How You Doing, Mate?
The Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers in Forming Friendships with International Students: A New Zealand Perspective

Franco VACCARINO & Emma DRESLER-HAWKE
Massey University, New Zealand

Abstract

Many countries throughout the world are experiencing globalisation, and New Zealand is no exception and has experienced increased mobility and changes in demographics, through sustained migration as well as an increase in the number of students from around the world. This has resulted in changes in the multicultural and ethnolinguistic make-up of communities throughout New Zealand. Over the last few decades, international education has become increasingly commonplace. Nearly two million tertiary students worldwide are involved in formal education outside their own country. Since 1990 there has been a rapid but fluctuating growth in international students in New Zealand. Part of the socialisation and integration process of students and migrants is the development of friendships. This paper explores domestic students' benefits, barriers and difficulties of making friends with international students from different cultures. The results indicate that benefits for domestic students to have friends from their own cultural background include similarity and being able to relate to and understand each other. Students make friends with international students because they are different and can learn new things from them. The difficulties of making friends both from their own culture and from other cultures are highlighted.

Keywords: Friendship, friendship formation, tertiary students, international education

Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase of international students coming to study at tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Merwood (2007) highlights that "New Zealand's international student population has grown rapidly in recent years, with students coming from an increasingly diverse range of nationalities. Over the last five years, people from more than 180 different nationalities have been granted permits to study in New Zealand" (p. 10). This increase in international students has created a greater ethnic diversity within New Zealand and has led to more intercultural communication exchanges, including friendship formation across cultures. Although there is extensive literature on friendship formation, there is limited research around friendship formation between domestic and international students.   In recent years in New Zealand a number of research studies focusing on various forms of interactions between international and domestic students have been undertaken (Brebner, 2005; Holmes, 2005; Ward & Masgoret, 2004, 2005a; Ward, Masgoret, Newton & Crabbe, 2005a, 2005b). Bird and Holmes (2005) point out that "the literature on international-host student interactions

suggests that there is generally low interaction between the two groups" (p. 5). Research by Peiselt (2007) has also shown that "international students perceived New Zealanders as reluctant to participate in bi-cultural friendships" (p. 75) as they "did not realise the benefits from these friendships" (p. 77). This research is the first part of a larger research project which explores the perceptions of domestic and international students, as well as perceptions of locals and migrants within communities. This paper aims to explore domestic students' perceived benefits and barriers when forming friendships across cultures.

Friendship Formation

Across the world, friendships are seen in different ways. In many Western cultures for example, friendships are seen mainly as "voluntary and spontaneous, in contrast to family or work relationships" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 393). Cultural differences in regard to friendships are related to notions about values and identity. Martin and Nakayama (2010, p. 393) state that

> in societies that stress values like individualism and independence, as is the case in most Western cultures, it makes sense to view friendship and romance as voluntary relationships. However, people who view the self always in relation to others – that is, collectivists – hold a notion of friendship that is also less individual oriented and less spontaneous.

How does one choose whom to make a friend with and whom not to? Before attempting to answer this question, it is necessary to provide a definition of what a friend is. Allan (1996) points out that "there is a lack of firmly agreed and socially acknowledged criteria for what makes a person a friend" (p. 85). When trying to define a friend it is important to remember that there are many differences in notions of friendships. For some people, a friend is someone they talk to every now and again; for others a friend is someone they do things together with, like going to movies; whilst for others a friend is someone with whom they can share their problems and concerns. Different people assign different meanings to friendships. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1996) state that "Friends must enjoy each other's company, they must be useful to one another, and they must share a common commitment to the good" (p. 115). In Western societies friendship tends to be defined as "enjoying each other's company", whereas historically friendships also had a utility function. Discussions surrounding what constitutes friendship have a long history. Aristotle for example defined a friendship as a relationship which is characterised by mutual liking (Cooper, 1980), whilst Cicero believed that in order to have a true friendship with someone one must have complete honesty, truth and trust; and that friends do things for each other without any expectation of repayment (Halsall, 1998). Collier (2007) points out that "ideas about what friendship is, as well as norms for what friends should and should not do, are learned in national, ethnic, and socioeconomic class group contexts" (p. 320). She continues by saying that "humans learn what a friend should be and should do from family, friends, and the media; patterns and norms emerge as behaviors are positively and negatively reinforced" (Collier, 2007, p. 320). Furthermore, experience with friendship alters

with age, and Pahl (2000, pp. 99-101) points out that from the age of twelve onwards, "there is a recognition that individual friendship is part of a larger network of relationships — and that friends are linked with others in 'personal communities'" Extending this further, Doyle and Smith (2002) add that "friendship needs time, space and material resources to develop and will be impacted upon by the particular social environment and setting in which it arises" (p. 11).

