

Outside in the Moana? Chinese International Students' Experiences of Studying in Pacific Studies at The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Banguo Du¹, Patrick Thomsen²

¹ *Beijing Foreign Studies University, China*

² *University of Auckland, New Zealand*

Abstract

Scholarship that explores the experiences of Chinese International Students in New Zealand have identified language barriers, differing rationale in classroom participation and “face” as a concept that mediates their scholastic journey. At the University of Auckland, New Zealand, the majority of Chinese international students take up majors such as finance, computing and engineering. This paper is the first to explore the experiences of Chinese international students majoring in Pacific Studies at a postgraduate level. We make use of data gleaned from critical autoethnographic and talanoa interview methods to explore the uniqueness of this positionality through a thematic talanoa. In doing so we argue their experiences are similar but also differ in important ways from other Chinese international students, in that those in Pacific Studies were also presented with a greater awareness of the need to negotiate their lives between multiple cultural contexts: Mainstream New Zealand society, Pacific Studies – a learning environment that emphasises decolonisation and Indigenous knowledge – while living as Chinese students in a foreign land.

Introduction

In July 2018, three Chinese students arrived in Auckland, New Zealand to take up studies for a master's degree at the University of Auckland (UoA). They were among almost four-thousand Chinese international students that joined the UoA in 2018, however, these three were unique in that they were to join the Centre for Pacific Studies (CPS). They would be the first Chinese international students who had been sent to New Zealand to take up a Master of Pacific Studies degree at the UoA from a Chinese university and sponsor.

Their ability to study at the UoA was made possible through sponsorship by the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). The BFSU is a top Chinese university that offers the largest number of foreign language majors at different levels in China (BFSU, n.d.). Proclaimed on its official webpage, BFSU teaches 101 foreign languages including Māori, Tongan, Sāmoan, Cook Islands Māori and Niuean. These five Pacific languages, however, are under a Newly Established Language Major Program and the university is actively recruiting staff that can facilitate the teaching and research of these languages. The interest in these objectively less commonly taught languages in China is driven by a key objective of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to have the ability to teach official languages covering all countries that are in diplomatic relationship with China (BFSU, n.d.).

According to the UoA, In 2018, among the 8020 international students who enrolled there, 3870 of those came from China. This greatly outnumbered the second-place country in terms of international

students: the United States (US), which numbered 630 students (UoA, 2018). Among those Chinese international students, the most popular majors are finance, computing and engineering (EIC Education, 2018). While China is clearly one of the most significant source markets of international students for the UoA, no Chinese international students have enrolled in a postgraduate program in the CPS at the UoA prior to 2018. Being one of the global leaders in Pacific Studies, the CPS works with and for Pacific communities to sustain and create valued ideas and knowledge about histories, identities, mental health and wellbeing, cultural exchange and languages (UoA, n.d.). The CPS at the UoA presents a different classroom context as it was the first academic centre focused on Pacific knowledge, languages and scholarship to be established in a New Zealand university (UoA, n.d.). Besides its interdisciplinary nature, the CPS centres Pacific approaches to teaching and learning methods, which promotes the decolonisation of Pacific Studies in New Zealand and abroad.

As such, until now, there has been little opportunity for work to be conducted into the experiences of Chinese international students in this space. This paper presents one of the first attempts to begin to plug this empirical gap and is based on a study conducted as part of graduate work that explored the experiences of Chinese international students studying Pacific Studies at the UoA. This study aimed to explore two underlying mapping research questions: 1. what are the main themes and characteristics of Chinese students' experiences of studying in the CPS at the UoA? 2. How are these experiences different or

similar to other Chinese students' studying in New Zealand? We conclude that although certain similarities exist in the challenges experienced by this cohort in the CPS and other Chinese international students, those in the CPS found themselves uniquely placed, having to navigate three worlds: Mainstream New Zealand society and classrooms based on foundational whiteness (Kidman and Chu 2017, 2019), a Pacific-centred worldview that emphasises decolonisation in learning and praxis (Thomsen et al., 2021) and negotiating relationships with other Chinese international students who lived in a Chinese social bubble in New Zealand. This paper reports the study findings using a thematic talanoa (Thomsen 2019; 2020, Thomsen et al., 2021).

Selected Literature Review

Scholarship that explores the experiences of Chinese students as International Students in New Zealand have identified language barriers, differing rationale in classroom participation and "face" as a concept that mediates their scholastic journey. This selected literature review presents some of the work that has helped to inform our understanding of Chinese international students' experiences of studying in New Zealand.

