

## **Fostering interactions among international women in a tertiary institution: Research in progress**

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International students in New Zealand are positioned within internationalisation and export education discourses reflecting market rather than human concerns. These discourses position international students as consumers and commodities rather than people. In order to change this, there is a need to reinstate human agency and human imagination in relation to international education and the global marketplace. Gibson-Graham's (2003) 'ethics of the local' is a framework that facilitates this. It allows us to question the assumptions underlying current internationalisation and export education discourses, and to recognise the heterogeneity of both 'international' and 'New Zealand' students. It provides a rationale for the creation of spaces where students as people can be 'together-in-difference'.

Recent research has suggested the need to attend to the diversity of New Zealand's international student population; consider international students in relation to New Zealand students; and implement and evaluate initiatives to foster interaction between international and local students. To date, women have remained largely absent from international education literature, especially women who are international students' partners. The current project aims to attend to the perspectives and experiences of women who are international students and/or partners of international students in the University of Otago student community. An intercultural group (Women Across Cultures) has been established for international and New Zealand women, and data is being gathered through participant observation and in-depth interviewing across two years. This paper discusses the theoretical basis for the project, its key aims, and theoretical and methodological issues encountered to date.