When examining the meaning of friendship, Duck (2002) highlights two important aspects: "the general *features* that humans expect friends to have and the *rules* of friendship that humans expect to be observed" (p. 327). Features would include characteristics that we find desirable in friends, for example honesty, trust, sharing time and activity to name a few; whilst some rules include demonstrating emotional support and being able to confide in the friend. Duck (2002) continues by stating that a friendship is a "voluntary bond" (p. 328) between two people where there is an unwritten contract between them about the rules of the friendship. Violating these rules can lead to the dissolution of the friendship. Friendship can be seen as private and voluntary and friendship is undoubtedly a matter of choice where individuals are under no obligation. Pahl (2000) adds that "Dependence and independence are perceived as having a dialectical relationship with each other. Friends rely on each other both for support and a sense of personal identity, but also accept that each needs the space to develop relationships with others" (p. 101).

Some people believe that friendship is a matter of similarity, and "that our friends are those who are like ourselves" (Doyle & Smith, 2002). Duck (2002) states that we look for individuals who assist us in supporting our thought-world and

> the more of these 'thought-ways' that we share with someone, the easier it is to communicate with that person: we can assume that our words and assumptions will be understood more easily by someone who is 'our type' than by someone who is not – we shall not have the repetitious discomfort of perpetually explaining ourselves, our meanings and our jokes (p. 333).

Furthermore, friendship creates a sense of belonging and reliable alliance (Duck, 2002). Friendships also provide necessary anchor points for opinions, beliefs, and emotional responses. Friends are "benchmarks that tell us how we should react appropriately, and they correct or guide our attitudes and beliefs in both obvious and subtle ways" (p. 329). This clearly applies to intercultural friendships as well; however, friends from different cultures may not be able to be "benchmarks" as their "attitudes and beliefs", as pointed out above by Duck (2002), may be very different. Oetzel (2009) adds a number of factors for the formation of intercultural friendship: "the opportunity to interact with culturally different people, the personality of the individuals, similarity in characteristics, positive attitudes toward other culture, and appropriate communication skills" (p. 152).

Intercultural Friendships

According to Borrett and Zysk (2007), "International students encounter a range of challenges in their first study period in a new country. They are expected to make transitions to

new educational, cultural and social environments" (p. 1). In addition, most of these students want to interact with domestic students and form friendships (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). In New Zealand, a major concern voiced by many international students was the formation of friendships with New Zealand students (Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Ward and Masgoret (2004) interviewed 2,736 international students to find out their experiences whilst staying in New Zealand. Of relevance to this paper is that the formation of friendships between domestic and international students is rarer than friendship formation amongst international students, and the most common type of friendship was with co-nationals. Of the international students interviewed, 70% stated that they had wanted to form friendships with domestic students. In addition, 40% of students said that it was difficult to form friendships with domestic students, and 38% said that they had expected domestic students to take the first step in initiating the friendship. In her research, Peiselt (2007) found that "international students invested considerable amounts of effort to establish bi-cultural friendships but had only limited involvement in friendships with domestic students" (p. 78).

According to Ward and Masgoret's research "One in four students said they had no interactions with New Zealanders in social settings, and 35% reported that they had no New Zealand friends" (2004, p. 10). Another comprehensive study, involving 543 New Zealand students from secondary and tertiary institutions, was undertaken by Ward et al. (2005a) in order to examine their perceptions of international students. Forty-one percent of the respondents did not have international friends.

In response to the literature indicating domestic students' reluctance to form friendships with international students, this study examined:

1. the core characteristics of friendship,
2. the expectations and importance of making friends, and
3. the perceived benefits and difficulties of forming friendships with students from other ethnic groups.

Methods

The sample comprised 161 university students in New Zealand. There were 47.2% men and 52.8% women and their age ranged from 18 to 46 years (M=20.2 SD=4.4) with 94.4% of the sample being aged between 18-24 years. The data were gathered in a class setting selected from various undergraduate courses in which both domestic and international students participated. There were two versions of a 'Friendship across cultures' questionnaire constructed to explore friendship formation across cultures. The construction of the questionnaire is reported below. All survey responses were anonymous. This paper reports solely on domestic students' responses.