A key feature of studies that have attempted to theorise Chinese international students' experience in New Zealand identify language barrier as a major intervening variable. In Holmes's (2007) study, which was based on interviews with thirteen Chinese international students as participants, it was demonstrated that participants' listening and understanding skills did not equip them well for extended native-speaker delivery in lecture contexts. Similarly, Du-Babcock (2002), in a study of Hong Kong students found that the students' listening skills were not sufficiently developed to sustain a 50-minute lecture given by a native English speaker. Other studies also reported Chinese students encountering difficulties within New Zealand's classroom (Butcher and McGrath, 2004; Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes, 2005; Zhang and Brunton, 2007; Zhong, 2013). Reasons participants gave were the variety of accents exhibited by the multicultural faculty. They became confused when teachers departed from notes projected overhead and began to enrich lectures by using humour and examples.

Related to this, prior research has also found that Chinese students are exposed to different pedagogical approaches in Chinese classrooms in comparison to Western and more specifically New Zealand classrooms. According to Holmes (2006), Chinese education is characterised by memorisation, rote learning, and repetition. Ballard and Clanchy (1991) labeled this approach: a conserving attitude to learning, and Greenholtz (2003) described this method as surface learning where knowledge is treated as a commodity between teachers and students. By contrast, Greenholtz (2003) claims that Western education is generally described as Socratic, where knowledge is generated, or co-constructed, through a process of questioning and evaluation of beliefs. Problem solving and critical thinking skills are also considered to be important (Greenholtz, 2003). Ballard and Clanchy (1991) described this approach as an extending attitude toward learning.

In terms of local integration, according to a survey run by the Chinese embassy in New Zealand (2012), 83% of Chinese students in New Zealand say they mainly interact/make friends with other Chinese. Despite this, 67% of respondents agreed that there is a need to be engaged in communications with local students (Education Office of Chinese Embassy in New Zealand, 2012). Interestingly though, 35% of participants intimated that they had never interacted with local students. This demonstrates that despite Chinese international students acknowledging a need to develop stronger intercultural interactions and communications, other factors were preventing them from doing so. Those factors according to prior research related to (but are not limited to) language barrier and cultural gap (Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes, 2007). Similarly, in Holmes's (2006) study on Chinese students' competency of intercultural communication, mutual understanding and goal achieving are two key factors to describe the competency of communication when facing a diverse society which Chinese international students encounter in New Zealand.

An interesting concept which has been identified as impacting the experiences of Chinese Students' studying in New Zealand is that of "saving face." In Chinese culture, face is an abstract concept. The definition of face is constantly negotiated, however, scholars tend to agree that the concept of face is related to shame, respect and honour (Wu, 2004). To give face is an important social manner in Chinese tradition. In short, when one encounters a person they are not so familiar with, one should create a low profile and try not to make the one they are interacting with feel embarrassed or to "lose face" (Wu, 2004; Jiang, 2006; Holmes, 2007). When it comes to classroom interactions in New Zealand, it is often manifested in politeness, friendly silence in conversation in order to avoid confrontation of opinions and discouragement to compete with others (Wu, 2004; Jiang, 2006). The fear of making mistakes and losing face further discouraged Chinese students from speaking up in New Zealand classrooms (Holmes, 2006; Zhong 2013).

Methodology

In this article, we make use of critical autoethnography combined with talanoa dialogue to build the analysis of the paper into a thematic talanoa. Critical autoethnography as a method provides the researcher a start with a familiar topic: the self; whereas other methods dealing with ethnography usually start investigation with an unfamiliar topic: the other. By adopting autoethnography, we will have direct access to intimate information that can investigate the author's own experience in depth (Kennett, 2010). The benefits of this method includes (1) a research method friendly to researchers and readers; (2) it enhances cultural understanding of self and others; and (3) it has the potential to transform the self and others to motivate them to work toward cross-cultural coalition building (Kennett, 2010).

Kennett (2010), however, also cautions that the data extracted from the self needs to be put into cultural context and its analysis and interpretations must be appropriately situated in theory in order to avoid creating a mere

autobiography. Critical autoethnography is often also criticised for an excessive focus on the self in isolation from others; for its overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; an exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; a somewhat negligent consideration of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and an inappropriate application of the label “autoethnography” in certain instances (Kennett, 2010). To ameliorate these limitations, the autoethnographic data will be balanced with insights from another participant who was interviewed using the principles of talanoa, and all interpretations and themes were cross-checked by another researcher to bring a more impartial perspective on the arguments and interpretations presented here.

