one another. The “people” noted by Dave included the organising staff, the volunteers and the participating international students. In a separate account, Eva hinted on the present of a favourable social environment in terms of the closeness felt in the relationships she forged at the ISNMW. She said,

I have a few friends who had gone to the Māori village. ... They don't welcome you into the family (at the Māori village). It's more like you come and see them as a tourist and you go. It is not like here (at the ISNMW), they (the people at the ISNMW in general) really welcome you and you sought of feel that we are part of the family.

Sam's narration also highlighted this social aspect which put the participants at ease during their time at the ISNMW. Sam's description of the social atmosphere at the ISNMW as,

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<sup>3</sup> El is the pseudonym of one of the organising staff.

There is an easiness with them (the organisers), which make it so much easier. They were just encouraging the group (of participants), that whole group (of participants), to let go and just be themselves, be easy and introduce yourselves to each other, just have a chat, have a snack, have a chat, and so and so.

This social setting was conducive for helping participants learn about the culture presented at the ISNMW. Sarah summed it nicely,

It is like people are allowing you to see and learn about their culture. So that's the initial steps of opening the information up to you for you to understand, to share with you how they see their lives, how they see the world around them, how they relate to it.

#### **5.2.2.5 First Encounter with Culture**

The next factor was the element of a novel experience. Dave recounted, *"This is the first activity where I learn something about Māori culture."* Sarah put it simply, *"the first hand exposure to it (Māori culture). ... I think just sort of the first encounter and touch base to the basic concept that surrounds the Māori culture."* Sarah was referring to her ISNMW experience as the "first encounter" for her to learn about Māori culture. The novel effect of the programme was supported in Jack's opinion when he said,

I knew a lot about Māori culture before I went to the Noho Marae. But I would say that if I didn't know anything, it would have been a big impact. But since I knew a bit, it didn't come as a surprise to me. ... So I knew some of the things (such as *haka* and singing Māori songs) that would happen. So everything was not completely new.

#### **5.2.2.6 Ability to Relate Home Culture with Māori Culture**

The next theme was the connection made by the international students between Māori culture and their own cultures. Sarah and Eva both described the cultural similarities they observed at the ISNMW. From Sarah's account,

I do see the similarity between Māori culture and the culture from where I come from. ... my culture is also very musical, we also have a lot of dances and songs and such. I can relate to that aspect of, you know, a song and dance culture. And of the idea of having extended family living together, doing things together and such. I see a similarity. Because I see a similarity, it feels familiar to me.

From Eva's account,

All the little boys (Māori children at the ISNMW) call everyone uncles and aunts. It is similar to back home, you don't call anyone by their name if they are older

than you, (you) only call them uncle and aunty, and they do the same here. You sought of see so many similarities and so many differences.

These facts signalled the influence of the perceived cultural similarities experienced at the ISNMW as a factor that heighten some international students' culture awareness experience.

#### **5.2.2.7 Activities Scheduling**

The last emerging theme also indicated that the arrangement of the activities carried out at the ISNMW had an important part to play in engaging the international students. Josh was impressed by the event and said, *"It is just surprising that the activities are very well organised, I just enjoyed it."* Taken from Estee's narration,

From nine to five, you just practice and practice, there is a group song which you practice with guys, and there is the *poi* dance for girls and the *haka* for guys. This is most of what you do. And in the evening you perform a concert. And every single hour is like so prep-up. ... The way he (one of the staff) organised stuff that you will actually look forward to it... 'Oh there is a concert now,' 'there is this activity now.' Yeah, pretty exciting. The way he manages the event is very encouraging, very inspiring.

Although Estee was in favour of the "prep-up" programming schedule, Sam commented negatively on the arrangement of the activities at the ISNMW. He said,

I think there was too much of a hassle or a hurry to practice this and that... to practice all morning, practice for hours at least, for all morning and then in the afternoon again, and again for hours. (So that we, the international students, can) perform in the evening (on) the same day. And that for me, as a learning process did not feel right.

However, in another part of Sam's sharing, he brought up a contrasting nature in the arrangement of the activities that was more relax,

The set up of the weekend, there were lots of breaks, tea breaks and coffee breaks, so time to chat or waiting time in between (activities). So, you had lots of opportunity to talk and that was one thing (feature of the programme).

Although these few excerpts did not provide a clear picture on the effectiveness of the ISNMW, it was nonetheless important to note that the planning of the activities carried out at the ISNMW was an area that would impact international students' engagement during this cultural weekend.

All the seven themes identified were helpful to point out the characteristics of the ISNMW that contributed to its effectiveness as an institutionally initiated cultural awareness programme. These seven themes would be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The next section outlined the findings on the ISNMW as a platform to promote social integration.

## **5.3 ISNMW's Influence on International Student Social Adjustment**

### **5.3.1 Types of Social Adjustment**

#### ***5.3.1.1 Improved Sense of Belonging***

From the data mined, it was apparent that the ISNMW had impacted the international students' social adjustments. A lack of sense of belonging has been identified as one of the adaptation issues among the international students (Campbell & Li, 2008; Pedersen, 1995; Sandhu, 1994). The twelve international students were asked how they perceived the ISNMW to have contributed to their sense of belonging to the AUT community and to New Zealand's local community in general. Strong evidence pointed to an improved sense of belonging to AUT in eleven of those interviewed.

To illustrate this occurrence, Sarah narrated, *"I see my participation gives me a greater awareness of being part of the AUT community."* In Eva's interview, she commented, *"Well, yea. Before I went to the Noho, I didn't have too many friends at the university."* Another example, taken from Jack, *"Yea, definitely. The Noho made me feel that I belong to AUT community because I meet all the students there are from AUT, (and) most of the staff are from AUT."*

The majority of the eleven who felt a stronger sense of belonging to AUT also perceived the ISNMW to have contributed to their sense of belonging to New Zealand's local community. For example, Abe responded, *"Yeah, it kind of does. I understand the ways of doing things, well Māori wise, differently and more broadly than what I would have done if I haven't gone there (the ISNMW)."* From Jack's account, he said, *"Yes, kind. Because I become good friends with some Māori who are ISSS staff."* As for the remaining of these eleven students, two were not sure whether the ISNMW has helped them to identify with the local community, and two others did not report that the ISNMW has contributed to their sense of belonging to the local community.

Of the one individual who did not perceive an improved sense of belonging to AUT, Becky instead indicated,

I feel more like being part of the local community, not AUT community. I think it doesn't matter whether it is AUT or AU (University of Auckland) or any other university. But I do feel being part of the local community here. ... (Māori at the ISNMW) are from outside the college.

Although Becky did not feel that the ISNMW has helped her with regards to her social affiliation with AUT, her social transition as an international student in New Zealand had been aided by the ISNMW. She got to socialise with Māori, a people group she identified as members of the larger New Zealand community. Becky explained,

For example, I'm staying at the university student apartment, there are not so many Māori people (living there). I don't really have (the) chance to talk to Māori people by living there. I only talk to international students or friends from my home country. Here in this weekend, I can get so many chances to get to know them.

She felt more a part of the local community because Māori she got to know were both from AUT and outside of AUT. Some Māori volunteers were neither staff nor students from AUT. Therefore, whether it was an increased affiliation with the university or a newly discovered identification with the local community, the ISNMW had contributed to enhance the international students' social adjustment by strengthening their sense of belonging to AUT and/or to New Zealand.

#### ***5.3.1.2 Encouraged Formation of Social Networks***

In addition, the analysis of the interview transcripts detected three other ways in which the ISNMW had benefitted the international students socially. The findings suggest that the ISNMW has facilitated the formation of social networks among the international students, enabled opportunity for information sharing, and developed practical social skills useful in New Zealand.

Becky's evidence provided the evidence on the promotion of social networks. Becky said, *"Before I join Noho Marae last semester, I didn't really have Kiwi friends. I only have international friends."* This phenomenon was also described in detailed by Sam,

The other thing would be this bunch of international people, the connections (with the international students) which were made over that weekend was somehow special for the whole semester... So when you have met them (at the ISNMW), there is a connection, and that's actually people for you to contact and or want to be

with. So at least that was the contact which lasted the whole semester, certainly not with everyone, but, I found that was very important (for international students). ...as far as I can see it today, this lump, they just stuck together, and they were linked on Facebook. ...a handful of people you were drawn to, a bit more than to others. (But they were from) all kinds of disciplines... whether they were of my nationality or not.

Sam highlighted his observation on the friendships forged during the ISNMW. He was impressed that these friendships lasted through the semester. In Sam's case, he had only been enrolled at AUT for one semester at the point of interview. Sam's narration also suggested that these relationships were desirable by the international students for the purpose of social companionship.

In support of Sam, Jon provided further insight on the importance of these relationships when he said, *"You get to know a lot of people. You kind of stick to them for the whole semester, like a nice group. Yea, and this is very valuable for an international students because you are alone."* Sharing on a similar note, Estee said, *"This is a place where you can actually socialise. New students, when they come to a different country, they feel kind of lonely and homesick."*

In Eva's case, the friendships built during her ISNMW were more than casual acquaintances. An excerpt taken from the interview with Eva revealed,

Before I went to the Noho, I don't really have any (close) friends at university, it is just more study friends. If you have an assignment, you say, "Let's study together," and that's about it. So you don't actually get to know anyone personally. ...that is not really what you want (only). You want study friends but you also want friends you can talk to and get to know. ...at the Noho you sought of get to meet a lot of people and get to know them quite well. ...you get to talk about your own country, you talk on a more personal level rather than just talk on just academics.

It was evident that the ISNMW promoted international students to have friends, some of these friendships out lasted the weekend, while some of these friendships grew in a more personal level.

#### ***5.3.1.3 Provided Opportunity for Information Sharing***

Another way in which the ISNMW has supported the international students socially was by providing a place for information sharing among the international students. Josh revealed this advantage when he said,

I met a lot of new friends. That is the most important (thing) to many (new international) students when you stay in a foreign country. You can communicate some new information (with your new friends), and when you know information (it helps you to live in a new place). For example, I met a guy from another nationality, he told me he was living in my current apartment and the price was very high. So he left to a new place which was just half the price. That was very good information for me, and maybe I will try (moving to this new place) next semester.

#### **5.3.1.4 Taught Social Skills Practical in Local Context**

The next social benefit was gleamed from Estee's sharing. She said,

If I have to talk to a Māori person, I can use some of the Māori word I learnt. In case there is a Māori wedding or a Māori function, I can always join in to sing with them Māori songs. I'm pretty confident of that. In case of a Māori function, I can participate and don't feel left out, I do feel part of the local community.

She pointed out one of the perceived benefits of an awareness on Māori culture has equipped her to function socially during local events.

Evidence presented in this segment revealed that the ISNMW has supported international students socially. The interview data were able to provide further information on the factors present at the ISNMW that have supported the above listed aspects of social support. A total of four themes were found.