The domestic students' version of the questionnaire consisted of three parts: demographics, definition of a friend, perceived benefits and barriers of friendship formation. The questionnaire had a short introduction which stated that the research was about friendship formation whilst they are studying. In Section A, the participants were asked to provide information on the demographic variables (age, gender and country of origin) and their living arrangement (flatting,

hostel, boarding, living with family member). In Section B, the participants were asked to define "What is a friend?" and to rate the degree of importance of having friends from your own cultural background and from other ethnic groups. Each category was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= not at all important, 7=very important). In Section C, the participants were prompted to elaborate on the benefits and difficulties of making friends from their own cultural background and from other ethnic groups. The participants were asked to rate how difficult it is for them to keep friends from their own cultural background and from other ethnic groups. Each was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=not at all difficult and 7=very difficult). The survey data were entered into SPSS 16.0 package for analysis, including descriptive statistical analysis together with independent t-tests.

Results and Discussion

In response to the question regarding the definition of what a friend is, the results indicate the following themes as most frequently mentioned:

1. Trust and respect: *A friend is someone you can trust and rely on.* (S[1]138); *Someone who you trust and share a bond with*. (S15); *Someone who is loyal.* (S59); *Someone who you hang out with and have a mutual respect for each other.* (S103); *Somebody who you can talk to and someone that looks out for you and that you can have a good time with and have fun with*. (S25).

2. Openness: *Someone who you are close to that you're not afraid to share secrets with.* (S5); *Someone whom you can trust. If you are friends you should be able to be honest with each other.* (S6); *A person who you share thoughts and common interests with and who you confide in when you need help – which works both ways.* (S7).

3. Comfort and ease in communication: *A person you find yourself comfortable with.* (S106); *Somebody I am comfortable around.* (S107); *Someone you feel comfortable with and can talk to, accept each other and enjoy doing things together.* (S110); *Someone whom you share common ground with and can communicate with.* (S108).

4. Support, caring and affection: *Someone who you share interests with, they will support, encourage and help you when needed, someone you can trust and rely on.* (S24); *Someone that you care for and they care for you. Someone who is there for you. Someone you can trust and talk to.* (S64); *Someone with whom you get along with, can be very interpersonal with, can help willingly or be helped by.* (S65); *Someone that you hang out with and can go to with your problems.* (S77); *Someone one can count on.* (S80); *Someone who is there for you, loyal supportive.* (S91); *A nice kind caring person who is their* [sic] *for you in good and bad times, doesn't backstab.* (S95); *A friend is someone you can rely on and that can rely on you.* (S113).

5. Enjoy time together, have fun: *Someone you can hang out with, enjoy their company.* (S158); *Someone you get along well with and enjoy spending time with.* (S34); *A friend*

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[1] The "S" is a sequential number given to each student questionnaire

> *is somebody that you can spend a lot of time with and enjoy that time, they can make you laugh and you always have a good time. They are somebody that you trust with sensitive information and will help you out when you're in a bind.* (S43).

From the definitions provided by our participants, the notion of friendship is reflected in the themes that have emerged, which display more emotive and affective domains of friendship. This is consistent with literature findings about friendships (Duck, 2002; Cooper; 1980; Bellah, et al, 1996; Doyle & Smith, 2002).

Students were asked whether they expected to make friends when they came to university, and 79.5% of students expected to make friends with other New Zealand students compared to 43.5% of students who expected to make friends with students from other ethnic groups ($t = 9.75$ (df 148) sig = .000). These findings are very significant as the domestic students' expectations when coming to university to make friends influences who they actually choose to make friends with. When asked to elaborate on the importance of having friends, 77.6% of students said that it was important to have friends from their own cultural background compared to 51.5% who said that it was important to have friends from other ethnic groups ($t = 6.775$ (df 147) sig = .000). When it comes to friendship formation our findings indicate that domestic students find it significantly more important to have friends from their own culture than friends from other cultures. This could be that students feel more comfortable with people from their own culture; there is more familiarity and ease of communication. This links back to the students' definitions of friendship discussed earlier.