Moreover, we argue that autoethnography in this case is a valid method to collect data as the research questions relate to experiences of Chinese international students. As one of the authors is a member of the small cohort of Chinese international students studying in Pacific Studies, self-reflective pieces are still valid sources of knowledge, whose validity must be judged with these limitations in mind. All data in qualitative social research carries limitations, and the first step is always acknowledging them transparently (Thomsen 2020). Furthermore, as this research follows Pacific Research Methodological insights, there is an inherent acceptance that the ontological and epistemological position this research takes is based on a social construction of reality that is open to further interpretive conjecture (Thomsen 2018).

Talanoa, according to Vaoleti (2016) is linguistically in Tongan made of two parts: “tala” meaning to inform, tell, relate, command and ask; and “noa” meaning of any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void’ (Vaoleti, 2016). Thus, it is roughly translated into talking about nothing in particular (Vaoleti, 2016; Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). The method of talanoa is described as a “personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and their aspirations” (Vaoleti, 2016). Furthermore, talanoa is the “process in which two or more people talk together, or in which one person tells a story to an audience who are largely listeners. Talanoa is guided by rules of relationship and kinship” (Vaoleti, 2016). Therefore, in talanoa, the participant as well as the researcher is encouraged to participate actively and add their own opinion and stories to the data. This runs contrary to conventional interview protocols where participants are usually placed as subjects of the study and will only reply to a set of fixed questions predetermined by the researcher (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaoleti, 2016; Tecun (Daniel Hernandez), Hafoka, ‘Ulu’ave and ‘Ulu’ave-Hafoka, 2018). These principles that guide talanoa were used in the generation of data that is reported in the thematic talanoa below.

The participant is considered a junior master’s student in Pacific Studies who is in the same BFSU Pacific Island Language programme as one of the authors. This means that there are similarities and specific differences to how both came to be in Pacific Studies. It was this shared genesis in the field that we find an appropriate starting point for the development of a talanoa that is rooted in shared experiences. This is important as the research project aims to map out what the experiences of Chinese

international students may look like in Pacific Studies and use this approach as the starting point for theorisation.

During the conversation, which was conducted in Mandarin then translated into English by the researcher, the researcher participated actively and was involved in an iterative discussion with the participant to generate an organic environment that does not place the participant as solely an object of the study, but rather an active contributor to co-constructed knowledge (Thomsen, 2019). This contrasts with conventional Western methods of qualitative interview principles popular in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, where often the predominant goal of the interview is to excavate data to glean contextualised (but still objective) truths (Thomsen, 2020). These semi-structured interviews were informed by the talanoa methodology. While key points of interests were listed prior to the talk. It was made known to the participant that the researcher would offer personal views and experiences that they could challenge and/or legitimate at their discretion. This is important, as Vaoleti (2006) points out, in a talanoa participants must feel free to question and challenge the researcher during the session. The following section presents the thematic talanoa, which according to Thomsen (2019, 2020) uses participants’ words as anchoring points, centred in the pages whilst interpretations and theory are built around them in conversation with prior literature.

Thematic Talanoa

Theme 1: Language Barriers

An important recurring theme was how encountering language barriers impacted experiences of studying in CPS. Both researcher and participant conveyed disappointment that their level of academic English skills inhibited full participation in classroom discussions and activities. The participant expressed concerns around the multiple times that they could not understand class content. This finding sits in-line with many studies on the experiences of Chinese international students’ in New Zealand that have identified this previously (Holmes, 2005; Ding 2006; Holmes, 2006; Zhang and Brunton, 2007; Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes, 2007). Language level also resulted in discouragement from asking questions for clarification, while language barriers continued to affect the study experience. When asked about concerns over communication experiences, the participant stated:

PARTICIPANT: What I am missing now is daily communication skills. For example, the simplest “Hello, how are you?” “I’m fine, thank you” that was taught to us over and over again in school. Do you think native speakers of English actually greet each other like this? It is totally impractical and dogmatic. Through my learning process from elementary school to college, I felt a strong fixation on grammar and model answers. There was not much “fluidity”. Language itself is fluid and developing. If you use model answers to reply to someone in daily communication, it is very awkward. There are lots of slang words in spoken language. We don’t have any exposure to that at all. At school the emphasis was solely on grammar.