### **5.3.2 Factors Assisting Social Adjustment**

#### **5.3.2.1 The Concept of Whanau**

The *whanau* concept in Māori culture resonated strongly in more than three quarters of the participants. *Whanau* is Māori word for "family". The concept of *whanau* is tied to Māori value of *turangawaewae* (a place to belong); the marae is a place where an individual can belong. The international students attributed their strengthened sense of belonging to their inclusions as members of the *whanau*. Abe, describing his sense of belonging to AUT, replied, "*I feel like I'm really part of the whanau, you could say.*" Similarly, Jack responded, "*You just got this group feeling, like in the whanau,*" while Becky reminisced, "*...a big whanau, I like it, I like the idea.*" Dave also responded, "*They just treat you as part of the family... the whanau.*" Sarah expressed her ability to identify with this concept and said,

I can relate to the idea of having an extended family living together, doing things together, a sense of belonging, an initial sense of belonging. You need that

especially when you are coming into a new area, a new country, a new culture, that sense of being welcomed.

Sam provided some details spoken about *whanau* that took place at the ISNMW,

I remembered the sentence that was at the end of the marae, “Wherever you go in New Zealand you can say or you should say, ‘I am part of the AUT *whanau*,’ ” or something like that. And they (the ISNMW organising staff) said, “ ‘And I have my very own marae,’ you can say.” Because obviously one (a local Māori) has his certain marae (in New Zealand).

Jon shared how he felt being in the *whanau*,

What I experienced here is the warmth of the people. Like they invited me to their *whanau*. That makes it special, you feel like people are caring for you. Like a group experience. That is really nice. And I think that’s what special about New Zealand and Māori. Maybe in the Pacific islands, it is similar. The idea of the family group, everyone belongs to a group. Everyone is nice to each other, everyone respect each other.

Estee had a deep impression of the *whanau* concept. She depicted,

They (Māori at the ISNMW) are very very family oriented. ...they make you feel not left out, but as part of a family. Oh, the word I love in Māori is *whanau*. We don’t even know each other the first time we meet and people are calling, “Hi, *whanau*! Come here, come here.” It feels so good, it is very touching. The moment you hear that a person is part of the family, and you just forget everything else, and like “Yes! I got a family here.” A very powerful word! For me, I can forget all the other Māori words, but never this *whanau*.

Eva described how the sense of *whanau* experienced at the ISNMW continued on after the weekend. Eva said,

You attend the Noho they (the ISNMW organising staff) sought of consider you as family. When you need help, they definitely do whatever they can to help you. You know, they see you they say, “Hello,” and it sought of make you feel nice.

Dan emphasised the importance of the *whanau* relationship to the transient characteristic of the international student community,

What I always tell new students, which I always tell everyone, is to go to the Noho because you get accepted to the family, and that is like the most important thing. That even when the weekend is over, you have something to take with you... you are part of the family. You get to know these people (non-international students). International students are great, but most of them will return home. So you can feel a bit alone if you have nowhere to go. Being part of the family is an important.



Excerpts from the above narrations indicated the significant influence of the *whanau* concept in the integration of international students into the AUT and the local community.

### **5.3.2.2 Exposure to Māori Culture**

At a broader picture, the awareness of Māori culture, one of the distinctive New Zealand culture, has helped international students to identify themselves better with the local community. Dave simply put it, “*It (The ISNMW) contributed to my sense of belonging is New Zealand because of Māori culture.*” Sharing the same sentiment, Abe said, “*understand the ways of doing things, well Māori wise, differently and more broadly,*” has helped him to identify with the local community. Jon, coupled the *whanau* concept with the awareness of the local culture and said,

Like you understand their culture, and if you understand their culture, you know how the other people think. And you can feel part of the *whanau*, that makes you part of the whole thing, of AUT, and of the country.

In the earlier section on social benefits, it was noted that Estee perceived her awareness of Māori culture has equipped her with skills to enable her to socialise at Māori events.

### **5.3.2.3 Suitable Setting for Socialising**

#### *Mass Gathering of People*

The ISNMW was a good socialising platform for the international students because it was an opportunity for new international students to build friendships. At the ISNMW, a student “*get to know a lot of people, you kind of stick to them for the whole semester, like a nice group,*” said Jon. Jon was referring in general to everyone who were at the ISNMW, from the participating international students, the staff, to the volunteers. He continued, “*Yea, and this (group) is very valuable for an international students because you are alone (as a new student).*”

Abe’s statement concurred with Jon. Abe described the ISNMW as a place for international students to “*socialise with others*”, “*meet a lot of great people*” and “*build friendships*”; all described in the same sentence. As for Ann, she met “*many friends from different countries*”. Ann was glad with her participation at the ISNMW because she “*missed the orientation week*” and “*did not know the other international students.*” In Becky’s case, she was able to meet with “*many Māori people and so many*

*Kiwi*”, and subsequently, “*after that I get to know their friends.*” The ISNMW was a good platform to meet the socialisation needs of the international students, as Eva quipped, “*After I went to the Noho, I meet about a hundred students.*”

#### *Group Activities*

The next emerging sub-theme was on the ISNMW’s characteristic of being an interactive programme. In Ann’s words, “*You play with them (international students), you sing with them, you dance with them. You can (interact) with international students in this activity.*” Estee indicated this factor by saying,

This is a place where you can actually socialise. ... This is a platform where you go and meet other people of different countries and explore new things. I get to know so much about new stuff of other countries and people, their culture. When you sit with like a hundred people, and eating, having breakfast, lunch and dinner, you know so much of stuff and you share your own culture with them.

The activities carried out at the ISNMW drew the international students out of passivity to interaction. Becky illustrated,

I don’t really have much experience with talking to people from other countries. ...But if we come to this programme, we automatically speak or have so many chances to speak with others. ...everyday there are some games to (help us) get to know each other.

When probed on what made his friendship connections with people at the ISNMW to last the whole semester, Sam suggested,

I think we were doing something together... Having been active together or having like achieved a project together. Like managed the *haka* for the boys, that was one experience. ...and they were celebrating birthdays and the nationalities would sing songs and so on. You had to function in certain groups during that weekend.

#### *Gathering of International Students with Similar Intentions*

From the data gathered, it seemed that the international students who signed up for the ISNMW were like-minded to some extent. Participation in the ISNMW was based on voluntary registration. Jack said, “*You will meet heaps of international students who are there with the same reason as you, to meet new friends and to learn new things. Everybody is there for the same reason.*”

This element could also be observed from Eva’s interview. She explained,

So the Noho is a good way to know new people and you meet people who are so much like you. The reason they are there is because they want to learn (about culture) as well. Same in the sense the same kind of mind, want to learn, want to make friends.

#### ***5.3.2.4 Opportunity to Relate with AUT Staff***

The AUT staff were credited for the improved sense of belonging. Their contributions were picked up from Sam's transcript. He commented,

And this is mainly depending on those few people who were initiating that thing (the ISNMW) and leading it. Especially from that staff, you can even pick a few personalities (from among the staff), two or three personalities which were the main initiators of that and they kept this (event) up somehow during that time because you kept seeing them and you were reminded of (AUT) that weekend.

When asked whether the ISNMW has contributed to her sense of belonging to AUT, Estee overwhelmingly agreed,

Oh Yes! I'm so proud. It is organised by our university only. It is AUT which actually organised this for AUT international students. Only because of this event, I'm now very close to International Student Support Team. They know my name and I know them. ...So now the bonding with the AUT Staff, Lu, Ro, El, and Co<sup>4</sup>, it's gluing, it is becoming more and more."

Estee was proud to be socially identified with AUT because the ISNMW organised for the international students has facilitated a bonding between the staff and her even after the weekend. She considered herself to be "gluing" more and more with the staff as her impression of being a part of the AUT community.

Jack indicated friendships with the ISNMW organising staff has caused him to relate to AUT better. He shared,

The Noho made me feel belong to AUT, most of the staff are from AUT. The staff are very good to make you feel part of the group, they take very good care of you. ...I become good friends with some Māori who are ISSS staff. So I really know them as friends rather than ISSS.

A good relationship with the staff has helped Jack to feel he was taken care of while he studied at AUT. The friendships forged with the staff who organised the ISNMW have enhanced some international students' sense of belonging to AUT. Quoted from Eva,

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<sup>4</sup> Lu, Ro, El, and Co are the pseudonyms of AUT staff.

Friends you can talk to and get to know... El, Lu and Ro, and Re<sup>5</sup> and all of them (the ISNMW organising staff). When you need help they are always willing to help you. They really make you feel more part of the university.

The evidence obtained from this exploratory study has showed that the ISNMW has an influence on international students' social adjustment. This study has also uncovered four characteristics in the ISNMW that supported the social integration of the international students.

## **5.4 ISNMW Influence on International Students' Perception of New Zealand**

The final interview segment with the international students was an invitation to share how they perceived the ISNMW has influenced their perceptions of New Zealand.

Although this portion of the study was posed in a more general sense to understand the students' perceptions of New Zealand as a country, it was noted that all the participants offered their replies in relation to Māori culture or Māori. This may be due to the nature of the ISNMW that was solely based on Māori culture. The responses gathered can be classified into three groups: 1) corrected initial negative perceptions, 2) changed from neutral perception of New Zealand to a more positive feeling of the country, and 3) no change in perception.

### **5.4.1 Corrected Initial Negative Perceptions**

In the first category, some international students shared the initial negative impressions they had about New Zealand that were associated with their perceptions of Māori. In Josh's case, his negative perception was gathered through the information obtained from the watching the local television programmes during his short three weeks in New Zealand. Josh said, *"Before I attend the Noho Marae, I think Māori are not that good because the television reports that the criminals are mainly Māori. The Police's Wanted Lists shown on local television channel are usually Māori and Pacifika."* However, at the point of interview, Josh highlighted that the ISNMW has changed his initial negative perception of Māori. He said,

But after I attended the Noho Marae, I think that they (Māori) have their culture, their music, the words, their language. I think they are very nice. Māori people are very strong, now I feel more familiar with them and I don't need to be afraid of them.

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<sup>5</sup> El, Lu and Ro, and Re are the pseudonyms of AUT staff.

In another instance, Estee revealed that peer influence was the factor which contributed to her initial negative perception of Māori. She shared, *“I’m going to be very honest here. My friends told me that they try not to be friends with Māori. They said that Māori are good people but not too good.”* Conversely, Estee’s personal experience at the ISNMW informed her otherwise. She described,

But after attending this event, my perception totally changed. Māori people are really nice, just because of the (organising) staff, they are very welcoming, very hospitable and always with a smile on their face. No matter what the situation is they are so full of energy, singing, dancing together, very very family oriented. I could actually relate their culture with our own culture, they are very family oriented.