Students were asked how beneficial it is to have friends from their own cultural background and friends from other ethnic backgrounds. Overall, 77% of the students believed it was beneficial to have friends from their own cultural background; whilst 60.3% believed it was beneficial to have friends from other ethnic backgrounds ($t = 5.1$ (df 150) sig = .000). From a list of benefits of having friends from their own cultural background, results indicate the following emerging themes:

1. Similarity, which was expressed in the form of
   i. Views, values and beliefs: *Can share same views*. (S111); *Have similar beliefs and households.* (S34); *They have the same beliefs as you*. (S13); *Can relate to each other. Can have some of same values, etc*. (S16); *Share some of the same cultural beliefs and share a similarity in the way of sports, etc. relevant to New Zealand.* (S35).
   ii. Religion: *Same religion*. (S58); *Same religion, interests*. (S58).
   iii. Upbringing and experiences: *Similar upbringing and experiences*. (S12); *They act the same*. (S42); *Familiarity. Links. Interests. Sense of humour similar*. (S115).
   iv. Culture, history, customs and memories: *You can relate to the same culture*. (S44); *Same cultural background*. (S47); *Can talk my native language and share same memories and experiences*. (S118); *You have the same customs and the same way of doing things. You are more similar*. (S15); *A lot in common. Same history. Same food*. (S25); *Your cultural interests are common and you can relate to each other easily*. (S7).

    v.   Interests: *Common interests*. (S92); *Can relate to the same things*. (S8); *You can relate with them and you do similar things together*. (S33); *Share similar interests, similar morals so can relate well to them*. (S57).

    vi. Jokes and slang: *They understand how you are, they get your jokes*. (S73); *They have things in common and can understand slang*. (S41).

2. Relate to and understand each other: *Can relate to each other*. (S121).

3. Language and communication: *Ease of communication. Similar interests*. (S100); *They talk my language*. (S82); *They understand me more easily*. (S107).

4. Have fun: *Same culture and sense of humour, more understanding, same ideas of having fun*. (S94).

5. Shared interests and values: *Someone you share similar values, beliefs and norms*. (S104); *A person who you share thoughts and common interests with and who you confide in when you need help – which works both ways*. (S7); *They understand the things I do/think. They want to do same things as me*. (S77); *Same culture and sense of humour, more understanding, same ideas of having fun*. (S94); *Like the same things. Can understand them better. Don't feel awkward at all*. (S105).

The results indicate that similarity is the central theme in having friends from one's own culture. Neuliep (2009) points out that similarity plays a very significant role in establishing and developing relationships. Duck and Barnes (1992) add that "all communication and all relationships are likewise founded on a necessary base of similarity of understanding or similarity of meaning that facilitates the development of each" (p. 100) and that "People who have similar attitudes or values are indicating that they treat aspects of the world as having similar meanings" (p. 205). Neuliep (2009) points out that intercultural researchers have found that "the more we perceive another as similar to ourselves, the more we are able to reduce uncertainty about that person and to form accurate categories of him or her" (p. 305). Literature highlights that the central function of friendship is homophily or similarity between friends, and in intercultural interactions, homophily is a very important and significant factor influencing the formation of friendships across cultures (Gareis, 2000).

Students were also asked to list some benefits of having friends from other cultural backgrounds, and results indicate the following emerging themes:

1. Differences: *Different perspective on things*. (S120); *Differing beliefs and values*. (S22); *Different stories*. (S125); *Diversity knowledge of their culture*. (S126); *They are different to you because of their different upbringing so they could teach you about their culture.* (S21).

2. Learning, and this broad theme included:

    i.   Culture: *Can learn about other cultures*. (S91); *Learning new stuff about their culture*. (S47).

    ii. Points of view, perceptions and perspectives: *Learn about different cultures, different points of view*. (S110); *Learn about other cultures, opinions and perceptions*. (S65); *Different outlook, perspectives*. (S1).

    iii. Background and way of life: *Learn about their culture. Interacting with people with*

different backgrounds. (S25); *Learn of a new culture, and way of life*. (S8).

iv.　Food, lifestyle and entertainment: *Introduce you to new culture, food, etc.* (S37); *Learn new things. Different views and life experiences.* (S92); *Learn about other cultures, taste new foods, different lifestyle/entertainment.* (S140); *Learn different ways.* (S27).

v.　Communication and language: *More knowledge. Gaining skills to communicate with people from other cultures.* (S127); *Learn more about other countries, learn other languages, could be interesting.* (S35); *Learn about other language.* (S41).

vi.　New experiences and stories: *Diversification. Learning new experiences.* (S100); *New experiences/stories, better understanding of the world.* (S116).

vii.　Understanding: *Get involved in different interests, become more understanding of other cultures.* (S94); *Gather a good understanding on the way others view the world.* (S99).

