

# **The Social Practices of Chinese International Students in New Zealand**

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## **Chinese Abstract**

这份社会调查报告是建立在一份量化的问卷表上的。此次调查的目的是为了研究中国留学生的社会行为与新西兰社会服务体系之间的关系。通过收集奥克兰理工大学中国留学生的意见，多数中国留学生在奥克兰的生活可以被反映出来。数据显示中国留学生在新西兰的社会身份很特殊。他们既不是长期居民，也不是短期访客。这种两头不靠的特殊身份不仅给留学生的生活带来不便，而且也让当地居民感到困惑。

## Background

Along with the progress of a global market, financial and human resources frequently move worldwide. As a result, most governments tend to consider their roles in relation to labour markets, education and training agendas more and more from business perspectives (Bianco, 1999). Because it can directly combine the process of knowledge capitalisation and accumulation, the industry is regarded as a good paradigm for building a knowledge economy (Bohm *et al.*, 2002).

Export education has been one of the fastest growing industries in New Zealand since the 1990s. In 2002 over 80,000 overseas students lived in New Zealand, and contributed approximately \$1.7 billion to the nation's economy (Asia 2000 Foundation, 2003b). The industry has created up to 20,000 jobs for New Zealanders, to make it the fourth-biggest export industry in New Zealand, not far behind the timber industries (Asia 2000 Foundation, 2003a).

New Zealand has the ambition of creating a worldwide reputation for her export education industry – ‘the new world class – educated in New Zealand’. Many government departments, such as the Ministry of Education, Trade New Zealand, and the Immigration Services, work closely to provide effective official support for the industry (Ministry of Education, 2002). Two most significant strategies, the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Code) and the Export Education Industry Development Fund and Levy (Levy), were introduced in 2002 to secure the long-term growth of the industry.

However, the rapid growth of the industry not only produces economic profits, but also brings challenges to New Zealand. Several challenges associated with capacity, quality of education and students, pastoral care, market risks, professional development, and further internationalisation of the education system should be considered seriously (Costa, 2003). In general, the growing export education currently yields meagre social and cultural returns. Matthews (2002) argues that, to some degree, the social and cultural impacts caused by the international students are negative rather than positive. Ward (2001) believes that a primary reason for these unsatisfactory outcomes is the poor interaction between international students and local residents. Ward suggests conducting further research to study the relationship between international students and local communities to address this issue.

Verbitsky (1998) clarifies those difficulties international students face into living and learning categories. To live in an unfamiliar social environment, the most common problems international students face are likely to be food, transport (especially the bus system), nightlife, shopping time, and establishing contact with New Zealanders. As far as learning difficulties are concerned, international students are likely to have problems interacting with students and lecturers, dealing with unfamiliar types of assessment and assessment criteria, and participating in classroom discussions (Verbitsky, 1998).

Chinese international students play an important role in New Zealand export education, as almost two in five international students were from China in 2002 (Asia 2000 Foundation, 2003b). However, the increasing numbers of Chinese international students not only inject significant economic

capital into New Zealand society, but also cause many unexpected social problems for local community (Gower, 2003). Based on media reports, Chinese international students are more likely to be involved in dangerous driving, kidnapping, and abortion more often than others. Many social and personal factors can contribute to these problem behaviours. However, the social conditions which are associated with being far away from home and being able to access to massive financial resources certainly have significant effects on Chinese international students' problem behaviours.

### **Theoretical framework**

International students are international immigrants. Traditionally, social studies about international immigration focus on either short-term or long-term immigration, which both pay limited attention to international students.

In most short-term immigration social studies, most attention is paid to tourists' behaviours. According to Urry (2002), the interactions between individual travellers and locals are relevant indirectly. For example, hotels may raise or lower their price according to the season, but such price adjustment is unlikely to change the rental rate for local residents. However, in the case of international students, although their official identity technically is also short-term immigration, the social interactions between them and local residents are much more direct than tourists. However, little literature focuses on international students' social positions, and the implications of these positions.

In long-term immigration studies, social integration is a central topic. Some influential social adjustment theories distinguish

migrants' social assimilation from structural integration and socio-cultural integration. The structural integration refers to the social status where migrants are full participants in social institutions, while the socio-cultural integration reflects the social contacts that members and organisations of minorities maintain with society as a whole, and the cultural adaptations to that society (Engbersen, 2003). In general, mainstream host social groups expect migrants to achieve socio-cultural integration, while, integration for most migrants is likely to stay at the structural level. Nevertheless, the intention of international students' social integration seems to be ignored in long-term immigration studies, as they are not officially regarded as residents, though they may live in the host society over years.