Estee went on further to recollect the general perception she had of the New Zealand society before her arrival to this country,

Before coming to New Zealand, I had a perception of New Zealand, being a developed country, as a western country. I had a perception that the people in New Zealand like to be with their own circles and they don’t like to mix with people and stuff, especially with other nationalities.

Estee’s narration showed that this preconceived assumption was debunked when she continued,

Frank enough, I didn’t even know about Māori, before (I came here). Once I landed here, I got to know more about Māori... My perception actually changed after Noho. Mainly because of the staff, very very very friendly and hospitable and always smiling, they make you feel not left out, but as a part of family.

It seemed that in both Josh and Estee accounts, having opportunities to be in contact with Māori at the ISNMW gave them a different reality from their initial perceptions. Furthermore, in Estee’s case, she obtained a more multicultural perspective of the New Zealand society.

#### **5.4.2 Neutral to More Positive Feeling**

The next group of international students had a neutral feeling towards New Zealand before the ISNMW. Seven students reported the ISNMW has caused them to feel better about New Zealand. Concerning the influence of the ISNMW on his impression of New Zealand, Sam gave some descriptive details,

Yeah, it (the ISNMW) certainly has influenced me. You got lots of impression of those Māori people. For example, when it came to cooking, or preparing the food or teaching the *haka*, suddenly they had like ten more big (Māori) guys coming. And they were just waiting to teach that (*haka*) to you. Some guy would just come in to teach you voice, few aspects of the voice stuff. And another guy was doing stretching with you. They would spend the whole day hanging around and being easy and repeating the *haka* and they all knew it so perfectly by heart. That was of their priority to be here with friends and teach that (*haka*) and have some fun with those international people. And actually that is also a sign of great hospitality.

...they are just practical, but very very social, very social people. They would just gather and of course they would bring their kids along and they are just there, yea the kids. And there were rules like, “everyone was watching for the kids”... This whole social aspect is positive with regards to the upbringing of the children.

...The weekend brought out respect for this culture, for Māori culture. No matter how big one is, these (Māori) guys are physically big, everyone is approachable and easy to talk to and, I had quite a few insights, it was good to do that.

Sam’s response came in light of the social encounters he had with Māori at the ISNMW. Despite that Sam had earlier encounter with Māori as a tourist prior to his educational sojourning, it seemed that the social interaction with the local people was the biggest influence on Sam’s change of perception of the country.

Similarly, Dave reported on the social impact the ISNMW had on him. He said,

Yea, it is a better feeling of New Zealand. At the beginning everything was just new. At the beginning I didn’t know any Māori. ....Before the Noho Marae, I do not know how open were, the Māori. The New Zealand people in general are more open than my countrymen. They are open and friendly.

Dave had a better perception of New Zealand because he perceived Māori were open and friendly. This has resulted in giving him an impression that New Zealand people in general were more open, friendly, as compared to people from his own country.

At her interview, Eva also mentioned about the openness of the host at the ISNMW. She shared how she felt this social experience has caused her to have a more positive feeling of New Zealand.

I didn’t have any perception about New Zealand before I came, but it (the ISNMW) definitely helped me understand New Zealand, understand the people here better, learning about the culture, to know how nice they are, how open they are, it makes you feel less shy. ...I was neutral about New Zealand before and after the Noho there was a more positive feeling about New Zealand. Definitely have more friends,

definitely felt more in place here. Once you know that there are people who can help you, you sort of feel nicer and more at home.

Becky's perception of New Zealand was tagged to the friendships she forged with the locals. Becky said,

Before I join Noho Marae last semester, I didn't really have Kiwi friends. Even though I am in New Zealand, I don't really know about their culture or how they live or how they are. ...I feel like my world has expanded. I only know fellow countrymen when I was back home. ... The Māori people are friendly... and welcoming.

Becky took the expansion of her social world as a positive experience of her sojourning experience in New Zealand. Her positive feeling of New Zealand was tied to the contacts she had with Māori at the ISNMW.

Jon's positive perception of New Zealand was due to feeling welcomed at the ISNMW. He said delightedly,

I think you feel you are welcomed. You understand that there is an open culture that invites you, that is happy that you are around; you will notice that the people in this country are happy that you are around them.

On the other hand, Sarah's perception of New Zealand was influenced by cultural similarity rather than social association. Sarah shared the influence that the ISNMW had on her as,

I have to say that I feel that there are some similarities between my own culture and Māori culture that has been shared (at the ISNMW) so that I understand it (Māori culture) a bit more. In a way, I do like New Zealand, I do see what they have to offer, the beauty of the culture, the beauty of the place and such. ...I can also appreciate what I have back home in comparison.

The similarities Sarah identified between her culture and Māori culture has helped her to appreciate New Zealand and also deepen her appreciation of her home culture.

Different from the rest, Abe's perception of New Zealand was influenced by what he learnt about New Zealand at the ISNMW. He felt more positive about New Zealand because he moved from a state of little knowledge of New Zealand to a more informed state about the country. Abe described how his perception on New Zealand changed,

Before I came to New Zealand, first of all, I didn't know where it was, to be quite honest, well, sort of but not exactly. I didn't know anything about the culture or what kind of people to expect, and the ways they behave, that kind of thing. I would say after the Noho, I got to learn about a lot of people (internationally), that was good because New Zealand is kind of a multicultural society, and also different people, Māori, Kiwi. Just see how they do things and behave and communicate and all that. So maybe, you can say that yes there was a change in my feeling of New Zealand, a more positive feeling. ...Definitely a more positive feeling of New Zealand because I get a better knowledge of New Zealand itself which is fantastic.

#### **5.4.3 No Influence on Perception**

Three international students did not perceive the ISNMW to have caused any change to their perceptions of New Zealand. Dan signed up for the ISNMW in his second semester in AUT. He did not think that the ISNMW had influenced his perception, but he felt he was being accepted by the New Zealand people socially through the ISNMW. He responded,

I don't really know if I felt different as such. I didn't know what to expect of the Noho. As I told you, I feel sort of more part of the family, more part of New Zealand. It is just something you can't learn, it is something you have to do, you feel more part of the family and know people better.

Unlike some participants' perceptions in the previous section, although Dan had a positive social experience with the host at the ISNMW, he did not perceive that the ISNMW has influenced his perception of New Zealand. Dan qualified that since he did not know what to expect from his participation at the ISNMW, he was not able to comment on whether any change in his perception occurred.

For Jack, it was hard for him to comment on the influence the ISNMW had on him. He said,

Well, it is hard to say, because since I have been here in 2007, I kind of had an interpretation as well. I knew a lot about Māori culture before I went to the Noho Marae. But I would say that if I didn't know anything, it would have been a big impact. But since I knew a bit, this didn't come as a surprise to me. ... I have been to a Māori community in Rotorua before. I have been to the marae there.

Prior knowledge of Māori culture was the reason the ISNMW did not seem to have an influence on Jack's perception of New Zealand.

The reason Ann did not perceive the ISNMW as having any influence on her perception of New Zealand was due to some prior knowledge she had on New Zealand. She said,



*“Before I came here, I read some books on New Zealand, some introduction on New Zealand. So I already knew something about this culture.”* But more than the prior knowledge Ann offered that it was her living experience in Auckland that has changed her preconceived idea of New Zealand. Ann reflected the experience that jolted her knowledge of New Zealand,

A little changed in my feeling towards New Zealand was due to Auckland itself. Before I came, I thought Auckland is not a city, there very few people here. After I came here, I realised that Auckland is a city. I had the wrong initial feeling that New Zealand is far away, less developed, but not Auckland.

Instead of making a reference to the ISNMW, Ann highlighted the city life she experienced as the cause of her change of perception of New Zealand.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

A review of the literature shows that little is known about the effectiveness of cultural awareness initiatives undertaken by educational institutions in New Zealand, especially on programmes outside formal academic requirements. However, scholars have noted that cultural adjustment is a key aspect in international students' sojourning experience (e.g. Bennett, 1986; Pedersen, 1995; Ward, et al., 2001). Furthermore, it is in the interest of New Zealand Ministry of Education to improve the social experience of international students. The International Agenda 2007-2012 drawn up by the Ministry highlights that international student's social experience satisfaction was a contributing factor to an enriched education experience in New Zealand (International Division, 2007). This research was set out as an exploratory study to gather insights on cultural awareness initiatives organised for international students in a university. The aim of this study was to identify the key factors present at the ISNMW (International Students Noho Marae Weekend), a type of a cultural awareness initiative, for promoting cultural awareness and facilitating international students' social adjustment. Using the ISNMW as the case study, this research was built upon the following research questions:

- 1) How do international students perceive their cultural experience at a cultural-based programme?
- 2) How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their social adjustment into the AUT community and the general local community?
- 3) How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their perceptions of New Zealand?

Following the findings presented in the previous chapter, this chapter discusses the meaning of each of the themes in relation to works by other authors. Despite that the findings are consistent with existing literature in general, there emerged a few novel findings that suggest new perspectives on international students' adaptation.

## 6.1 Research Question 1: How do international students perceive their cultural experience at a cultural-based programme?

### 6.1.1 Cultural Awareness Experience at the ISNMW

The current study found strong evidence indicating that international students had been enriched with cultural awareness experience from attending the ISNMW. All the participants stated that the experience increased their awareness of Māori culture. Each participant was able to share three or more Māori cultural artefacts in describing the ISNMW experience (refer to **Error! Reference source not found.** in Chapter 5 p. 80). The ability of the international students to describe their ISNMW cultural encounter experientially suggests a cultural awareness that is beyond their own culture.

According to Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), a framework that models people's perception on cultural differences, one's intercultural perception progresses developmentally from single culture awareness to more complex constructs involving more than one culture. Bennett (1986) terms this progress as a transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. A person who is more ethnorelative is able to accept that other cultures equally exist alongside one's own culture. A person is considered accepting of other's culture when one gives acknowledgement to tangible experience of the other culture. However, this acceptance does not translate to agreement with or embracing of the different culture. This acceptance of experiential difference was noted in the participants' narrations.

Progressing to a greater extent of ethnorelativity, Bennett's (1986) DMIS explains that a person grows from a state of acceptance to a state of adaptation. Adaptation refers to the ability to understand the significance of culture indicators and to behave appropriately outside one's own cultural context. A few excerpts in this study illustrate this greater degree of ethnorelativity. For example, Abe demonstrated his understanding of the making of Māori meal, *hangi*, when he said,

I understand the ways of doing things, well Māori wise, differently and more broadly than what I would have done if I haven't gone there (the ISNMW). Sometimes when I travel around (New Zealand), I see people digging and putting lambs down the earth to cook them, I do understand why. (Once) on (a) travel channel, they were like doing that and I was like going to my mom, that was when I was back home, and said, "Hi, come and look, they are making *hangi*!"

