

# **Cultural and religious connections; community engagement; wellness and entry adjustment amongst international students in Palmerston North.**

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Cultural and religious connections; community engagement; wellness and entry adjustment amongst international students in Palmerston North.

In a survey amongst mature and post graduate students at Massey University, Palmerston North in 2011 there were indications that local religious & cultural communities served an important role as sources of information and assistance in settlement outcomes for international students and their families. The role of such connections was further reinforced in this subsequent study where the authors sought to explore further the cultural adaptation amongst a broad group of international students in Palmerston North with reference to factors that may aid settlement or act as barriers to good settlement outcomes. Through a methodology of a short survey and complementary focus groups and interviews the experiences of a range of international students were explored as to engagement with the local community groups and how such engagement facilitated a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion and recognition. This in turn contributed to growth in wellness through a lessening of acculturative stresses, a heightening awareness of social supports and a perception of paths to overcome language and communication barriers in the wider community. The sample of international students included young, single undergraduate students as well as post graduate, mature and married with family students. In this paper the authors draw from the Maori health model, Te Whare Tapa Wha and make suggestions relating to entry adjustment programmes for international students to seek to achieve a balance whereby the international student adjustment includes the spiritual as well as physical, social and mental aspects

## **Key Words**

Community engagement , social awareness, pastoral care

## **Cultural and religious connections; community engagement; wellness and entry adjustment amongst international students in Palmerston North.**

In 2011 we conducted some initial preliminary research into the expectations and experience of the many mature international students who come to live in Palmerston North primarily due to the opportunities to study post graduate courses at Massey University. This research was amongst Massey University international and mature post graduate students, many of whom have families with them and have come to study courses from all corners of the world. This very diverse student body and the complexity for pastoral care related to the flow on effects of many students having family responsibilities intruding into study life of itself suggested there may be some issues of wellness associated with poor settlement outcomes.

This initial pilot study amongst members of the International Post Graduate and Mature Students club at Massey University was undertaken with a view to gaining insight into the expectations and experiences of living in the Massey University and Palmerston North community. It envisaged information gained would be helpful in the design of more in depth research within this group of students and their families over time and also allow for a comparative study of post graduate international students and their families experiences that would be inclusive of other centres. The aim of such research would be to learn how the experiences reported may be enhanced in the future for this specialist group of temporary migrants.

The information gained from this initial pilot study gave some good indications but raised some questions as well around wellness that were wider than basic aspects of physical and social settlement outcomes. This paper reports on a follow up pilot study amongst this same population of students that sought to extend some of the findings and to explore a more rounded and holistic view of the extent of wellness in the settlement outcomes for this group..

### **Methodology**

Data for this study was derived in three ways:

1. An online survey amongst the students eliciting both qualitative and quantitative responses
2. Interviews with students
3. Focus group activity

The online survey was promoted through the International Post Graduate and mature students Club at Massey University.

The interview subjects were identified through informal connections with the researchers and the club.

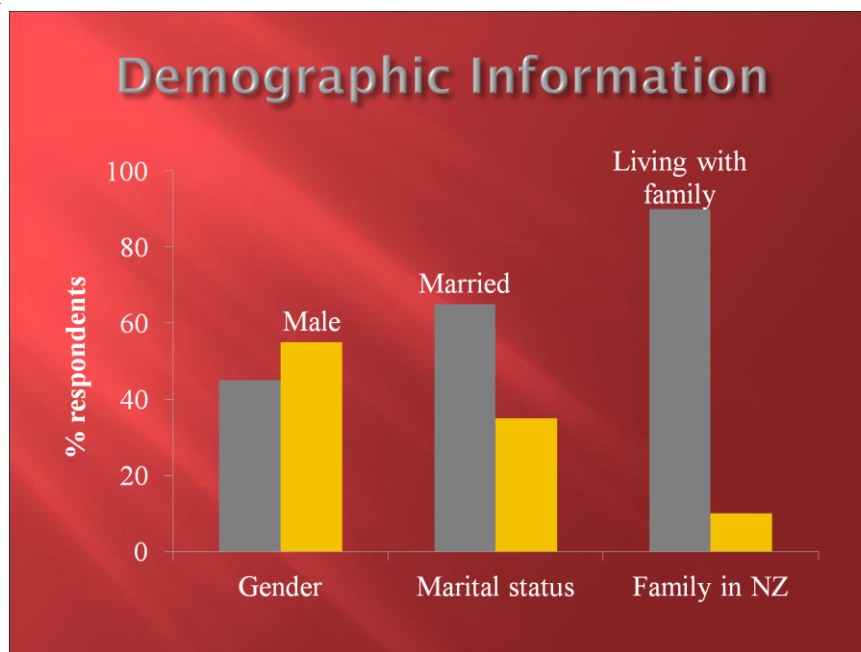
Focus group activity was initiated by a post graduate helper arranging for a focus group

Data from interviews and the focus group has been aggregated with the qualitative comments from the survey and the findings have been written up around the structure of the survey. Some survey questions were the same as for the survey in 2011 and where this is the case the findings are presented for the whole set of students involved in 2011 and 2012. This increases the number of students surveyed and the confidence of the data being obtained.

### Demographic Information

Just over 100 nationalities study at Massey University with anywhere from 80 -90 nationalities at any time being classified as international students by visa status. The students in our research sample as it turns out were drawn from 23 of those nationalities and were somewhat skewed to a high response amongst students from Pakistan however there has been a significant cohort amongst the postgraduates . In our second survey and set of interviews fewer Pakistanis made themselves available. Our study participants were largely drawn from the Asian block of countries (South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asia and one from Central Asia) and only two came from Europe, one each from Africa, North and South Americas. The size of sample and informal approach to gaining research participants contributed to this sample not being fully representative of the international student body however amongst the post graduate student sector the only major omission is students from the Pacific. The gender balance across both data collection periods for survey and interviews was 55/45 male to female with two thirds of participants being married. All married students had been joined by their marriage partner and two thirds of those married students also had children with them. Figure 1 represents this aspect of our sample of participants in our surveys.