To start an English conversation with “Hello, how are you” and then reply with the model answer “I am fine, thank you, and you?” is included in perhaps the most widespread English starter lessons in China. While being

acknowledged as dogmatic and mocked by later generations, it remains a symbol of Chinese English teaching pattern which emphasises model answers. In Holmes's studies (2005; 2006), this is often exposed by English speaking classroom environments which emphasises self-elaboration and non-moderated discussion. Previous studies on differences in classroom teaching between Chinese classrooms and Western classrooms suggest that this makes it difficult for Chinese students to learn in Western classrooms (Greenholtz, 2003; Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes, 2007; Zhang and Brunton, 2007). In contrast to previous studies, the participants indicated that they were not unfamiliar with Western style classroom activities, nor were they incapable of being active in a Socratic teaching context.

PARTICIPANT: I think the seminar-form classes are quite common at postgraduate level in China. When attending postgraduate school in China we had seminar classes. That's basically in all the classes, you do need to express your opinions or deliver a presentation. It was very helpful. And I would definitely be more critical when using Mandarin.

This is an important finding as it runs contrary to Greenholtz's (2003) assertion that dislocation of Chinese learners in a Western classroom was caused by the differences of nature between Chinese and Western education. The participant specifically acknowledged the language obstacle of being more critical in participating in classroom discussion, whilst the format in which classes are being run is not unfamiliar to them. This suggests that Chinese international students are not unaware of the differences in learning styles, nor are they coming completely blind into the New Zealand classroom. This means that the language barrier and cultural gap may be a more significant factor.

Theme 2: Cultural Gap

When talking about experiences of studying within Pacific Studies, both acknowledged a lack of understanding related to general information about daily life including transport, urban layout and lifestyles in New Zealand which echoed previous research (Holmes, 2006). Furthermore, there was a lack of understanding of the unique cultural context that exists in New Zealand. This was exposed when encountering Pacific and Māori culture for the first time. The knowledge gap (which was also a cultural gap), upon entering Pacific Studies, was so wide that we argue it impeded the process of acculturation into the department and study environment. In a practical sense, for the researcher they felt they were simply missing core contextual knowledge that one would be acquainted with growing up in New Zealand. Such things include the history of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the concept of biculturalism that involves Pākehā and Māori peoples, and the special relationship that the Pacific has with New Zealand being something they were oblivious to.

RESEARCHER: In one of my Pacific Studies classes, my Sāmoan classmate shed tears when talking about reasons for her to choose the topic of wellbeing of Pacific kids. I could only sympathise with her strong emotion but could not relate to her experience of seeing those children struggling in difficulties as I had never experienced it and was learning about it for the first time. Thus, upon my first arrival to the department and classroom context, I felt I was restrained by my own knowledge gap to a very large extent.

The inability to connect with classmates' lived experiences was profoundly important for cohort members. The researcher claimed that: "none of us really had an appreciation of the depth of impact that colonisation has produced on the lives of Māori and Pacific peoples." But even more importantly, admitted that they had very little knowledge on the difference between Māori and Pacific communities in New Zealand. In addition, they claimed that: "a lot of us had very little understanding of the difference between Māori worldviews and Pākehā worldviews." Without this cultural knowledge, without the context to understand the cultural contexts they were learning about and in, it made it difficult for this cohort of Chinese international students to be sure of the right approach to academic learning and success in the CPS. This was especially evident when they were introduced to Pacific ways of knowing through Pacific research methodologies.

PARTICIPANT: The methodology of talanoa gave me a headache. It's not that easy to apply methodologies with unfamiliar cultural meanings. The theme of decolonisation surprised me at first. I thought Pacific Studies would probably use the same patterns of other social/human science disciplines.

Pacific Studies as a discipline is more than just about "studying" the Pacific. It is also about centring Pacific ways of knowing, highlighting the value of Indigenous-centred research methodologies and actively trying to decolonise classroom and research (Wesley-Smith, 2016; Teaiwa, 2017; Thomsen et al., 2021). Without this grounding, it is difficult for those who are not Pacific Islanders or Indigenous to understand the importance of Pacific research methodologies like talanoa. This was clearly evident in the way researcher and participant talked about their surface-level understanding of Pacific and Māori cultures in the previous excerpt. In order for any non-Pacific students to succeed in Pacific Studies, we argue that there must be an acknowledgement of this knowledge and cultural gap early on and attempts to assuage this must be taken early and intentionally to ensure an ability to learn effectively in the classroom.