Abe went on to share a glimpse of his understanding of a culturally different way of cooking with his parents when he returned to his own country. In the case of Jon and Dan, they indicated that they both embrace singing the Māori song, *Pokarekare Ana*, as to singing songs from their own languages even after the ISNMW has ended. In another instance, Estee described her desire to participate in local Māori functions after being introduced to culturally appropriate behaviour and practices at the ISNMW. She shared,

If I have to talk to a Māori person, I can use some of the Māori word I learnt. In case there is a Māori wedding or a Māori function, I can always join in to sing with them Māori songs. I'm pretty confident of that. In case of a Māori function, I can participate and don't feel left out, I do feel part of the local community.

The findings on cultural awareness in this study are consistent with Bennett's (1986) DMIS, a model that has been applied in other cultural awareness studies among local and international students (e.g. P. H. Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Klak & Martin, 2003). These findings do strongly suggest that the ISNMW has been useful for promoting awareness of a local culture.

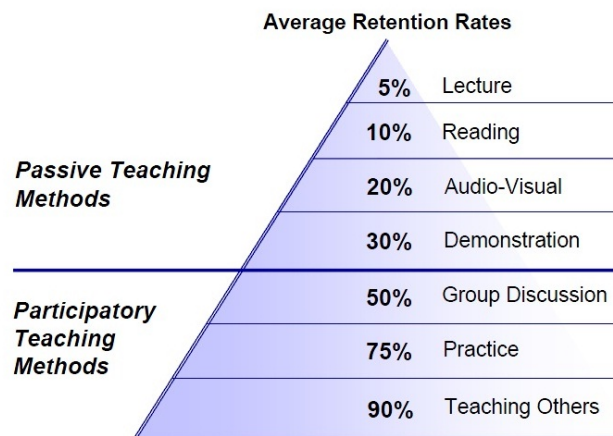
However, this study was limited in that it was not able to measure the degree of cultural awareness experienced at the ISNMW. Further research should be conducted as an extension of this exploratory study to assess the degree of cultural awareness change taking place by conducting pre- and post- surveys on participants at the ISNMW. A tool developed based on DMIS, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) could be used to serve this purpose (Hammer & Bennett, 1998). IDI was used by Klak and Martin (2003) in their study to measure the influence of Miami University's cultural programme among its geography students. There are many other tools used in research to measure the level of cultural awareness such as the Cultural Awareness Scale (Rew, Becker, Cookston, Khosropour, & Martinez, 2003) used in a study on nursing students (Krainovich-Miller, et al., 2008), and Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (Henry, 1986) used to investigate multicultural awareness among teachers (E. L. Brown, 2004). Amidst the selection of tools available, future researchers need to cautiously evaluate the suitability of each tools based on the tools' underlying assumptions before using it to measure people's level of cultural awareness. Presently, the choice of instruments for measuring cultural awareness varied among researchers, and there is no compelling evidence for favouring any one tool.

## 6.1.2 Factors Contributing to Cultural Awareness Experience

### 6.1.2.1 Hands-on Activity

Along with the cultural awareness experiences, the participants in this study offered insights into factors present at the ISNMW that facilitated their cultural enrichment. Seven participants perceived their involvements in hands-on activities helped them to gain a deeper understanding of Māori culture. Their narrations suggest that they gained understanding beyond the less interactive modes of learning, namely, reading from internet or books, watching an online video or movie, visiting museum or tourist centre, and attending a lecture. International students were engaged with hands-on activities to learn dancing (*haka* and *poi* dances), singing, making *poi* (ball like artefact), and playing stick games. In one instance, Sam highlighted that the weekend was filled with extensive practices of learning these cultural elements. He said, *“I think there was too much of a hassle or a hurry to practice this and that... to practice all morning, practice for hours at least, for all morning and then in the afternoon again, and again for hours.”* Although Sam considered the practice sessions excessive, he noted that *“doing things practically was (great), it was a great weekend.”*

This finding indicates the effectiveness of learning culture by means of practicing cultural elements. Learning by practicing, also known as learning-by-doing, has been identified as the second most effective way of retaining learning in the learning pyramid (National Training Laboratories, n.d.). The learning pyramid in Figure 8 suggests that practice contributes to 75% of retention of learning as compared to learning from attending lecture (5%), learning by reading (10%), learning from audio-visual media (20%), and learning by watching demonstration of cultural performances at museum or tourist centre (30%). Even though the current study supported the learning retention concept, it is cautioned that little empirical evidence was found in literature to support the proposed percentage quoted by Hannum (2009).



**Figure 8. The Learning Pyramid.** Source: National Training Laboratories. (n.d.). Retrieved February 18, 2011, from [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVMARKETPLACE/Resources/Handout\\_TheLearningPyramid.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVMARKETPLACE/Resources/Handout_TheLearningPyramid.pdf)

#### **6.1.2.2 Opportunity to Immerse in the Culture**

A second factor that emerged in my research was the potency of immersion in Māori culture during the weekend. Since only about one in seven New Zealanders are Māori (in 2001) (Wilson, 2009), opportunity for international students to immerse in Māori cultural environment can be rare apart from access to museums and cultural centres like Te Puia. The opportunity to be immersed in Māori culture was a motivation for international students to participate in the ISNMW. As Sarah put it, *“The Noho Marae would be a good sort of platform to participate in because it is short and sweet and within your own university.”*

Also, the significant presence of Māori facilitators at the ISNMW contributed to Māori communal environment. The international students had the opportunity for up close interactions with Māori, in Eva’s words, *“..you don’t learn stuff like that (family orientation observed among Māori at the ISNMW) unless you live with their indigenous people and spend time with them and ask them.”* And Sam recounted, *“But you also get to experience this bunch of Māori people as well. And you could see how they would work together and how they would function together and that was really impressive.”* Māori staff, students and volunteers at the ISNMW provided a community of “the people of the culture” for international students to interact with and relate to.

The ISNMW was a cultural immersion initiative that brought international students beyond “head-knowledge” about Māori culture. Sarah offered, *“I had a very superficial*

*sort of exposure and understanding of Māori culture (before the ISNMW). ...The idea of camping is also very interesting, a two nights stay, which is just nice, you get the sense of the spirit.”* The weekend long stay at the AUT marae gave Sarah a lived-in experience with Māori community.

The cultural immersion factor concurs with a study on twelve teachers sent for 2-3 weeks long cultural immersion programme from the United States to Kenya (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). The study is based on the concept that experiential learning by Dewey (1938) who believed that learning comes through meaningful experience. The concept of experiential learning is different from learning by practising mentioned earlier in that experiential learning emphasises the cognitive reflection of the experience to reinforce learning, while learning by practising emphasises the psychomotor act of engaging in an activity to learn.

Kambutu and Nganga's (2008) study concludes the immersion experience helped the participants to make sense of the unfamiliar host culture they had to live in. That study notes,

When people are immersed, they experience cultural dissonance, an essential step in the process of building cultural awareness. Immersing people in foreign cultures, physically distant from familiar ones, denies them the luxury of going back to the familiar. To function, they must make sense of the unfamiliar. Making sense of unfamiliar cultural practices leads to cultural transformation. (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008, p. 949)

Drawing reference to Kambutu and Nganga (2008), international students are situated in a state of cultural dissonance because they have dislocated from home. Even though the ISNMW was just a weekend instead of 2-3 weeks as in the case in Kambutu and Nganga (2008), the international students may have experienced similar effects and made sense of the unfamiliar Māori culture by interaction with the culture within the marae complex. This finding suggests that international students who are already living in an unfamiliar culture can experience cultural transformation by immersion in a cultural programme shorter than what Kambutu and Nganga (2008) proposed.

#### **6.1.2.3 Role of Organising Staff**

Thirdly, evidence in this study suggests that the organising staff played an important role in contributing to participants' positive cultural experience at the ISNMW. Three

participants related their ISNMW experiences with the role of the organising staff. Jon described,

I think this group of people (the staff), like El<sup>6</sup> and her team, they are doing such a great job and that is really special. I am happy to experience that. I am sure I can't experience something like that to that extend that I had there.

The organising staff, consisting of both Māori and non-Māori members, and both academic and non-academic staff, were “*friendly and hospitable and always smiling*” according to Estee, and “*very good and very passionate*” according to Josh.

It is interesting to note that recent study by Arambewela and Hall (2009) on international student perception of sojourning satisfaction revealed that interaction with academic staff is emphasised while interaction with administrative staff is only indirectly implied by the quality of students services experienced. In a separate study, Pereda, Airey and Bennett (2007) also report that quality of instruction and interaction with teaching staff as one of the key measures valued by international students in assessing their education experience. It can be argued that academic achievement, being the purpose of international student sojourning, will be influenced by academic related matters, including satisfaction derived from interaction with academic staff.

In light of the importance of using holistic cultural adaptation for enriching the international student sojourning experience (Ward, et al., 2001), this study brings to attention not only members of the academic staff, but also that of non-academic staff in facilitating positive international student sojourning experience. Recognition given by the participants to the effort put in by the university staff in general suggests staff across all department has the potential to positively influence international student's cultural experience.

#### **6.1.2.4 Friendly Social Atmosphere**

The fourth factor suggests that the ISNMW generated a friendly social atmosphere for international students to be at ease with the new culture. Sam found the organising staff promoted “easiness” in the social atmosphere, while Dave expressed the social setting gave him a sense of “familiar contact”. The effect of this social atmosphere was telling in that Eva commented, “...*they (the people at the ISNMW in general) really welcome*

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<sup>6</sup> El is the pseudonym of one of the organising staff.



*you and you sort of feel that we are part of the family.*” Sarah explained on how comfortable conditions were important to culture learning,

It is like people are allowing you to see and learn about their culture. So that’s the initial steps of opening the information up to you for you to understand, to share with you how they see their lives, how they see the world around them, how they relate to it.

This finding is supported by current literature on sojourner adaptation. The host environment plays a role in the adaptation of sojourners (Y. Y. Kim, 2001). Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) report international students who perceived themselves as being discriminated showed higher level of homesickness. Conversely, Y. Y. Kim (2001) notes that friendliness in the host environment encourages sojourner to adapt to the new culture.

#### **6.1.2.5 First Encounter with a New Culture**

To some participants, it was important that the ISNMW was the first Māori cultural activity they attended. Dave recounted, *“This is the first activity where I learn something about Māori culture.”* Similarly, it was Sarah’s *“first encounter and touch base”* with the culture. It may be possible that curiosity caused by the novel encounters impacted international students positively to learn about the new culture. According to Silvia and Kashdan (2009),

Curiosity motivates us to approach and explore new and uncertain things in greater depth. Anxiety might be essential for surviving our current situation, but situations change. Curiosity and exploration are essential to learn how to adapt to changing situational demands and capitalize on growth opportunities. (p. 785)

Curious people have a tendency to recognise and pursue new knowledge and experiences, to possess an open and receptive attitude toward whatever is the target of their attention, and to exhibit a greater willingness to manage and cope with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Apart from looking at the novel cultural effect from the angle of curiosity, it is also interesting to examine this theme with reference to what McKeown (2009) posits as the “first-time effect” of sojourning experience. McKeown’s (2009) study suggests that first time travellers may experience more culture shock dissonance that leads to a greater gain in new learning as compared to travellers with prior overseas experience.