Figure 1



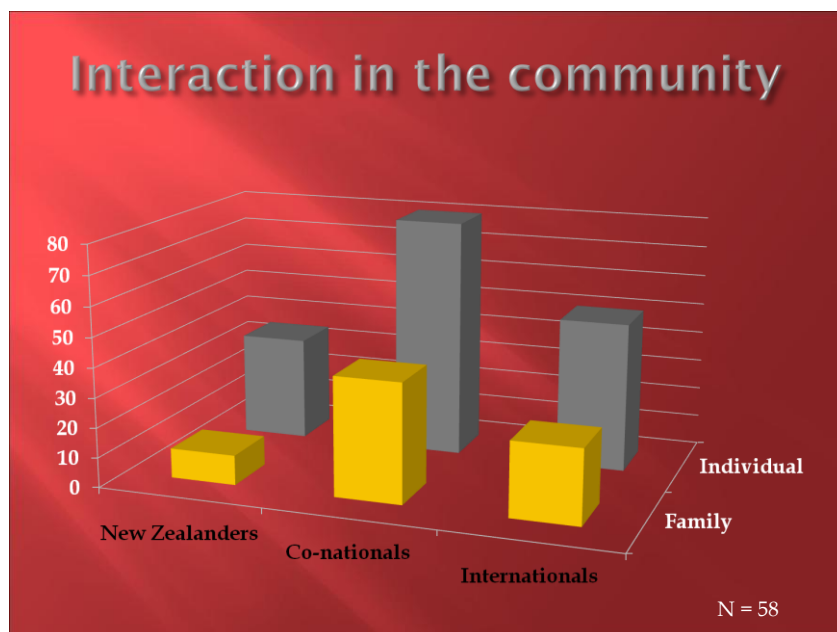
Students surveyed had been in New Zealand on average 2.5 years with some having been here only six months and some nearly at a course finishing time of 4 to 5 years out. 4 had been here longer than 4 years. 2 years was the average projected further study period ahead. This length of stay is consistent with the courses most were undertaking and the projections for further stay consistent with course length and the Graduate Work Search permit option of a further year of stay in NZ which some students indicated was their intention. Some in interviews and in comment sections of the survey indicated a desire to complete migration after graduation and some indicated that as a desire but scholarship arrangements prevented it in the interim. Two thirds of the student respondents were in PhD programmes and the remainder were drawn from Masters programmes. The international post graduate body at Massey includes many involved in post graduate diploma programmes as well as visiting scholar programmes but none of these featured amongst participants in this study.

Our 2011 and 2012 surveys asked students to identify their faith background. All but 4 responded to this question. 6 chose Hindu 4 Buddhist 19 Christian, 14 Muslim, 1 Sikh, 2 atheist, 3 agnostic and 10 no religion. In our earlier study there had been a finding that connections with faith communities seemed to aid settlement. We wanted to explore this further in the second study to see the importance of spiritual well being.

### Findings from the Study

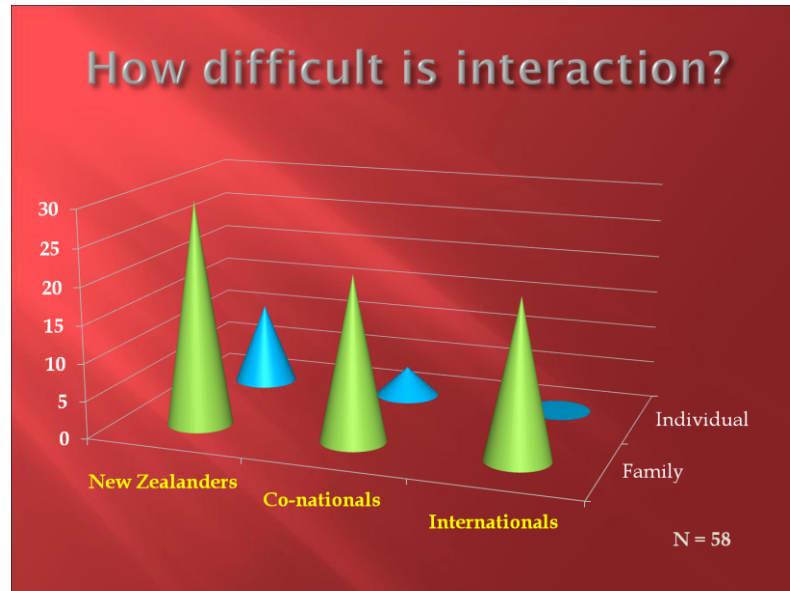
Frequency of Interaction with different sectors in the community was an area of interest and we were interested in comparing the frequency of interaction of students and families with New Zealanders, co-nationals and other internationals. In addition we wanted to see if the frequency of interaction changed when it included families in the interaction. The findings in this area are displayed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**



While all had experienced interaction with individual New Zealanders just over a third had not experienced interaction with New Zealand families. The degree of difficulty experienced in interacting was also explored and findings from this are represented in Figure 3

**Figure 3**



Of note here is the greater difficulty the families experienced in social interactions than did the individual students whom we surveyed. In part this may be due to the family members not having the same ability in English as the student and also possibly being house bound due to caring for a household. The student needs a high level of English to qualify for study and often they are at the young family stage of life which ties up the parent who is caring for children.

Frequent interaction occurred more with co-nationals and other internationals than with New Zealanders but one surprise was that frequent interaction amongst co-national families was not high and a quarter of those surveyed did not interact with co-national families at all. There may be some simple explanation for this like limited numbers of others from home country and this would be the case for some participants but this is an area for further exploration in subsequent studies. There could be a social norm for the origin country that is duplicated here that limits interaction but does not apply in reference to interaction with other internationals or New Zealanders.