Theme 3 Insecure Identities

RESEARCHER: When I first came to this department, the researcher's positionality was really emphasised. For example, in Kaupapa Māori Research, a key learning is that Māori research should be "for Māori with Māori and by Māori". At first, I thought, I am not and can never be Māori. So, what am I doing here then? I had a hard time accepting it in my heart, and I felt perhaps I would never be able to do research well enough in that way.

PARTICIPANT: Pacific researchers and academics want to focus on research indigenous knowledge and methodologies. Then what kind of positionality do we hold as outsiders to Pacific Studies as Chinese students? We were required to think about this when we came to study.

Neither researcher nor participant had experienced having positionality highlighted in this way before. It forced both to think about their position as "outsiders" in not just the makeup of the classroom, but also to the theoretical and foundational values of a discipline. Initial encounters with this issue were framed in a pessimistic light when thinking about future academic performance. The researcher

initially interpreted the emphasis on Kaupapa Māori principles as “only Māori researchers can be seen as qualified” to conduct research using these frameworks, rather than understanding the core message of valuing indigeneity and centring Indigenous ways of knowing when trying to conduct research. As this lack of awareness extended beyond the classrooms, the researcher was unsatisfied with their interactions with Pacific cohorts.

RESEARCHER: One thing I learnt about Pacific Studies was that it is not just about the classes but also community experiences. Say, when you walk into someone’s house and join for dinner, this is also part of learning. That is also our learning privilege in coming to Auckland as a Chinese international student. But I realise now that it seems that I have been missing this part (relationship building) of Pacific Studies.

Zhang and Brunton’s (2007) report indicated that local students usually do not tend to take the initiative to interact with international students. This was not the case with Pacific classmates. Both researcher and participant shared memories of Pacific peers’ attempts to include them in Pacific Studies events. The researcher indicated that they did try to maintain friendships by spending more time with Pacific peers than Chinese fellows. However, this led to an “out-of-place” feeling, or in-betweenness which is common for Chinese expat students to experience (Education Office of Chinese Embassy in New Zealand, 2012; Huang, 2008). A large part of this is due to inside forces of a Chinese social bubble. The forming of this Chinese social bubble and its strong impact on experiences reported here indicated that factors influencing the maintaining of friendship of a Chinese student often extend to their Chinese side of the social realm.

For a newcomer in a foreign country, the researcher stated that: “I wanted to make acquaintances that were both Pākehā and Māori/Pacific.” They indicated that they also had a shallow impression that New Zealand had put much effort into cultural revitalisation of Māori and Pacific communities, I had imagined it to be a perfectly balanced society where Pākehā and Māori/Pacific people share little segregation. However, upon arrival and study within the department, they realised that Māori and Pacific people are actually marginalised in New Zealand sharing features of many minoritised groups across many societies in the world. There were racial tensions between classmates and the dominant White hegemony in New Zealand society that the Chinese cohort was not aware of and was surprised to encounter during conversations that some Pacific classmates were having while they were present.

RESEARCHER: There was a time I was eating with my classmates when one of them suddenly started condemning Pākehā for exclusively occupying certain campus facilities, using phrases like ‘damn these white ladies’. At that moment I was confused and remained silent since I didn’t totally understand the long oppression posed to the Māori/Pacific people from Pākehā.

In this excerpt, the researcher was privy to an in-group conversation where Pacific classmates were expressing frustration of experiencing marginalisation on-campus. In this situation, the researcher came to understand that there were still issues around how classmates were feeling excluded at a university despite seeing them as local

students and the Chinese cohort as outsiders. In fact, because they did not have any cultural understanding and did not have a deep understanding of the history and legacy of colonialism in the Pacific and in New Zealand, they failed to understand that classmates were also outsiders, too. They were outsiders to the dominant culture, and the Chinese cohort were outsiders to Pacific Studies.

RESEARCHER: In my Māori language course the lecturer asked students’ what their motives were for studying Māori. The answers my fellow classmates gave made me feel ashamed. Someone said: “Because I want to understand my grandparents”. Another said: “I want to do something for the community.” Such reasons to me sounded so powerful and selfless, this made me question my motives for Māori language studies, since I didn’t come to the classroom with such specific personal reasons.