McKeown's (2009) first-time effect based on cultural dissonance is debatable because earlier research has found that the more culturally different or novel the host culture from sojourner's home culture, the more difficult the adaptation process (Hofstede, 2001).

Although it was noted that Dave was of European cultural origin and Sarah was of Asian cultural origin, it was not possible to accurately determine the deeper significance of their "first cultural encounter" in the present study. Nevertheless, whether it is the first-time effect (McKeown, 2009) or curiosity to explore new and uncertain things (Silvia & Kashdan, 2009), Dave's and Sarah's narratives suggest that the first Māori cultural encounter at the ISNMW had meaningfully contributed to their cultural awareness experience. It would be useful to extend the current study to investigate in particular the role of cultural dissonance caused by novel effect to contribute to the mired understanding on this topic.

#### ***6.1.2.6 Ability to Relate Home Culture with Māori Culture***

Eva and Sarah both identified similarities in Māori culture when they compared it with their own cultures. Their ability to relate their home culture with Māori culture was noted to have helped them build familiarity with the local culture. This phenomenon can be explained using Hofstede's (2001) theory on cultural difference based on the five cultural dimensions model. Individuals will be able to relate better with individuals from relatively similar cultural dimensions. Eva and Sarah, both from Asia, were able to relate with features in Māori culture especially in the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism. Sarah highlighted the concept of "*having extended family living together*". Eva also pointed out the collectivism of family-orientedness among Māori,

All the little boys (Māori children at the ISNMW) call everyone uncles and aunties. It is similar to back home, you don't call anyone by their name if they are older than you, (you) only call them uncle and aunty, and they do the same here.

This finding suggests that participants' cultural awareness was heightened by cultural similarities experienced at the ISNMW.

#### **6.1.2.7 Activities Scheduling**

The last emerging theme was on the way the activities were scheduled during the weekend. On one hand, both Estee and Sam noted the ISNMW to be packed with practising of Māori cultural performances, Sam also noted that the event offered “*lots of breaks*” to facilitate “*lots of opportunity to talk*”. It seems that there was a mix of activities that kept the participants busy with things to do and also activities that kept the participants relaxed to have time to interact casually. It would be necessary to investigate this factor more closely based on the participants’ insights as evaluation on how the programme was planned is not covered in this exploratory study.

In addressing Research Question 1, the cultural experience of the participants at the ISNMW was consistent with Bennett’s (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The findings also identified seven factors contributing to international students’ increased cultural awareness based on participants’ perceptions. These seven themes were triangulated with secondary findings based on current literature, except for the last factor on activities scheduling which required evaluation that is beyond the current scope of this study.

### **6.2 Research Question 2: How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their social adjustment into the AUT community and the general local community?**

It is important to highlight that all the participants in the current study expressed that the ISNMW helped them to feel more socially connected with the university community and/or with the local New Zealand community. Many studies on international students showed that social adaptation is one of the key challenges faced by international students (L. Brown, 2009; Campbell & Li, 2008; Hendrickson, et al., 2010; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sawir, et al., 2008). When international students leave their country, their social connections with the communities back home are affected (Pedersen, 1991). International students adjust socially by building new networks of friendship in the host country (Bochner, et al., 1985; L. Brown, 2009; Hendrickson, et al., 2010). This social adaptation may come in the form of building relationship with members of the local community and/or with fellow international students. Deloitte (2008) highlights the importance of integrating international students in New Zealand into their educational

institutions and the local community as part of improving international students' sojourning satisfaction. The international students in Deloitte's (2008) report indicated that their desire to interact with members of the local community was largely unmet during their course of study.

It was a desired outcome of the ISNMW to help international students forge close friendships and feel they have a family away from home (Chan, 2010). Participants in this study validated that this intention was achieved from participating in the ISNMW. This study found that the ISNMW addressed international students' social needs in four ways: 1) improved their sense of belonging to a community, 2) encouraged formation of social networks, 3) provided opportunity for information sharing, and 4) taught social skills practical in local context. These four themes are consistent with literature about sojourners' social well-being.

A lack of sense of belonging has been identified as an adaptation issues among international students (Campbell & Li, 2008; Pedersen, 1995; Sandhu, 1994). Schlossberg (1989) theorises that it is important for individuals experiencing transition, such as international students, to feel that they matter in the new community. Individuals who feel that they matter, who perceive a sense of personal significance, to the community around them will feel less marginalised. In the case of international students, a perceived sense of belonging to the university and/or to the local community at large may reduce feeling of alienation in the new host community.

Therefore, it is not surprising that investigation of international students' friendship patterns attracted interest in this field (e.g. V. Anderson, 2008; Bochner, et al., 1985; L. Brown, 2009; Hendrickson, et al., 2010). Encouraging international students to establish new friendship networks in the host country, whether it is friendship with co-nationals, cross-national international students, or host students, has been seen as an important strategy to assist international students cope with their transition. Becky, Sam, Jon, and Eva's appreciation of the opportunity to make new friends at the ISNMW validate research on international students' need for their social vacuum to be filled. Jon said it succinctly, *"this is very valuable for an international students because you are alone."*

Additionally, the ISNMW facilitated the acquisition of culturally relevant social skills and information to operate within the new cultural context (Adelman, 1988; Ward, et al., 2001). Josh's perceived beneficial learning of "*very good information*" from the friendship forge at the ISNMW, and Estee's sense of confidence to be able to "*participate and don't feel left out*" in local Māori function are both examples of culture learning mentioned in Adelman (1988) and Ward et al. (2001).

## **6.2.1 Factors Assisting Social Adjustment**

### **6.2.1.1 The Concept of Whanau**

The findings in this study suggest that the participants' social adjustment had been assisted by four aspects of the ISNMW. Firstly, the participants' sense of belonging has been strongly influenced by the concept of *whanau* presented within the marae setting. *Whanau* means 'family' in Māori and is tied to Māori value of *turangawaewae* (a place to belong); the marae is a place where an individual can belong (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986). Significantly, ten out of twelve participants highlighted this concept in their narrations.

The concept of *whanau* impacted the participants' sense of belonging to AUT and/or to the local community. This was evident from their excerpts presented in Chapter 5. *Whanau* was associated by the participants with "*(being) part of a family/AUT*", "*sense of belonging*", "*people are caring for you*", and "*feel not left out*". It seems that this cultural element, a value embraced in Māori culture, is a special characteristic that is able to induct international students rather effectively into the local communities. The concept of *whanau* appears as a natural fit to address international students' lack of sense of belonging and Schlossberg's (1989) theory on the need of individuals in transition for them to feel they matter in the new community.

The AUT *whanau* presented at the ISNMW also provided a relatively permanent social support to the international student community. This implication was highlighted by Dan, "*International students are great, but most of them will return home. So you can feel a bit alone if you have nowhere to go. Being part of the family is important.*" The AUT *whanau* was perceived by Dan to bring a higher degree of stability of social support as compared to a social network that consists of only international students. This is desirable to complement the transient characteristic of the international student community.

The concept of *whanau* in facilitating international students' social adjustment is a new idea in research on international students. The evidence in this study suggests that this Māori value can considerably boost international students' sense of belonging and significance in the host community. However, it is important to note that there were two participants who did not discuss *whanau*. It was inconclusive as to why these two participants did not mention *whanau*. This concept was not suggested to them during data collection so as to not influence their responses. Nevertheless, this finding opens up a potentially fruitful area of research pertaining to international students' integration into the host country.

#### **6.2.1.2 Exposure to Māori Culture**

Being informed about local culture in the new society can help international students feel less at lost in the new environment. Jon put it,

Like you understand their culture, and if you understand their culture, you know how the other people think. And you can feel part of the *whanau*, that makes you part of the whole thing, of AUT, and of the country.

This finding is consistent with culture learning through means of learning new knowledge about the local culture (Adelman, 1988; Ward, et al., 2001); exposure to Māori culture equipped participants with cultural knowledge and cultural skills to operate in the local context.

#### **6.2.1.3 Suitable Setting for Socialising**

The next theme is consistent with the important concept of encouraging international students to establish new friendships during their sojourning (V. Anderson, 2008; Bochner, et al., 1985; L. Brown, 2009; Hendrickson, et al., 2010). Based on my personal observation, more than one hundred people were present at the March 2010 ISNMW; no other data were available about the attendance numbers of the other ISNMWs. It seems that the ISNMW was a place where a lot of international students as well as locals were gathered for a cultural exchange event. Abe described the ISNMW as a place to “*socialise with others*”, “*meet a lot of great people*” and “*build friendships*”. The participants at the ISNMW were also encouraged to interact through group activities, as Sam put it, “*...doing something together...been active together...function in certain groups...*” The ISNMW environment was complemented by the personal motivation of international students to make new friends and learn new

culture; as Jack said, *“You will meet heaps of international students who are there with the same reason as you, to meet new friends and to learn new things. Everybody is there for the same reason.”* International student’s personal motivation is a contributing factor to the success of making new friends (L. Brown, 2009; Sandhu, 1994). The ISNMW was a suitable setting for socialising due to both physical setting and international students’ personal motivation to make new friends. Despite that the findings on this theme were not substantial enough to provide a more detailed analysis, the evidence indicates that the ambience at the ISNMW was conducive for socialising.

#### **6.2.1.4 Opportunity to Relate with AUT Staff**

Four participants indicated that their identification with the university had been influenced by the staff’s presence at the ISNMW. The staff made an impression on Sam because he *“kept seeing them and you were reminded of (AUT) that weekend.”* To Estee, Jack and Eva, their interactions with the staff, especially the International Student Support Services (ISSS) staff, have grown from formal student-staff relationship to social friendship. As mentioned earlier, little is documented about how international students and non-academic staff relationship can affect international students’ adjustment. The finding that staff contributed to participants’ cultural awareness and also affiliation with the AUT community suggests that administrative staff, along with academic staff, can play an important role in international student transition and hence helping international students to experience greater satisfaction in their education experience. Further investigation on how the administrative staff-international student relationship affects sojourning experience will contribute to the literature about the knowledge of caring for international students’ well-being.

Research Question 2 was crafted with the goal of investigating how international students’ social well-being can be influenced by a cultural awareness programme. The findings in this study suggest that the participants benefitted from the ISNMW in four ways that helped their social adjustment in the host country. It was also identified that the ISNMW had been effective in this aspect of international student support due to the concept of *whanau*, the exposure to Māori culture (one of the local cultures), the suitable setting for socialising, and the opportunity to relate with the staff.