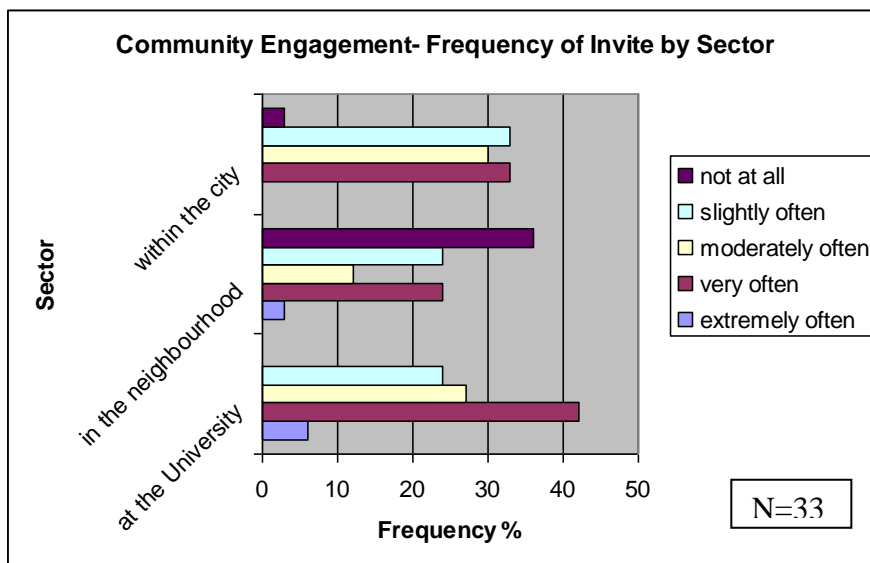
Comments from interviews were helpful in understanding some of the limits to social interaction: *“Sometimes it is difficult to interact with New Zealanders as they often already formed tight social groups and often do not seem to include others”* In the second series of interviews this was explored in more depth and comments like, *“Most of my social circle are Indian community not many internationals or kiwis”* were common where a local community of co-cultural people of recent migrant origins existed. In exploring this particular comment with a community leader within the Indian community we noted an expressed desire for, *“More connection with these new students. Interaction needs to be encouraged.”* This community leader expressed strong views as to the role of the local migrant community in looking after and connecting with the students who were seen largely as recent migrants themselves.

This observation is significant as international students are temporary migrants and when they are mature and have families with them then their profile in the community is very much like that of a new migrant and where a cohesive co-cultural migrant community exists then that community becomes a natural source of social connection and even seeks out the students. Further exploration of this with other interviewees and community leaders indicated that many within the local Indian community felt a sense of responsibility for the Indian students as the experience of many within the community was of migration along a study to work to residence track. A similar observation was made of the Pakistani community and amongst pacific island students this seemed a norm.

Another refrain that was common in the comments section of the survey and in interviews was comment about how language tended to be a limiting factor in regards to social interaction and this was even more apparent for spouses. Another limiting factor related to food and an often mentioned comment was halal food tended to be a barrier for non halal people in inviting Muslim people to share food with them. Possibly also the perception of differences of custom may be a factor here and is speculated on by some students in their comments. The Pakistani students who took part in interviews and the surveys mentioned food issues as a barrier to some cross cultural interactions. Several comments echoed the refrain that the local kiwis they might have had more in depth social interaction were put off by the idea of providing halal food in a potential hospitality situation and correspondingly some of the students felt shy to accept social invitations as there might be embarrassment around questioning and/or refusing food or alcoholic drinks and so preferred to avoid such situations. *“...muslim we only eat halal meat and don’t drink ... so sometimes people might not be comfortable with this”*

A second area of exploration on social engagement was in the area of frequency and where invitations to engage socially are initiated. In our first data collection we were interested in the sectors of the community most often providing social engagement activities that included invitations for international students and families. Figure 4 reflects the findings in this area.

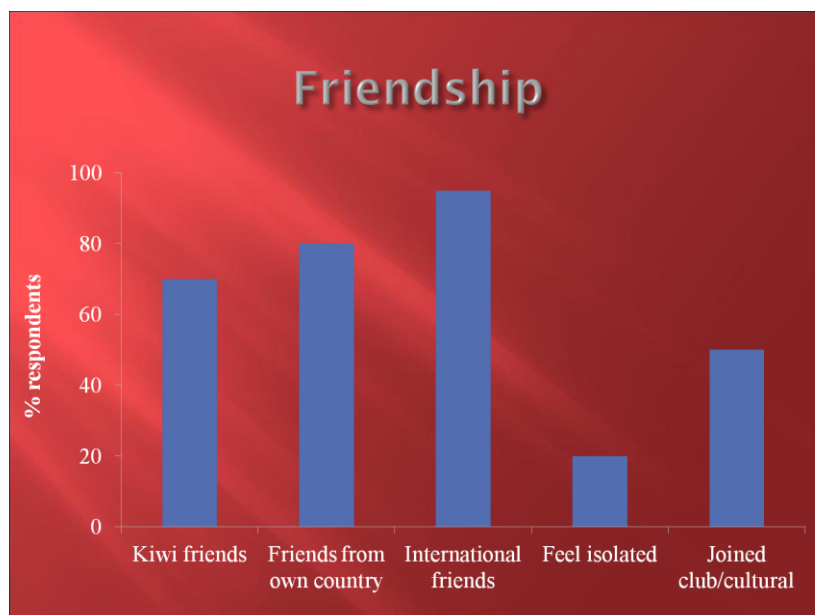
**Figure 4**



The frequency of social invitations is highest for participants to join activities within the university sector and lowest for joining activities in the Neighbourhood. Many of the international families live in community housing complexes, some university owned and some owned by the city council. This finding indicates there may be need for community engagement activities in some of these community housing areas. Interviews with students indicated there was limited social organisation in these housing complexes and it was easier to “make friends at university gatherings” which was fine for the student but not always fine for a partner who may be struggling to make friends due to language and other barriers. Of note was the offering from amongst the students that their children seemed to make friends easily and especially so in the community housing. One student offered evidence of this by referral to a U tube video posted by the children in one of the community housing complexes (Crazy Kids of Rakaia).

We sought to explore the concept of where friends are made and barriers to interaction in our second set of surveys and interviews. Figure 5 represents some of the findings from the second survey related to friendship building.

**Figure 5**



The international community featured most often in the place where friendship was being initiated and that more so than amongst people from ones own country. It is worth noting that many of the students we surveyed and interviewed in their daily lives came into greater contact with other internationals than their own country persons many of whom were few on the ground in many cases. Of note is the finding that 20% viewed themselves as isolated.