As a student, the researcher realised that the varied motivations of classmates was something they could not emulate to such a personal level as those who were closely related to what they were studying. This made the researcher realise that there are divergent motivations for students to study Māori and Pacific languages and cultures. For local classmates, these motivations were very personal and related to their experiences of feeling like their cultural identity may have been excluded in their learning experiences up to this point in their academic journey. Meanwhile, for the Chinese cohort, they were motivated to study Pacific Studies and Pacific languages because according to the researcher, they represented: “a way for us to improve our employability as well as to learn about new cultures and societies.”

Concluding Discussion

As China’s interest in the Pacific will only continue to heighten over the next few years, it is important for us to track new phenomena in an array of areas that may be impacted by this rising presence. One way we are seeing this manifest is the arrival of Chinese students in Pacific Studies programs and universities that may not have hosted Chinese international students in the past such as the CPS at the UoA. The experiences of these students in a unique study program like a Masters in Pacific Studies are deserving of more scholarly attention as the generative impacts on teaching, learning, relationship-building and scholarship, not just geopolitics must also be the focus of our research endeavours that maps shifts in the Pacific and Asia-Pacific region as has been demonstrated in this paper through this brief thematic talanoa.

Overall, it appears that after years of Chinese students coming to New Zealand for education, some recurring themes of their experiences remain unchanged: The impact of the language barrier, cultural gaps, dissatisfaction of having and maintaining friendships with locals, as well as experiencing difficulty in being able to acculturate effectively. But also, this research demonstrates that Chinese international students’ experiences may vary individually by department as well as due to factors not limited to their education background, early arrival experience and largely, language proficiency. While some of these themes were highly overlapping with this cohort’s experience in Pacific Studies, some were unique to them.

A significant finding was the unconventional in-between and otherness reported from this cohort. The triangular shape among Chinese culture, New Zealand's Westernized mainstream culture and Pacific cultures created a multi-dimensional self-identification for individuals negotiating life within it. For incoming Chinese students, it is crucial to bear the cultural awareness including awareness of the Chinese-Western binary when coming to live in New Zealand. More importantly, Chinese students should be aware of the persisting effects of colonisation and its impact on the discipline of Pacific Studies. Only by enhanced knowledge and cultural understanding of the reasons to re-centring Pacific ideologies and methodologies prior to arrival, one can better locate and accommodate themselves into Pacific Studies.

A point that bears repeating from this research is that Chinese international students must learn that the imprint of colonisation can be traced deeply in the preference of research methodologies and epistemologies that have marginalised Pacific ways of knowing in conventional humanities and social science disciplines. Further, Pacific Studies compels us to value Indigenous knowledge and research principles and deal with the question of a researcher's positionality in meaningful ways. This is a key difference between being a Chinese international student in Pacific Studies, to what currently exists in the literature regarding the experiences of Chinese international students studying in New Zealand.

Also, to create and maintain relationships with Pacific peers requires an acknowledgement that they live and experience life differently from local students of European or Pākehā descent. Therefore interactions with Pacific classmates will necessarily be different. It is clear that Pacific communities share similar values to Chinese communities, which includes valuing community connections, family, support for kinship, filial piety and so on. On the other hand, this may need to be balanced with the rise of individualism in China and an awareness of how this may be occurring within Pacific communities in New Zealand too. The lesson is to not presume Pacific peers to be the same as Pākehā students despite being members of the New Zealand nation, and to explore ways of interaction individually.

In Pacific Studies there is a great emphasis on researchers' positionality that relates to one's ethnic/cultural and racialised background in conversation with one's research questions, community and context. This presented real issues for the researcher and participant as Chinese students, especially for the researcher who was studying Kaupapa Māori research. This made them question their legitimacy to conduct research using this approach. Both participant and researcher were unsure as to how Chinese international students enter this conversation. The same can be said in regard to other Pacific research methodologies and ethical praxis. This is a separate issue from insider-outsider positionality as the researcher argues that this speaks to the work Chinese international students will also need to undertake in positioning themselves in adjacent conversations of allyship and relationship to Tangata Whenua and other Pacific peoples that do not reproduce colonial configurations. This is an on-going conversation that more Chinese international

students will need to have as future students continue to arrive in New Zealand to study in programs like Pacific Studies at UoA.

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Keywords

Chinese International Students; Higher Education; Pacific Studies; Intercultural Communication; International Education; China; Pacific