### **6.3 Research Question 3: How do international students perceive the influence of their experience at a cultural-based programme on their perceptions of New Zealand?**

This study also set out to understand how cultural awareness of a local culture can affect international students' perceptions of the host country. When the participants were asked how the ISNMW influenced their perceptions of New Zealand, their responses associated the host country with Māori culture or its people. It is possible the nature of this cultural awareness programme which was based on Māori culture has influenced the participants to respond from the context of this programme. Therefore, readers are reminded that the findings presented are to be viewed in light of the cultural context presented at the ISNMW. It is not a full representation of international students' sentiments of New Zealand's multicultural society.

The participants' responses can be categorised into three general responses. The themes that emerged were:

- 1) Corrected initial negative perception about New Zealand,
- 2) Improved from neutral to having a positive feeling about New Zealand, and
- 3) No perceived influence on perception about New Zealand.

The data collected in the current research suggested that initial perceptions of New Zealand gained from media and friends in some cases presented Māori in a negative light. But two participants' prior negative perceptions were changed after they attended the ISNMW. Josh shared that before the ISNMW, he thought that *"Māori are not that good because the television reports that the criminals are mainly Māori."* But after his ISNMW experience, he *"feel more familiar with them (Māori)"*. Before the ISNMW, Estee was influenced by her friends to *"try not to be friends with Māori."* A similar positive change was noted by Estee after the ISNMW when she said, *"My perception actually changed after Noho. Mainly because of the staff, very very very friendly and hospitable and always smiling, they make you feel not left out, but as a part of family."*

It seems that having opportunity to interact and get to know Māori personally has helped to debunk the negative impression they formerly possessed. Josh contrasted his initial perception with his experience at the ISNMW that Māori are pleasant and has their own distinct culture. As for Estee, she attributed a modification in her opinion

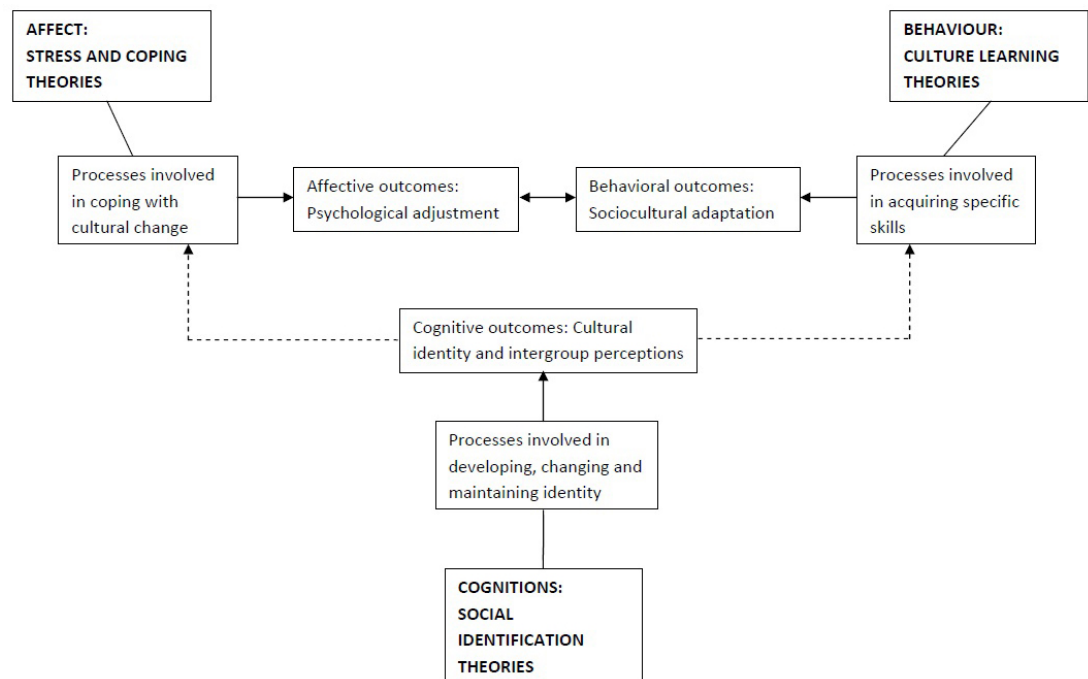


about Māori to experiencing the hospitality and sense of family orientedness she experienced at the ISNMW; hospitality and *whanau* are part of Māori's cultural value.

The majority of the participants were neutral about New Zealand before the ISNMW. Similar to Josh and Estee, five participants attributed their improved perception of New Zealand to the contact and interaction they had with Māori during the weekend. Sarah, on the other hand, formed a favourable impression of New Zealand because she was able to find similarities between her own culture and Māori culture. Sarah's improved perception was influenced by a sense of relative closeness of her own culture to similar artefacts of Māori culture. As for Abe, who began from a state of not knowing much about New Zealand culture, he was able to feel more positive about the country because he got to know more people (as multiculturalism was representative of New Zealand) and to gain new insights in one of the country's culture. It seems that Abe's gain in culture learning has influenced his perception of the host country.

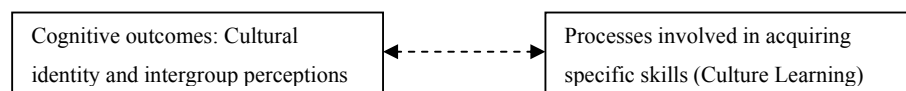
With reference to the ABC Model of Culture Shock in Figure 9, the ISNMW has helped the participants to acquire culturally relevant skills to negotiate their sociocultural adaptation in the host country. These cultural skills are in terms of explicit knowledge on Māori cultural artefacts, and experiential understanding of intrinsic cultural values such as the concept of *whanau* and hospitality of the people. The ISNMW also encouraged building of relationship, which served as an avenue that promoted international students' social well-being. It was unclear whether the ISSS intended for this social support aspect observed in the ISNMW to be an intervention strategy to help international students cope with transition stress. Whether it was an intended intervention strategy or not, the ISNMW has positively impacted psychological adjustment through the social networks forged by the international students. These findings are consistent with the ABC Model of Culture Shock.

An unexpected finding in the current study relates to international students' changed perceptions. There is a suggestion of a possible unidentified relationship between the process of acquiring specific cultural skills and individuals' cognitive outcomes. The participants' responses about their perceived feelings of New Zealand in the first two categories indicate that benefitting from culture learning at the ISNMW produced a change in their perceptions of Māori and New Zealand. The ABC Model of Culture



**Figure 9. The ABC Model of Culture Shock.** From *The psychology of culture shock* (2nd ed.) by C. Ward, S. Bochner, and A. Furnham, 2001, East Sussex, England: Routledge, p.275. Copyright by C. Ward, S. Bochner, and A. Furnham.

Shock posits that sojourners' cognitive state determines the individuals' cultural identity and intergroup perceptions. This cognitive state, which is an internal factor, will influence sojourners' external engagement in the affective and behavioural domains. But the findings in this study suggest that the sojourners' cognitive perceptions can be influenced by external interaction in the behavioural domain. It may be argued that the international students who attended the ISNMW were predisposed to experience a new culture. Although the receptivity among the international students for exploring the local culture may have facilitated their culture learning and social networking experience, it was evident that a reciprocal influence exerted by the effect of culture learning on intergroup perception exists. This relationship could happen both ways as suggested in Figure 10 instead of a unidirectional relation.



**Figure 10. Proposed Relation between Culture Learning and Cognitive Outcomes.**

However, it is cautioned that this new relationship may not be found in all cases. In this study, three participants, Dan, Jack, and Ann, commented that the ISNMW did not influence their perceptions of New Zealand. Neither Dan nor Jack attended the ISNMW during their first semester of educational experience in New Zealand. The duration of their stay in New Zealand before attending the ISNMW may have served to set a certain impression of the country. Additionally, Dan highlighted that since he did not know what to expect from joining the ISNMW, he was not able to comment on whether any change in his perception occurred. It seems that Dan may have reserved his comment on this matter. As for Ann, she was more affected by the experience of living in Auckland that modified her pre-arrival ideas about New Zealand.

So, the proposed relationship between culture learning and cognitive outcome is to be viewed as a weak link that may not always be present in some circumstances (duration of stay from instance of participation in cultural awareness initiative and greater experiential contrast from preconceived idea are two circumstances identified here). The ABC Model of Culture Shock is comprehensive, but complex. Ward et al. (2001) are careful to caution that it is difficult to separate clearly variables representing the three domains of affect, behaviour and cognition in study on sojourners. It is recommended that possible new relationships identified in the current exploratory study be investigated more critically in future research on sojourning experience.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This exploratory study sought to understand international students' cultural experience at the ISNMW, a type of cultural awareness programme, and the influence of the experience on their social adjustment and perception of the host country. This study suggests the ISNMW was capable of promoting cultural awareness among international students. Additionally, the ISNMW assisted international students to build friendship with fellow international students and locals. To some extent, the ISNMW has also positively influenced the perception of international students of New Zealand. These three positive outcomes of the ISNMW may excite stakeholders of the International Education Agenda 2007-2012 (International Division, 2007) who are interested in the progress of cultural awareness initiatives taken among international students. (Some stakeholders of the International Education Agenda 2007-2012 includes New Zealand as a country at large, Ministry of Education, educators, and practitioners working with international students.)

Increased awareness of the local culture helps international students with their adjustment in the host country (e.g. Bennett, 1986; L. Brown, et al., 2010; Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010; Sawir, et al., 2008; Ward, et al., 2001). The ability to rebuild new social networks in the country of sojourning is important to provide needed social support to international students living away from home (Bochner, et al., 1985; L. Brown, 2009; Campbell & Li, 2008; Hendrickson, et al., 2010; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Pedersen, 1991; Sawir, et al., 2008). These two outcomes, therefore, translate to higher degree of sojourning satisfaction among international students – a desirable effect by stakeholders of the International Education Agenda 2007-2012 (International Division, 2007). Furthermore, the encouraging student perceptions of New Zealand as a result of the ISNMW participation nurtures future international alumni with goodwill towards New Zealand, such as that achieved by the Colombo Plan (New Zealand Development Assistance, 2001).

This study suggests that cultural awareness initiatives such as the ISNMW organised by educational institutions are very important to the international education scene. The affirmative outcomes of the ISNMW have been attributed to various factors that have been perceived by the participants as helpful. The following factors could serve as

strategic information for both the International Division of New Zealand Ministry of Education and tertiary staff working on promoting culture awareness and socialising among the international students:

- Incorporate of hands-on activities as a more interactive culture learning medium,
- Provide an accessible cultural immersion environment that involves strong local community presence and overnight stay,
- Leverage on the contributions of university staff, especially non-academic staff, in organising international students initiatives,
- Ensure a friendly social atmosphere for the programme, and
- Identify the right balance between the number of hands-on activities that keep participants busy and the amount of relaxing break that allow for participants to socialise in the activity timetabling for extended programme that runs over the weekend.