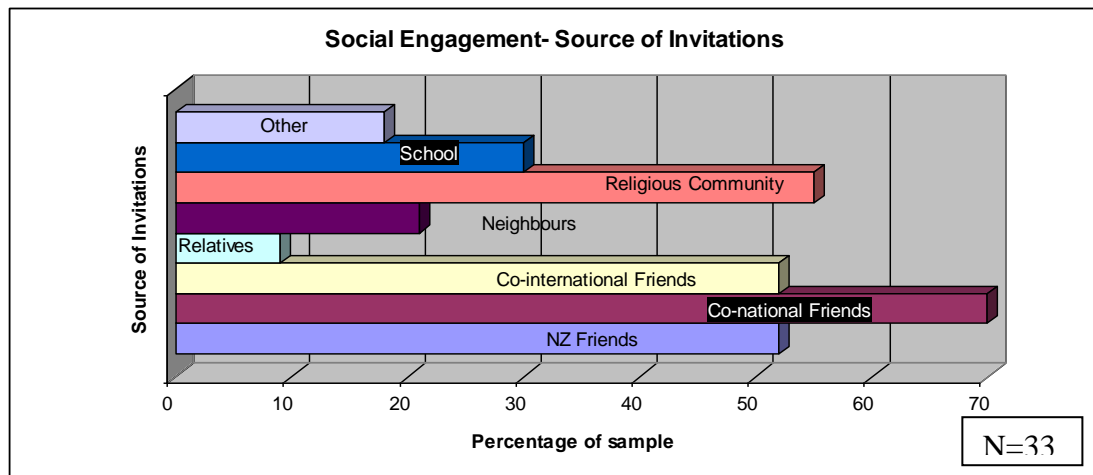
The source of invitations for social engagement activities was of interest to us. Our conversations with international students indicated there might be barriers to initiating social interaction. Our student respondents commented that language, food and differences of culture were perceived as barriers to interaction with New Zealanders and other internationals students and families both by the students and those they might interact with. Typical comments:

*“With nationals there were very little or no barriers at all, because we speak the same language. However, it was difficult with kiwis because they speak their own English (mostly slang and sarcasms).”*

*“Having a group from the same ethnic at the university helps me to enhance my social life. It is so difficult to be social with kiwi people and they with us.”*

Figure 6 represents findings from our 2011 survey related to knowing the sources of most invitations for social occasions.

**Figure 6**



It is not unexpected in view of the earlier comments that co-national friends would be the greatest source of invitations for social occasions. The religious communities emerge as a significant source of social invitations and friends made amongst New Zealanders and co-internationals are certainly important sources of invitations for just over half of our sample. Of note here is that the number responding to the survey is low and the proportion of Pakistanis and other Muslim students was higher than the overall proportion for the international student body.

One question we asked in the survey and in the conversations with students was what the students perceived as good ways to make friends and the barriers to doing so. A range of responses were recorded and we looked for patterns within them. Common threads were the importance of community groups that transcended language and culture. Amongst these community groups we identified the importance of common interests such as sport and the area of study; community service organisations such as plunket, playgroups, multicultural centre, library (the Palmerston North Library runs many programmes for families including ones aimed at serving diversity), and some of the language assistance programmes. A standout in comments was the religious community with Mosque and churches regularly identified as good places to make friends. This was explored in more depth in the second set of interviews and survey and we sought to see if the factors for this connection were spiritual or social. A common refrain in the interviews was that the mosque, temple or church provided a familiar link with life at home as the spiritual rituals and the concept of setting aside time to for reflection, meditation and worship often transcended national and cultural boundaries. Festival occasions were particularly mentioned with one interviewee commenting that on particular important festival days she travelled to another city

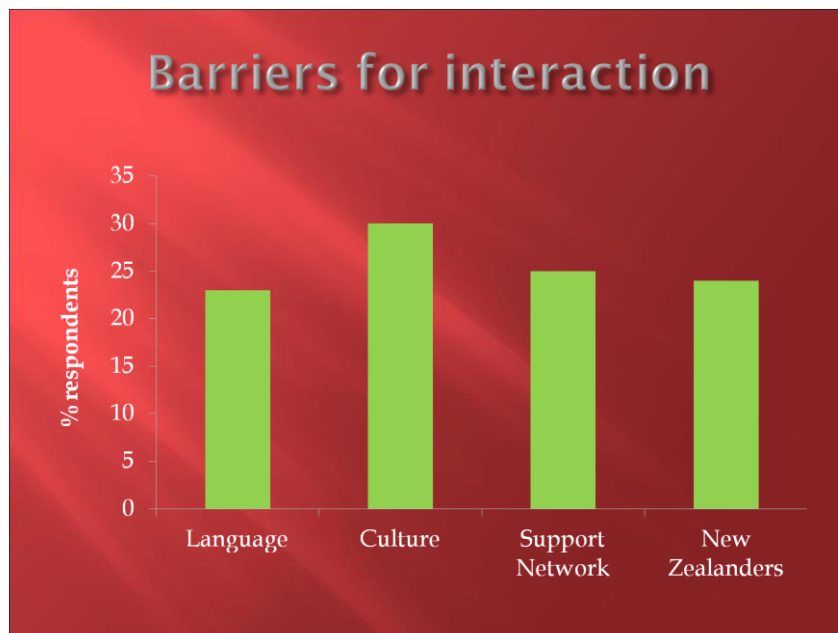


where there was a temple. Apart from these special occasions she had found attending a church met her sense of spiritual need to set aside time to reflect and worship but the temple visits were a connection with home and her identity. She felt it important for her well being to ensure she be involved in the spiritual aspect of life along with others. When attending a church she did so with friends and had made friends there and that too was an important aspect of the connection.