However, along with the rapid expansion of export education, social and economic impacts associated with international students have become as significant as residential immigrants to host countries. Therefore, it is necessary to address the sociological concern over international students' study. This research attempts to explore Chinese international students' social position in New Zealand.

The relations between society and individuals are core issues in any sociological study. Most social psychologists and sociologists tend to agree that social structures play a significant role in shaping individuals' behaviours that together can reform social structures as well. Erikson's lifecycle theory highlights the interaction between individuals' psychological and social factors, and considers that identity formation is a continuing process of negotiation between an individual's personality and their social identity (Erikson, 1997).

Based on Erikson's theoretical framework, Cote and Levine developed a Personality and Social Structure Perspective (PSSP) model to demonstrate the relations between social structures and individuals' behaviours. According to the PSSP model, people's identity can be divided into three levels: social identity, personal identity, and ego identity (Cote & Levine, 2002). Cote and Levine (2002) explain that social identity reflects the social structures which decide an individual's position(s) in a society; personal identity refers to the concrete patterns when an individual interacts with the other members in the society; and ego identity represents the more subjective aspects of an individual's personality that appears the characteristic of continuity.

The PSSP model provides a useful framework to inspect the relations between people's common social identity and their collective behaviours. Similar to individuals' PSSP process, in the scale of a group, the common social identity of the group provides the potential social possibilities and limitations for members to demonstrate their personalities. Thus, it is difficult for individual members to go beyond the given social space to seek positions in the society. Therefore, it is no surprise that different members adopt similar strategies in adjusting their personal positions in a common social room, which are noted by other social members as collective behaviours. In short, to a large extent, the collective behaviours of a social group can be seen as the consequences of the common social identity of the group. In the case of international students, their social practices can be seen as fundamentally associated with New Zealand social structures.

### **New Zealand Chinese**

Community plays a significant role in democratic social and political systems. Community provides an effective approach for individuals to negotiate their concerns with authorities, e.g., government. Therefore, it is important to understand the social position of Chinese international students in terms of community. To locate Chinese international students in social structures correctly, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of New Zealand Chinese communities. According to the 2001 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), the Asian ethnic group comprised 6.6 percent of the usually resident population in New Zealand, with Chinese the largest Asian ethnic group (44% of the Asian population). Most Chinese live in the main urban areas, e.g., Auckland and Wellington, and appear to be very diverse, as a result of the changes in New Zealand immigration policy.

New Zealand Chinese can be generally divided into two broad categories: New Zealand born Chinese and Chinese newcomers. Most New Zealand born Chinese are the descendants of the first-generation Chinese migrants, who came to New Zealand as cheap labourers in the late 19th century. At that time, Chinese migrants were treated discriminatorily, and isolated from other communities (Young, 2003). According to Ng (1998), New Zealand born Chinese normally have a long history in New Zealand; their migration approach appears to exemplify the pattern of chain migrants; they seem to use and construct internal family or extended family relations to gain social and economic support. After several generations' efforts, New Zealand born Chinese seem to integrate into mainstream society reasonably well. According to Statistics New Zealand (2002), the median annual income of the New Zealand born Chinese population

appeared to be higher than both overseas born Chinese and total New Zealand population, and the unemployment rate of the New Zealand born Chinese was 8%, while the overseas born Chinese was 15%. Therefore, to a large extent, New Zealand born Chinese appear to exhibit more New Zealand than Chinese cultural characteristics in social practices.

In the case of Chinese newcomers, three sub-groups can be generated, according to the changes in New Zealand immigration policy. The first sub-group refers to Chinese immigrants who are from wealthy backgrounds, mainly from regions outside the Chinese mainland, because the Immigration Act 1987 favoured business immigrants (Harker *et al.*, n.d.). As a result, most Chinese newcomers at that time were from economically advanced regions, e.g., Taiwan and Hong Kong. The characteristics of this group of people, to a certain extent can be described as "...sophisticated urbanites with high levels of qualifications and skills... more affluent than most New Zealanders, so have concentrated in elite suburbs of selected cities ..." (Henderson & Trlin, 1998). In general, members in this sub-group are likely to have economic advantages.

The second sub-group is mainly formed by people from mainland China under the General Skills category in New Zealand immigration policies, which was introduced in the 1990s. Overall, these Chinese migrants have higher educational achievements, but have little financial assets. Members in this sub-group appear to under-perform in the New Zealand labour market, although they are more likely to have gained higher educational qualifications in China. According to Trlin and Henderson (1998), migrants from mainland China are more likely to be engaged in low-skilled

labour markets. Therefore, finding jobs appears to be the critical issue in this sub-group.