The five recommendations above have been gleaned from analysis of participants' reports associated with increased cultural awareness and successful socialisation. This study proposes to further investigate these items in an up-coming ISNMW using quantitative survey to validate from a larger pool of participants the effectiveness of these identified factors. Concurrently, evaluation can be taken on the effect of these factors applied in other cultural awareness programme setting before and after these five recommendations are adopted to understand the degree of portability of these factors across cultural awareness initiatives. This study invites researchers and practitioners to comment on the recommendations suggested and to add to the rigour of these findings by suggesting overlooked assumptions made in this study.

This study has also uncovered new ideas that may be of interest of the research community on international students' cultural experience. An extension of the current study would stimulate further discussion on these new ideas that may be beneficial to expand our current understanding in this field. Suggested topics that are in need of more comprehensive investigation and are new in the field are:

- The role of cultural dissonance caused by novel effect in contributing to international students' culture learning;

- The role of the concept of *whanau* for facilitating international students' social adjustment in the host country; and
- The unidentified bidirectional relationship between cognitive outcomes and processes involved in acquiring culturally specific skills in the ABC Model of Culture Shock.

The above suggestions for further research were identified based on consideration of other studies and relevant theories.

Besides, it would be fruitful to extend the discussions on the role of non-academic staff in facilitating positive international student sojourning experience. Current literature on influence of staff-student relations on international students' adaptation focuses on the roles of academic staff (e.g. Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Pereda, et al., 2007). Little is known on the influence of non-academic staff-student relation on international students' adjustment. The role of non-academic staff on international students' well-being has mostly been implied through investigation on satisfaction of international student services rendered (Munoz & Munoz, 2000; Pereda, et al., 2007).

The findings in this study have been generated by the phenomenological-case study approach. It would be useful to introduce other methodological approaches to add on to the richness of the current understanding on the current research topic. For example, quantitative research method can be applied to assess the degree of cultural awareness change experienced by international students as a result of participating in the ISNMW. Quantitative survey can be deployed using one of the existing tools. One such instrument is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer & Bennett, 1998). However, it is cautioned that researchers need to understand the underlying assumptions of such measuring tool and evaluate its suitability to measure people's level of cultural awareness in context.

This study strongly recommends that a more comprehensive research be carried out using mixed method research approach. In addition to conducting pre- and post- cultural awareness measuring tool just mentioned, other data collection instruments, such as participant journaling and onsite observation, will serve to add to the richness of interview data in the current study. The mixed method approach will provide multi-data sources to triangulate the findings; a feature that is lacking in the present research.

Another methodological angle to the current study is to conduct a study on post-ISBNMW participants. This will contributively inform the Ministry in light of its goal to nurture goodwill among international alumni towards New Zealand and promote future academic/economic connections between international alumni and New Zealanders. Due to the transitory nature of the international student community, study on post-ISBNMW participants may need to leverage on the use of technology. Resources such as email surveys, internet/tele-interviews, and online surveys can be used. But it will be important that researchers also consider the cost versus benefits of this study. This recommended study may pose challenges as the participants are less accessible as compared to conducting a study locally. Also, the response rate of participant recruitment will be unpredictable as the contact information available may no longer be accurate.

In concluding this study, amidst the useful findings and new ideas that inform the Ministry, tertiary practitioners working with international students, and researchers, it is my hope that international students reading this study will be stimulated to reflect on their own transition journeys and glean useful information on how to negotiate in a new cultural environment. The findings on cultural awareness experience and socialisation are directly relevant to inform the adjustments challenges that they may face during their educational sojourning.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

Creswell and Maietta's (2002, pp. 153-154) procedures for conducting a phenomenological research.

1. *Identify a central phenomenon to study (e.g., the meaning of grief) and study the "essence" of the experience* – the common meanings ascribed by people to the phenomenon.
2. *Ask central research questions that focus on capturing this meaning.* For example, a phenomenologist might ask, "What meaning do individuals ascribe to grief? What is grief to them, and what is the context in which they experience it?"
3. *Collect data primarily through interviews*, although a wide range of data collection can occur through observations and study of documents, artifacts, music, and poetry.
4. *Analyze data by following the procedural steps identified by Moustakas (1994).* These steps begin with identifying "significant statements," short phrases of individuals (or in the researcher's words) that capture the meaning of the phenomenon under examination.
5. *Reduce the numerous significant statements to meaning units or themes.* In this process, the researcher looks for overlapping and redundant significant statements, then combines them into a small number of meaning units or themes that describe the meaning for the individual.
6. *Analyze the context in which the individuals experienced the meaning unit or themes.* It is important in phenomenology to identify not only what the individuals experienced (called by Moustakas (1994) the textual description) but also the context, the setting, or the situation in which they experienced it (called the structural experience).
7. *Reflect on personal experiences you have had with the phenomenon.* Only some phenomenologists use this procedure. It involves reflecting on the actively writing about your own experiences. These written passages typically involve identifying how the researcher experienced the phenomenon and the contexts in which this experience occurred.

8. *Write a detailed analysis of the “essence” of the experience for the participants.*

From an analysis of the significant statements, the meaning units, the analysis of what was experienced (the textual description), and how it was experienced (the structural description), the researcher writes a detailed analysis of the “essence” of the experience for the individuals participating in the study. Sometimes these descriptions are analyzed separately for individuals possessing different characteristics, such as for men or women (Riemen, 1986). The idea is for the phenomenologist to end a study with this “essence” that captures the common experiences of the participants and the setting in which they experienced it. This passage can include the researcher’s own experiences with the phenomenon.

## Appendix II

Creswell and Maietta's (2002, pp. 163-164) procedures for conducting a case study research adapted from Stake (1995).

1. *Provide an in-depth study of a bounded system.* To use case study procedures, the researcher must be interested in developing an in-depth discussion and analysis of a bounded system. To establish this analysis, the researcher must determine the type of case that will best yield information about an issue or whether the case is important in itself.
2. *Ask questions about an issue under examination or about the details of a case that is of unusual interest.* The research question asked addresses either an issue or a problem or a case. For example, a researcher might ask, "What is meant by professionalism for teachers in five schools or education?" In this example, the focus is on learning about the issue (an instrumental case study) and using the five schools as multiple cases to understand the issue. Alternatively, a case study researcher might ask, "What process unfolded during the teaching of a distance education course for deaf students?" The focus in this case study is on learning about an unusual case that is of intrinsic interest in its own right.
3. *Gather multiple forms of data to develop in-depth understanding.* Because a hallmark of a case study is an in-depth portrait of the case, the qualitative researcher gathers multiple forms of data. These forms might include interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. The extent and complexity of the data mark a case study as different from many forms of qualitative research. For example, Yin (1989) recommends six types of information: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts.
4. *Describe the case in detail and provide an analysis of issues or themes that the case presents.* Data analysis involves developing a detailed description of the case. This might be presented as a chronology of events or a detailed rendering of information about people, places, and activities involved in the case. Further data analysis typically includes developing issues or themes (Stake, 1995) that develop when the researcher studies the case. These issues add complexity to the case analysis. One popular pattern of analysis for the qualitative researcher of collective case studies is for the inquirer to analyze within each case for themes and across all cases for themes that are either common or different. This

procedure is called within-case and across-case theme development. Analysis of this data can be a holistic analysis of the entire case or an embedded analysis of a specific aspect of the case (Yin, 1989).

5. *In both description and issue development, situate the case within its context or setting.* In the analysis, the case study researcher situates the case within its context so that the case description and themes are related to the specific activities and situations involved in the case. This might involve a focus on the organization, the day-to-day activities, or the people and places involved in the case, or a detailed presentation of demographic information about the people or the site. This analysis is rich in the context or setting in which the case presents itself (Merriam, 1988). From this analysis, the investigator narrates the study through techniques such as a chronology, major events followed by an up-close description, or a detailed perspective about a few incidents.
6. *Make an interpretation of the meaning of the case analysis.* The researcher interprets the meaning of the case, whether that meaning comes from learning about the issue of the case (instrumental case) or learning about an unusual situation (intrinsic case). In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, the “lessons learned” from the case.



## Appendix III

### International Student Noho Marae Weekend Programme Brochure (Page 1).

# NOHO MARAE WEEKEND

## PROGRAMME

### FRIDAY 19 MARCH

**By 4.30pm** Meet at the Marae  
Take your dish for the Pot-Luck Dinner to the wharekai—dining room, St Paul Street entrance. (Do not walk with food on the grass area in front of the marae.)  
Registration and hand-in medical forms

**4.45pm** Powhiri—Welcome  
Set-up & introductions

**5.30pm** Getting to know each other

**6.00pm** Whakawhānaugetanga

**7.00pm** International Pot-Luck Dinner  
We'll provide dessert!

**8.00pm** Vesbar—AUI bar  
Free time

### SUNDAY 21 MARCH

**9.45am** Breakfast starts

**11.00am** Clean-up of Wharenui (meeting house) and Wharekai (dining room)  
Group photos and Poroporoaki  
Depart for home




### SATURDAY 20 MARCH

**By 9.00am** Breakfast/clean-up

**10.00am** Sessions:  
Tūtorea—stick game  
Choral item  
Haka words/poi making

**1.00pm** Lunch

**2.00pm** Tane (Men): Haka  
Wahine (Women): Poi

**4.00pm** Recap/Free time

**6.00pm** Concert

**6.45pm** Hangi (traditional Māori feast)

**8.00pm** Free time

### WHAT TO BRING:

- Sleeping bag and/or blankets
- Personal toiletries
- Towels
- Wet weather gear
- Camera
- Casual clothes for two days
- Warm jacket
- A dish from your country for pot-luck dinner on Friday
- Passport for ID and some \$5\$ for Vesbar!
- Plenty of energy and fun!

### HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE WEEKEND...

**Step one:** Go to the Fee Payments counter—located next to the Student Information Centre in WA ground level (City Campus) or AG Building (North Shore Campus).

**Step two:** Pay the \$60.00 fee to the cashier and give them the following code:  
**RS 0761 1400 03**

**Step three:** Give your receipt to International Student Support Service at WU014 or ASI Level 2 to register for the weekend.

### DIETARY NEEDS...

If you have any specific dietary requirements, please let us know when you hand in your receipt.

### PAST STUDENT FEEDBACK...

*"It was awesome—thanks a lot. I had high expectations, because Andre told us the last noho weekend was really great. It was not only a pleasure to learn such a lot about the Māori culture, it was really fun to meet so many different people from so many countries." — Stefan*

### COST...

The cost of the weekend is \$60.00, payable in advance. This fee for the weekend includes all meals, the traditional Māori hangi (feast), activities and materials.

## NOHO MARAE

19-21 MARCH 2010

Kia ora koutou.

This is an invitation to all who want to experience a weekend full of culture, diversity and fun!