A number of those interviewed in our more recent data collection identified as atheist or no religion. The spiritual well being question was naturally associated with religion and each pointed out their non religion involvement but also tended to compare themselves with those who were adherents to a religion and noted they gained as much in terms of well being by associating with others of similar thinking. One student noted he felt at home in New Zealand as there were many he could associate with who had similar atheistic or agnostic beliefs and being amongst them made him comfortable. This same student noted that if he were lacking friends he would probably connect with a church but since non religious friends were available he had no need. He observed that New Zealanders tended to be less involved with religion than his home country and that in his view was a good thing. The insight in his observation that the religious institutions provided a social connection point is significant and was part of the findings in our first surveys and interviews and of those surveyed and interviewed in the second set of data collection the ones who had connected with faith communities reported a great value was in the social interaction and the formation of friendships.

In our 2012 set of surveys and interviews we looked a little further at barriers to interaction. Figure 7 represents some of the perceived barriers acknowledged in the survey. These were all mentioned in the 2011 data collection in interviews and survey comments

**Figure 7**

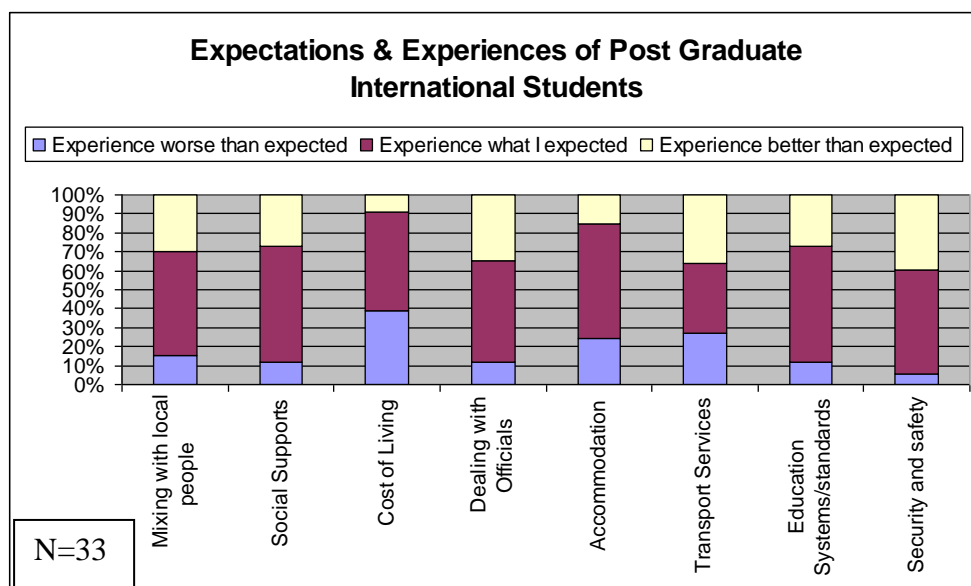


For over 20% of our respondents, language and/or culture and/or limited support networks and/or New Zealander attitudes or lacks in social interaction skills or desire were significant barriers to interaction. Information gained from interviews suggested

in some cases these barriers were more significant for spouses. More specifically barriers mentioned in interviews and survey comments related to cultural differences, food habits, language and lacks in knowledge of places and opportunities to build friendship outside the University. For some attached spouses this was more the case than for their partner who was studying. In evaluating community connections for partners and family the male students often expressed a desire for their partners and children to be involved but in contexts where barriers to language and culture were significantly reduced. They identified churches and community groups that had programmes for migrants. “English corner” an informal community volunteer group that assisted with English language practice was frequently identified as a positive place to involve partners. Community playgroups for pre school children and mothers were another place identified as suitable and safe. Some mention was made of craft and music participation groups. The common thread in this was that the community group identified often had a core purpose that related to something the participants could share in general that transcended cultural and language differences. Crafts, children, music were examples. These same men when asked about community groups they participated in were mainly mentioning sport (badminton, cricket and soccer) which sometimes took place in a co-cultural context and sometimes a context with people of other cultures including kiwis. The students interviewed both male and female indicated their leading cross cultural context for interaction was within their the University and frequently their department

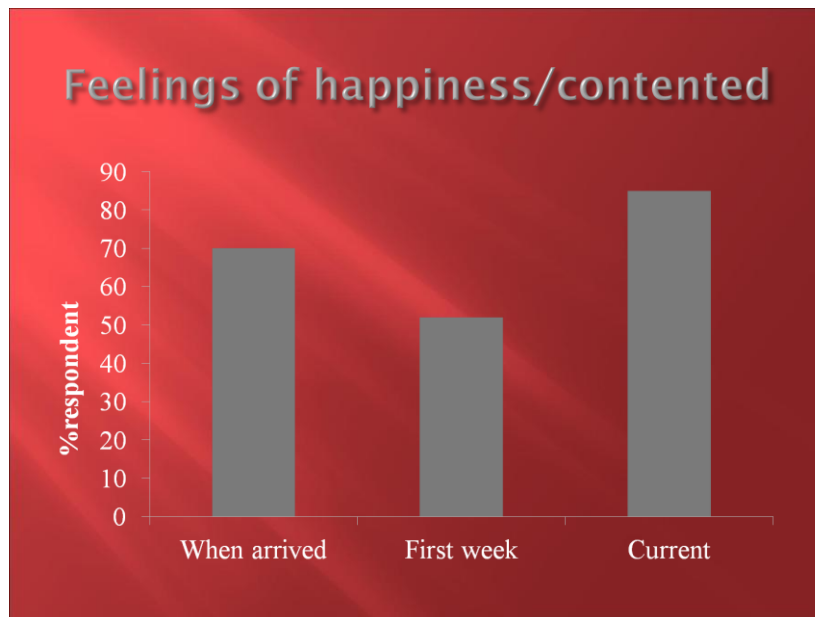
Part of the requirements for Universities to enrol international students is that they are well informed of living conditions and the experience of study and life they are likely to encounter. We wanted to see if our post graduate students received a good set of information about life and study here especially since the PhD students come in at all times of the year and don’t benefit from the formal orientation programmes. A question was devised around expectations and experience to gauge the level information received that might condition expectation. The first data collection findings from this are summarised in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**



In the 2012 data collection we were interested to track the feelings of our respondents around the sense of well being at arrival and beyond. Figure 9 summarises the findings