The emerging themes from the vast list of benefits of having friends from the students' own cultural backgrounds include a strong element of similarity and shared experiences; they can relate to and understand each other; there is an ease of communication; and they have fun. This contrasts with the emerging themes of benefits of having friends from another cultural background, namely differences and learning. Domestic students make friends with other domestic students because there is an element of sameness, and they are similar in, or share the same views, values, beliefs, religion, upbringing, experiences, memories, history, interests, customs, jokes and slang terms. This is important in that students do not feel that they have to explain what they say because they know that other students from their own cultural backgrounds will understand the context, whereas international students do not have the same context and background. A category which captures a benefit of having friends from different cultural backgrounds is the opposite of sameness, namely differences. Some students make friends with international students because they are different and do things differently and have diverse worldviews and perspectives. Linked to this benefit is the other category, namely learning, where domestic students learn from international students. They learn about different cultures, points of view, perceptions and perspectives, background, food, communication and language, lifestyle, entertainment, and new experiences and stories, and ways of life. Not everyone is comfortable with learning new things or of being exposed to new ways, and this could be a reason why many domestic students feel more comfortable making friends with individuals from their own culture. Communicating with individuals from a different culture could be uncomfortable because these situations are usually replete with high levels of uncertainty, which lead to elevated levels of anxiety, thus making communication awkward and difficult (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Often domestic students mentioned that having friends from their own cultural background meant that they could have more fun, whereas this was not mentioned as a benefit of having friends from other cultural backgrounds.

Students were asked how difficult it is to make friends while studying, both from their own cultural background and from other ethnic backgrounds. Overall, 63.4% of students believed it was not difficult to make friends from their own cultural background; compared to 38.4% from other ethnic backgrounds (t = 6.234 (*df* 162) *sig* = .000). With these figures it would be

expected that domestic students would have more friends from their own cultural backgrounds as it does seem to be more difficult to make friends from other cultures.

Students were asked to list some difficulties of making friends from their own cultural background, and results indicate the following emerging themes:

1. Differences: *Difficulty fitting in with trends and fashion. I have a different interest in a lot of cases.* (S28); *Different personalities.* (S35); *All people are different even from same culture.* (S77); *Difference in class, tastes, etc.* (S108).

2. Personal characteristics:
   i. Nastiness. bitchiness and selfishness: *Backstabbing, etc.* (S50); *Competition. Bitchy people.* (S36); *All very busy, selfish, no time really to try for new friends.* (S111).
   ii. Competitiveness: *We compete.* (S82); *Boys, drama, competitiveness.* (S92); *Competition.* (S93).
   iii. Shyness: *Shyness. Finding people on the same wavelength as you.* (S79); *I'm not very outgoing.* (S107).

3. Cliques and existing group of friends: *People already have cliques.* (S41); *Everyone my age already has a set/groups of friends.* (S116); *People absorb themselves in defined status groups.* (S57); *People generally stick to their own groups instead of mingling with others. Boys, bitchiness, competitiveness, dramas!* (S94); *Many already have friends they came with.* (S112); *People don't tend to go out and search for new friends, as most have already got long-term relationships made.* (S106).

Students were also asked to list some difficulties in making friends from another cultural background, and results indicate five emerging themes:

1. Differences, and this broad theme included:
   i. Culture: *Culture differences and lack of understanding.* (S19); *They are different.* (S82); *They don't like my lingo (idioms and my clothes), not always like our way of thinking. Not very open - language differences.* (S90); *Language. Different views/ethics.* (S92).
   ii. Language and accents: *Different languages. They can cluster so it's harder to talk to them.* (S103); *Language, accents.* (S126)
   iii. Religion, beliefs and thoughts: *Religion differences.* (S48); *Not understanding their belief and culture.* (S95); *Different beliefs and thoughts.* (S21).
   iv. Norms, values and customs: *Different cultural norms.* (S68); *Different values, customs.* (S8).

2. Closed-off:
   i. Remoteness and distance: *Remoteness.* (S43); *I feel more distant from them.* (S107); *Uncertain.* (S72).
   ii. Staying together: *Some ethnic groups seem to stick to themselves.* (S14). *Other international tend to stick together.* (S150); *Other cultures stick to their own cultural groups. "Exclusive". Don't speak a lot of English.* (S116); *Most tend to stick to themselves, not very accepting of New Zealand culture.* (S52).

3. Communication: *Language. Communication.* (S93); *Can't speak same language. Different ways of doing things.* (S67); *Languages, not trying to get into the Kiwi life and stay with their own group.* (S99).
4. Lack of time: *No time.* (S76).
5. Personal characteristics: *Often shy and don't know how to relate to New Zealanders.* (S112); *Time consuming when studying.* (S113); *Lack of time to get out there and meet new people.* (S118).