TUJIA I RUNGA

TUJIA I RARO

TUJIA TE HĒRE TANGATA

TENA KOUTOU KATOA

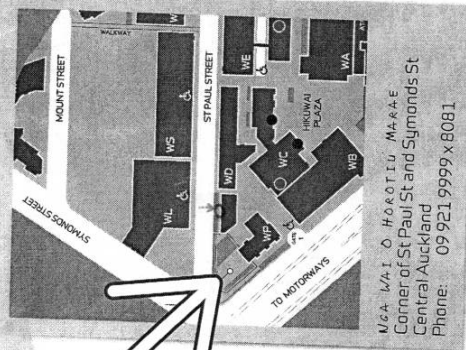
International Student Support Service, Te Tari Takawaenga Māori, Māori Liaison Services and Auckland Student Movement (AUSM) would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our international students to semester one, 2010.

We invite you to join us at the International Noho Marae. Make the most of your time in Aotearoa New Zealand, make friends and great memories to last a lifetime.

NAU MAI, HAERE MAI  
E RAU RANGATIRA MA

**AUT** STUDENT SERVICES

YOUR  
INVITATION...



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
SUPPORT SERVICE



## Appendix IV

page 1 of 2

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

5 May 2010

### Project Title

International student cultural experience: A case study of the Noho Marae Weekend..

### An Invitation

Greetings to you.

My name is Irene Teh. I am an international student enrolled in the Master of Philosophy (Education) programme at AUT University.

I am interested in the influence of the Noho Marae on international students' perceptions New Zealand culture. I would like to warmly invite you to participate in this research that will be the topic of my thesis.

### What is the purpose of this research?

This research will investigate how the Noho Marae Weekend has contributed to your cross cultural experiences and how the Noho Marae has influenced your perceptions of New Zealand. This research is part of a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirement for completing my Master of Philosophy (Education) degree at AUT University. Findings from this research may also be used for conference presentations and/or publications that will promote knowledge on the international student community, international education and/or any relevant fields.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are an international student who has attended one of the Noho Marae Weekend organised by the International Student Support Service.

### What will happen in this research?

You will be involved in a one-to-one audiotape recorded interview with me. The interview will last about 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted in a mutually convenient and acceptable public location at AUT University. I will ask you some questions about your experience at the Noho Marae Weekend, the impact it has on enriching you culturally and the influence of the experience on your perception of New Zealand. You may decline to answer any questions or withdraw your participation during the interview. The recorded interview session will be transcribed for you to review and validate.

Participation in this research is on a voluntary basis. Participation or non-participation in this research will neither advantage nor disadvantage you as an international student enrolled in AUT University. You may withdraw at any point of time during this research prior to the completion of data collection without any adverse consequences. In the event that you decide to withdraw your participation in this research, any interview data and transcribing data gathered will be destroyed and not used in this research.

### What are the discomforts and risks?

You may be a little uncomfortable about speaking in the presence of an audiotape recorder or being interviewed. Besides these, there are no other discomforts foreseen.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

The interview will be conducted in a manner to make you comfortable. The interview will be non-threatening and no sensitive topics will be discussed. No statements will be attributed to you by name. I would like to highlight that you have the right to decline to answer any of the questions or withdraw your participation at any point during the interview.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your identity will remain confidential and it will not be reported in the thesis or any possible publication. No quotes will be attributed to individual participants by name in any of the reports generated from this research. As the population of participants of the Noho Marae Weekend is sizeable and the mobility of the international student community is high, it is unlikely that you will be identifiable.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

You will need to spend between 45 to 60 minutes of your time for the interview session. You will also need to spend some time to proof-read and validate the interview transcript. The transcript will be sent to you between 2-4 weeks from the time of interview.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You will have three weeks to consider this invitation. Please reply your interest to participate by 15 July 2010.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

To participate, you can email to inform me at [gbn8114@aut.ac.nz](mailto:gbn8114@aut.ac.nz) or drop me a private message on Facebook in reply to the Facebook Group invitation. I will email you a Consent Form for completion to confirm your participation in this research.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Dale Furbish, [dale.furbish@aut.ac.nz](mailto:dale.furbish@aut.ac.nz), 9921 9999 ext 5557

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTC, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?****Researcher Contact Details:**

Irene Teh, AUT Student, [gbn8114@aut.ac.nz](mailto:gbn8114@aut.ac.nz)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Dale Furbish, Senior Lecturer, [dale.furbish@aut.ac.nz](mailto:dale.furbish@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 5557


Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 23 June 2010, AUTC Reference number 10/115.



## Appendix V

Page 1 of 1

# Consent Form



**AUT**  
UNIVERSITY  
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

**Project title:** *International student cultural experience: A case study of the Noho Marae Weekend*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dale Furbish*

**Researcher:** *Irene Teh*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 5 May 2010.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date: .....

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 23 June 2010 AUTEC Reference number 10/115**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix VI

### INDICATIVE QUESTIONS

**Researcher:** Irene Teh

**Project Title:** International student cultural experience: A case study of the Noho Marae Weekend

The following are the indicative questions for the semi-structured interview:

1. Background information:
  - a. When did you participate in the Noho Marae Weekend?
  - b. What motivated you to participate in the Noho Marae Weekend?
2. Cultural awareness experience at the Noho Marae (evidence of cultural awareness and factors influencing their cultural experience):
  - a. If I had been with you throughout your participation at the Noho Marae Weekend, what would I have seen you doing?
  - b. If a newly arrived international student would ask your opinion on the Noho Marae Weekend before deciding on whether to sign-up for the programme, what would you share to this new international student?
  - c. How has your participation in the Noho Marae Weekend contributed to your understanding of New Zealand and Maori cultures?
3. Factors influencing social adjustment:
  - a. How has your participation in the Noho Marae Weekend contributed to your sense of being part of the community in AUT University? How about being part of the local community in New Zealand?
4. Factors influencing perception of New Zealand:
  - a. How has the Noho Marae Weekend influenced your feeling towards New Zealand? How did the Noho Marae Weekend influence your attitudes about New Zealand?

## Appendix VII

**Table 5.**  
*Concept of Marae Identified in Participants' Verbatim*

Aspects of Māori culture	Expressions of Māori culture	Excerpts taken from the verbatim (The examples are not exhaustive, but a sampling of the evidence to support the experience of the culture.)
Māori artefacts or iconography	Hangi	<b>Jon:</b> And the hangi was quite interesting, I like the food.
	Stick game	<b>Dan:</b> ...learning the stick game... <b>Sarah:</b> ...the stick games that was very interesting, a hand-eye coordination kind of games.
	Songs	<b>Jon:</b> You get to learn some songs, for example <i>Pokarekare Ana</i> . <b>Ann:</b> ...singing some songs...
	Dances	<b>Jack:</b> Basically you learn dances...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Haka</i></li> </ul>	<b>Jon:</b> We did the <i>haka</i> , that was most important for me. I really love the <i>haka</i> . <b>Dan:</b> ... and of course the <i>haka</i> ... <b>Abe:</b> All I remember was the <i>haka</i> , mainly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Poi</i></li> </ul>	<b>Sarah:</b> We learnt...how to make the <i>poi</i> ( <i>poi</i> was a handicraft cotton ball used in the dance) <b>Estee:</b> There is the <i>poi</i> dance for girls
	<i>Te reo</i> Māori (The Māori language)	<b>Estee:</b> Played some games in which you learn some Māori words. <b>Josh:</b> The language is very interesting, I think the Māori language is much similar to the Japanese, in (terms of) pronunciation.
	Artwork	<b>Dan:</b> Like you might see the wooden statues.

Error! Reference source not found.. *Concept of Marae Identified in Participants' Verbatim (continue)*

Aspects of Māori culture	Expressions of Māori culture	Excerpts taken from the verbatim (The examples are not exhaustive, but a sampling of the evidence to support the experience of the culture.)
Māori Tikanga (Customs or Protocols)	Host observance of <i>tikanga</i> - <i>Manaakitanga</i> (Hospitality) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides lots of food</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sam:</b> The programme continued with lots of food, like dinners. Throughout the weekend, huge dinners, far too much food maybe, but great great food.</p> <p><b>Josh:</b> Last time, I asked for food and drink, they went back to the kitchen to find something to give me.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures a welcoming atmosphere</li> </ul>	<p><b>Eva:</b> They really welcome you... They are just so friendly. You don't really have to go up and talk to them, or if you are sitting alone, they never just let anyone sit alone, I have never seen anyone sitting alone at the Noho. It does not matter who you are, they just go and talk to you or introduce you to some people.</p> <p><b>Sarah:</b> (I) experienced the kind of welcoming culture, everybody is involved in the process of welcoming you.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows warmth and great hospitality</li> </ul>	<p><b>Estee:</b> The Māori people are really nice, just because of the staff, they are very welcoming, very hospitable and always with a smile on their face.</p> <p><b>Jon:</b> This makes it (ISNMW) quite special like the friendliness to people. What I experienced here is the warmth of the people.</p>
	<i>Pōwhiri</i> (Welcome Ceremony)	<b>Sam:</b> It was a nice, very interesting welcoming ceremony. ... the welcoming ceremony which they had well prepared, lots of Māori people were there, singing and all that like a ceremony - very nice mood at that moment.
	<i>Poroporoaki</i> (Farewell Ceremony)	<b>Estee:</b> Final day, it's the farewell ceremony. Students from different countries perform their own countries' happy songs to show gratitude towards the Māori people.
	<i>Tikanga</i> in the meeting house	<b>Sam:</b> And there were rules like, "Everyone was watching for the kids", somehow that was one of the rules. Everyone was watching the kids.
	Sleeping in the marae	<b>Estee:</b> I slept in the marae, and it was such a good experience. ... they have a place to accommodate you in case you are living outside the city. So you can come here and have a place to sleep.



Error! Reference source not found.. *Concept of Marae Identified in Participants' Verbatim (continue)*

Aspects of Māori culture	Expressions of Māori culture	Excerpts taken from the verbatim (The examples are not exhaustive, but a sampling of the evidence to support the experience of the culture.)
Māori values	<i>Manaaki</i> (Caring for)	<b>Becky:</b> I really really feel that they are close to each other, the cousins or really big family. <b>Jon:</b> you feel like people are caring for you <b>Jack:</b> The staff are very good to make you feel part of the group, they take very good care of you.
	<i>Turangawaewae</i> (A place to belong)	<b>Dave:</b> The Māoris are really open. They just treat you as part of the family... the <i>whanau</i> . <b>Eva:</b> You sought of feel that we are part of the family... they are so family oriented... if you attend the Noho they sought consider you as family.
	<i>Aroha</i> (Love)	[Note: None of the interviewee mentioned the word “love”. It is arguable that love may have been perceived as <i>manaaki</i> (caring for) and <i>manaakitanga</i> (hospitality). But it is not the intention of this study to interpret what the interviewees meant so as to preserve the authenticity of meaning expressed by the research participants in accordance to the phenomenological methodology.]