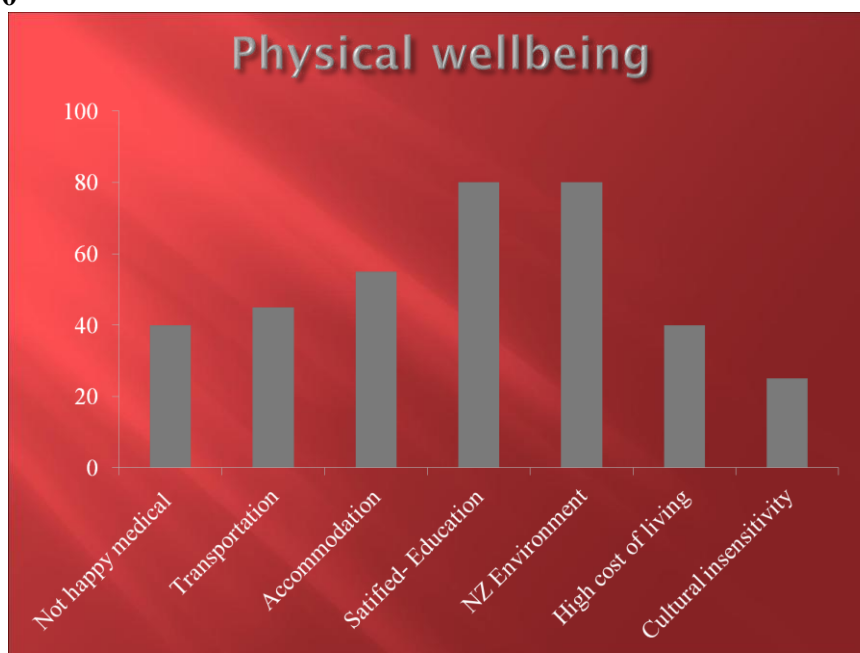
**Figure 9**



It is noteworthy that feelings of happiness and contentment have increased over time after initially reducing and are at higher levels than when the student first arrived.

After our first data collection we reported that concerns associated with living seem to be where the most issues were encountered. In the second data collection we looked more specifically at some of the concerns associated with living and how our respondents viewed their physical well being. The responses were varied and in relation to some questions there was a split in views. Figure 10 compiled from the 2012 survey represents those views.

**Figure 10**



In the 2012 set of interviews we sought to get further information on this. There was an indication that the students interviewed felt they were generally in better physical health now than when they arrived. This was largely attributed to greater engagement in physical activity in part due to opportunity for sport and physical exercise, a relatively disease free healthy environment, healthy quality of food and having to walk a lot more than at home due to limitations around transport. Some comment was made in relation to accommodation pointing out that it was needful to choose carefully to ensure the accommodation was suitable in both winter and summer.

Combining the findings from both sets of data collection in regard to physical well being some patterns emerged:

**Food:** Respondents were generally quite happy and enjoyed the variety available and adapted fairly easily. Most diet requirements such as halal and specific ingredients were available even if not in quantity of choice.

**Clothing:** Most were happy and the key adaption was to providing clothes suitable for winter in addition to summer weight clothing. For some but not all this was a big adjustment. The availability of second hand clothing stores and op shopping was mentioned as a good thing and helpful to students.

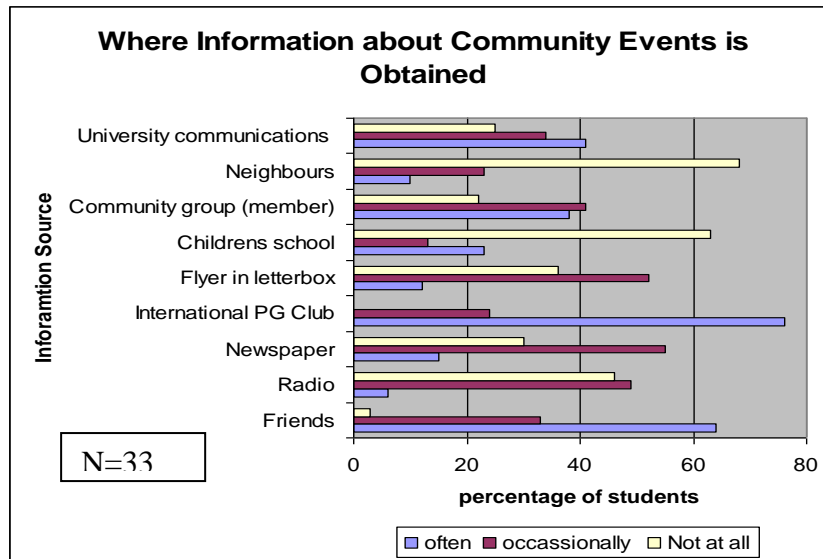
**Accommodation:** The issue that emerged was around heating and insulation qualities verses cost. Often in quest of low cost accommodation some students found themselves in poorly insulated properties which resulted in high electrical bills and other heating costs.

**Transport:** The 2012 survey indicated split views on this with one group being very satisfied and another group indicating transport was an issue. We looked for reasons in our interview data from both 2111 and 2012 data collections. There was a general satisfaction with a free bus service but dissatisfaction with timetable frequency and options. The purchase of a car was necessary for most students who had families. Very little comment was made about cars and their costs. Most seemed to regard the purchase of a car as their choice and in addressing the transport question they were responding as if it were a question about public transport.

**Health care facilities:** There seemed to be a moderate to good level of satisfaction with health care professionals with a generally expressed desire to avoid using them and it seems most of those we interviewed had limited need to use the health services. It would be interesting to be able to cross co-relate this view with health insurance claims to see how much international students use the health services

**Information services:** There has been an active programme in the international post graduate and mature students club trying to connect the students and their families to events going on in the community. The club regularly provides an information bulletin on what's on in the wider community and we were interested to see if there was any penetration into the community through events. We were also interested in how else students obtained information about community events. In Figure 11 we have summarised our findings in relation to our question regarding community events.