However, among these the biggest difficulty or barrier to making friends with students from other cultures was language. Forty-one percent of students mentioned language as a barrier to friendship formation: *English speaking skills.* (S75); *Can't speak same language.* (S67); *Language barriers.* (S125); *Different languages.* (S153).

The emerging themes from the list of difficulties of making friends from the students' own cultural background included differences, personal characteristics, and cliques. Students provided a list of differences within their own culture, personal characteristics such as nastiness, bitchiness, selfishness, competitiveness, and shyness. Interestingly, these characteristics were never mentioned as difficulties when making friends with international students. Cliques easily arise particularly when students know each other from secondary school and attend the same university. As they are already friends, it makes sense that their friendship continues at university; however, this could lead to the exclusion of other students, particularly international students.

The emerging themes from the list of difficulties domestic students had of making friends with international students, included differences; closed-off; communication; and lack of time. Clearly one of the difficulties of making friends with international students is their differentness, which is also one of the benefits of having friends from a different culture. Many students indicated that international students were closed-off and remained remote and distant and tended to stay together rather than engage with domestic students. One of the reasons for this is that often domestic students start university with their own cliques of friends and international students may find it difficult to infiltrate these cliques and may feel that they are unwelcome. Another crucial difficulty that was highlighted was communication. Earlier it was mentioned that one of the benefits of making friends from your own cultural background is that there is an ease of communication, whereas it is a difficulty with international students, particularly those who speak English as a second or third language. Forty-one percent of students mentioned language as a barrier to friendship formation, and this ties in with Sias et al's research findings that "... many participants ... noted that the lack of fluency in a common language made conversation difficult. These difficulties hindered, or slowed down, the increased breadth and depth of discussion necessary for relationship development" (2008, p. 9). From their research findings, Volet and Ang (1998) ascertained that language difficulties are a significant barrier for the formation of multicultural friendships. They also point out that international students find it difficult to express their feelings and emotions in their second or third language. Bird and Holmes (2005) found that some domestic students reduced their engagement and interactions with international students because of the international students' difficulties in English.

From our research findings, language as a barrier is indeed a convincing observation of a

genuine difficulty; however, we enquire whether this is always a valid assertion. International students who speak English as a second language do speak with an accent and one has to get used to that accent; and these students may certainly struggle with finding some expressions or may take longer to express themselves in their second language. However, these students need a fairly substantial command of the English language in order to be able to gain entrance to a university in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Furthermore, Ward and Masgoret noted that "About one in three students found their language skills an impediment to making New Zealand friends" (2004, p. 10), indicating that a large percentage of international students lack the necessary confidence to approach and engage with domestic students. Interestingly, Ward et al (2005a) found that New Zealand students who spoke an additional language had more contact with international students and were also more interested in engaging with international students than students who only spoke English. We believe that this is an area that needs additional research.

Future Research

We want to explore the perceptions, benefits and barriers of international students in friendship formation. Will these perceptions shape friendship expectations held by members of the other (domestic) group? Future research could also include Māori students' perceptions of forming friendships with international students. We want to look at existing data and collect additional data for international students to explore whether there are discrepancies in the functions and expectations of friendship for the two groups. We believe that the concept of friendship may need to be redefined and renegotiated for friendship formation as well as friendship maintenance. Data from the domestic and international students will provide us with information so that we can examine the implications of social stress on international students, migrants, refugees, and so on. We want to collect qualitative data to unpack barriers in forming friendships across cultures. Further research could also include friendship formation amongst more mature students; the concept of reciprocity; entertainment; gift giving; saving face; friendship maintenance, friendship breakdown, and conflict resolution.

Conclusion

There has been a lack of academic attention to research on the formation of different forms of friendships, particularly across cultures. Pahl (2000, p. 5) argues that friendship is becoming an increasingly important "social glue" and many cultures, communities and societies are held together by extremely different social bonds. Forming friendships across different cultures has therefore become even more important as the world continues to evolve into a global village.

Our research has created new knowledge about domestic students' perceptions of friendship formation, as well as benefits and barriers of making friends, both from their own cultural backgrounds and international students. Duck (2002, p. 325) points out that "relationships do not just happen; they have to be made – made to start, made to work, made to develop, kept in good working order and preserved from going sour". Domestic students need to have the motivation and interest in forming friendships with international students, then they need to

work at developing and maintaining these friendships. Many domestic students perceive a number of barriers and difficulties in forming friendships with international students and may not perceive many benefits of having such friendships, so they refrain from developing them.

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