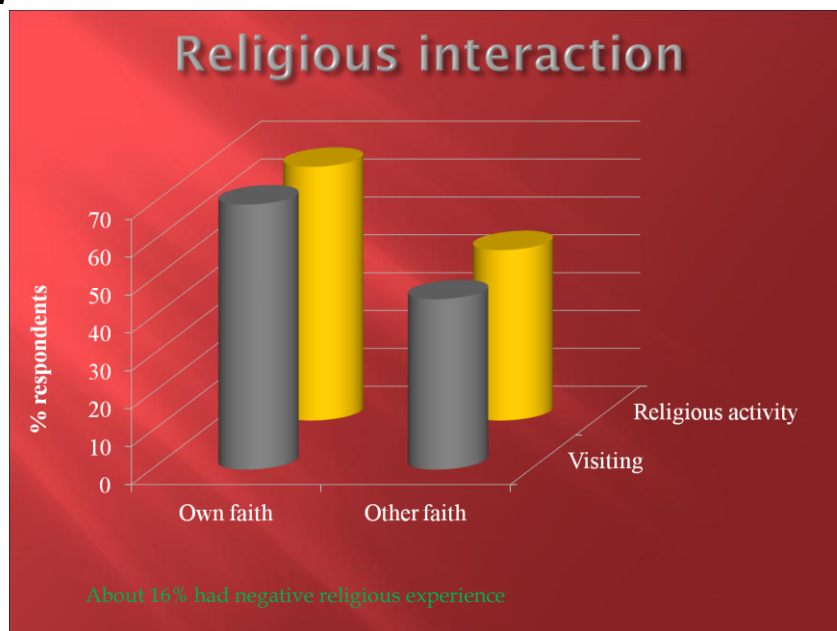
**Figure 11**



This shows the value of having a good information service for such information. The fact that it is a voluntary service makes it vulnerable as it involves work. Without such a service many international families would experience greater isolation as the normal information services in the community such as newspapers and radio are not used a lot

In the 2012 data collection we sought to find out more about the sense of spiritual well being. Figure 12 represents those findings.

**Figure 12**



Some comments from students are instructive here:

*“We have a nice experience of celebrating different festivals in New Zealand. Although we miss our family back home but overall happy”*

*“I am quite fortunate to know Massey Buddhist club and regularly participate in all activities. I got a monk visit at least once a month. Sometimes, I went to Buddhist temple in Wellington or Napier. Sometimes, Thai families here held these activities in their house. In fact, I have more chance to practice and participate in my own believe than when I was in my country. I feel really happy about this”*

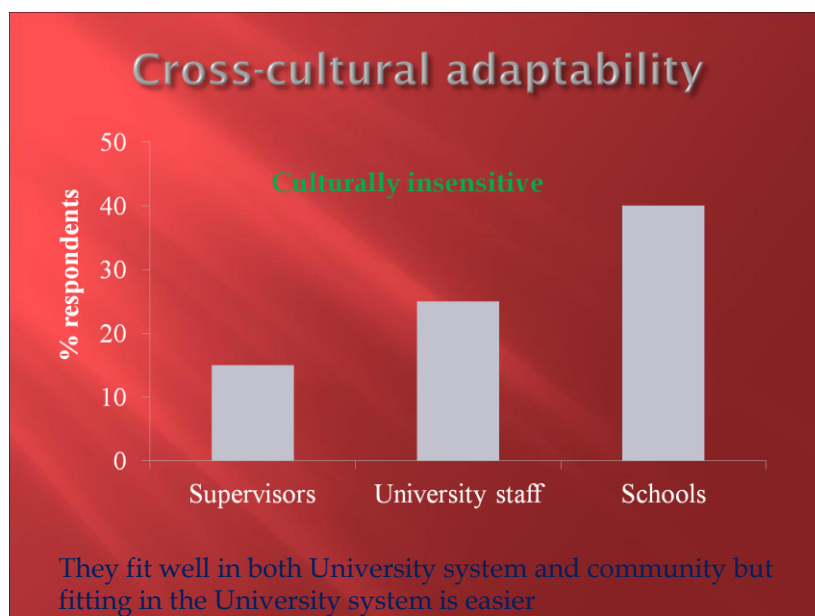
*“I have attended some church services and I feel connected to the local people. At the same time, I can enjoy the moment of peace and calmness and think about my life, my life style and attitudes towards others.”*

Amongst the things to emerge relating to exploring spiritual well being were two important thoughts. One related to the place of festivals. These seem to connect students and families with their heritage and culture and on the occasions of them they often feel a sense of loss due to wider family being missed and sometimes the actual festival is not celebrated locally but when it is they often connect with their co-cultural community. The other observation here is that students and families are happy to join festivals celebrating aspects of other religions and that is seen as a positive experience. The other emerging thing related to spiritual well being was the opportunity to set aside time to reflect and worship which is frequently offered in services of religious observance. Interviewees mentioning this felt being able to set aside time to be in such a setting was helpful to their overall well being.

On the other side of the ledger some students reported some negative spiritual experiences some of which seemed part of a general genre of racial and cultural insensitivity and some related to religious intolerance, however the expression of these was relatively mild.

We were also interested in our second set of interview and surveys to get a better indication of the psychological well being of our respondents. Rather than seek an in depth view we sought to look at how the students felt they fitted in and were accepted. Figure 13 summarises those findings.

**Figure 13**



Our interviews in this area produced some really good comment about supervisors. Most of our interview subjects were PhD students and they come in at any time of year and often don't receive the standard orientation. Our interviewee subjects were fulsome in praise to the role of their supervisor in helping them to feel welcome and getting orientated and fitting into the university and the wider community. Help was frequently received with finding and furnishing accommodation, getting around the city and finding their way around the university. The supervisor was frequently the one person they had most to do with in the initial few weeks of settling in and the care aspects of concern supervisors had for the student and them settling into life and PhD studies engendered a relationship of trust that seemed to carry forward into the supervisor student relationship.

Lastly in our survey we asked the students to provide advice they would give to other families coming in to live and study here. A common thread in the responses was about relating to New Zealanders and covered the natural reticence of New Zealanders to interact easily across cultures and the time it takes for them to warm up and build friendship. New Zealand is a safe place but not totally so. Avoid the young and drunken, noisy New Zealanders especially on weekends was the most common negative about New Zealand society. Understanding New Zealanders natural reticence in first social encounters is also important. They do not consciously reject you but take time to get wormed up to you. A further piece of advice was to understand and respect New Zealanders privacy and sense of privacy and along with that social distance. Taking time to understand and know New Zealand customs was considered useful. The international office featured highly as the best place to go for advice regarding living and accommodation. Church and Mosque communities were identified as helpful to get connected with around integration and living and supports. On the question of avoiding isolation there was a lot of encouragement to work hard to be free to participate in community and clubs events. Don't expect to easily get paid work so come prepared. Being involved in a community group was considered important and sources of information to locate suitable groups were varied. The International Post Graduate and Mature students club featured highly as an information source as did city council services, Church and Mosque communities. The international office at the University was considered helpful but it was felt this source and MUSA ( students association) could do more around providing contact details and directories and information to be available early on however they were worth consulting and when one explained what one was looking for their staff were most helpful.

## **Discussion**

Community engagement for Massey University international post graduate students and their families is more likely to occur amongst co-nationals and co-internationals than with New Zealanders. The availability of information and programmes designed to facilitate community engagement and inter cultural mixing early in the students experience appear important in ensuring that community engagement occurs throughout that experience . Sports clubs, cultural clubs and involvement in a religious community are important in facilitating community engagement. It should be noted at this stage that Massey University has a mosque (prayer centre) and a

Christian Chaplaincy centre both of which have high profile programmes and these centres may contribute to the awareness of what these two respective religious communities can contribute. Buddhist and Hindu communities on the other hand have not been able to provide similar centres and the awareness of what they can provide by way of community connections appears diminished comparatively. The provision of visiting monks and travel to temples outside Palmerston North along with informal meetings with others in the community similarly affected are important for retaining that connection and identity. This would be an area for more in depth exploration. The presence of a mosque on the campus that is open for Friday prayers of itself helps make that connection to the religious community as it facilitates the cultural norm for the many Muslim international post graduate students on campus.

The low levels of connection with New Zealand families observed in this study are indicative of both a need and an opportunity for an assistance programme to catalyse social engagement in this area. In terms of building good international relationships it is important that international student families get connected to New Zealand families and build friendships. A programme to connect international and kiwi families could be very helpful.

The university or university related groups have a role in making connections and do see well within their own context but are poor in assisting connection in the wider community. Some assistance is needed to connect international families more into the fabric of the wider community and especially with other families in their neighbourhood. Community related programmes to enhance community and connection in the housing areas where these families live may be needed to help such connections to develop. The university may need to have a role in fostering these. Barriers identified will need positive addressing so language assistance, food awareness demystifying to name a couple may need affirmative programmes to help or connection to regular migrant programmes where this is being addressed.

Neighbourhood awareness programmes in the areas where international students and their families cluster might be worth considering. The lack of social invitations in neighbourhoods reflects on how New Zealand society operates but for the sake of improving the social connections within the communities local events designed to assist community experience would be very helpful to the social engagement of international families. Organisations such as Neighbourhood watch and the University need to extend their communities experience programmes for students in to the housing areas where international students and their families live. There could be an opportunity for a service education programme to include this need. The finding that religious communities assist in creating social connections is useful to note in designing any affirmative programme.

Co-international friends and New Zealand friends featured fairly highly in the source of social engagement invitations. Programmes that enhance connection with individual New Zealanders and across the international student body need to be encouraged. Fostering international connections with a good involvement of individual kiwis can only enhance and increase in social invitations. The use of supervisors to extend social connections may be an option. If we regard that as a good outcome then it will be important for the university and those within it concerned for the well being of international students and their families to encourage,



resource and catalyse programmes to increase international and intercultural interaction and understanding.

The pre arrival information could be improved especially related to the realities of living in New Zealand. Images of New Zealand accessed in advance also add to that expectation. Information from students currently or recently involved in study is often more helpful and realistic than the tourism promotions. Particularly cost of living; available work options and living issues like transport need to be part of early information. All other areas we explored related to expectations verses experience showed up outliers but balanced with a strong finding of expectation and experience coinciding indicating information in advance was good and accurate

The students in this study had been here for an average of 2.5 years and it may be their comments simply reflect the changes in New Zealand society during this last period of years related to cost of living which has certainly been impacted by changes in taxation (gst) and inflation and high exchange rates which have a greater impact on international students. Some further work around providing information that would help students be aware of how such factors impact may help to redress the gap in expectation here.

Information service during sojourn need to be encouraged and focussed in areas that will be helpful to the students and their families. In particular assisting the making of connections in the community that contribute to well being are important. Where these might be voluntary some support could help and where they are formal such as university ones adding a community connection dimension would be useful

The finding that newspaper and radio services are largely ignored for information indicates how little these services have in attractiveness to people of international origins. Perhaps there is a need to revisit migrant news and community news services even in first language. This could be something the migrant resource centre might valuably take up with support from the university and city council.

Part of the briefing of new international students needs to be about New Zealand culture and some of the negative aspects such as young New Zealanders behaviour and drinking culture. Whilst New Zealand is perceived as a safe and secure place to come to study and bring ones family knowing about these negative aspects and being given skills to negotiate them is important. The idea of having an orientation around living and relating in New Zealand society for the families of international students from time to time is worthy of consideration.

Encouraging & empowering the work of formal agencies such as Student Job search and the International support office to contribute to international family well being would be helpful.

In conclusion this study sought to examine and describe the experiences and expectations and perceptions of wellness amongst Massey University post graduate and mature international students and their families in Palmerston North. It has given us some insight into the extent and nature of community engagement and how this contributes to well being. It has been a study of a pilot nature but now with the second set of data collected forms a good data set from which reliable information has been obtained. While this study is indicative a future more comprehensive study could be

worthwhile particularly if it were part of a wider study encompassing other centres where there are mature and post graduates international students and families. Overall despite the levels of wellness of international students and families reported on in this study there remains a need to enhance community connections not just for wellness but also in the interests of long term enduring relationships that can only be forged in early person to person and family to family connections.

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