The third sub-group is the result of the recent boom in export education. Chinese international students are the major players in this category. In the past few years, thousands of Chinese overseas students gained permission to study in New Zealand. Unlike traditional Chinese migrants from the mainland, international students are likely to have wealthy backgrounds. Compared to Chinese migrants, Chinese international students have less social cohesion, but more economic power. Consequently, Chinese international students are placed in an ambiguous social position, where they have difficulties in raising their voices to protect their interests in the present New Zealand social structure.

### **Methodology**

According to the PSSP model, the common social identity is the fundamental force in shaping a group's collective behaviours. Therefore, to investigate the relations between New Zealand social structures and their social practices, Chinese international students' collective behaviours should be identified first, which forms the approach of the study.

The main approach of the study is an anonymous survey. The term 'social practice' contains various aspects: feeling or experiencing the society, interpreting the society, one's place in the society, and responding to the society. Therefore, the questionnaire is designed to reflect Chinese international students' daily life, such as food, travel, and leisure. The questionnaire was divided into six sections: general information, accommodation, transportation, social activities,

media consumption, and New Zealand society. Please check the appendix I for the details of the questionnaire.

The effort on obtaining comprehensive information about subjects' social experiences made the questionnaire relatively long. As a result, a small gift, (e.g., a highlight pen) was employed to encourage students to participate in the survey, which was conducted both online and face-to-face.

The annual report 2003 of AUT (2003) states that 1780 Chinese international students studied at AUT in 2003. Therefore, the population of this research is 1780. By the end of 10 December, 295 questionnaires were returned, which represented approximately 20 percent of the population. The age distribution of Chinese international students appears to have the characteristic of normal curve. According to the survey, the participants' age mean was 22.5. Therefore, with 95 percent confidence, the margin of error was  $\pm 2.57$ , when the sample size was 295. The quantitative software SPSS was employed to analyse the data.

Research ethics, such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, were followed. To ensure ethical standards, the proposal of the study was sent to the AUT ethics committee for professional examination, before the survey was actually conducted.

Overall, this research is built on the assumption that the majority of Chinese international students are rational individuals, who have socially healthy attitudes about personal development. Generally, the most significant theoretical limitations were the simplification of the New Zealand social structure and Chinese international students' characteristics.

For instance, in the case of public transportation, it is much more convenient in Newmarket than in Northcote. However, as the performance of public transportation as a whole is unsatisfactory to the majority of participants, the social structure of public transportation is regarded as not matching the needs of international students.

In addition, personal biases and operational limitations should also be taken account of. The researcher is a Chinese, who has gained a Bachelor of Science in China. As a consequence, the researcher may over-emphasise the effects of social structure in a society, therefore devaluing the subjects' internal contributions to their social practices. The other is that the researcher could be over-orientated in scientific thinking. In order to minimise these personal biases, the researcher demonstrates the analysis in a very transparent manner, which will give readers enough information to make independent judgements.

In general, although the length of the questionnaire may diminish participants' interest and concentration, participants seemed to respond to the survey honestly and responsibly, because the majority of returned questionnaires were completed, and most questions were properly answered as the instruction requested.

### **The summary of the survey results**

According to the survey, Chinese international students are 22.5-years-old on average. They have been in New Zealand for over 26 months, and have studied at AUT for about 12 months. Students from mainland China account for more than 80 percent of the survey subjects, and two in five participants

are male. Presently, the majority of participants are studying in the business faculty at a pre-degree level; however, most of them are expecting to gain at least a Bachelor's Degree at AUT.

On accommodation aspects, sharing place is the most popular housing status among participants. Moving three times seems to be the most common experience for Chinese international students. To get a better deal in accommodation and to stay with friends are the most frequent reasons for moving. The majority of students are satisfied with their present accommodation, but most of them feel it is hard to find reasonable accommodation. In seeking accommodation, the most important factors are rental rate, location, and house quality. Chinese newspapers are the most accepted means of seeking accommodation, followed by asking friends. Real estate is the last option in seeking accommodation. Most students consider that their accommodation status has a significant impact on their study, and expect their university and the New Zealand government to arrange low-cost accommodation for them.

Transportation also plays a vital role in Chinese international students' social practices. Based on the survey, Chinese international students' mobility heavily relies on public transportation. Three in five participants report that a bus is their daily transport means. Therefore, when seeking accommodation, Chinese international students need to take transportation into account. As a result, most subjects live in the suburbs at two or three stages from the city (approximately in the area of between inter city and Zone One in Melbourne), where the rent is not too expensive and the transportation is not too bad. In general, Chinese international students are not

satisfied with the services provided by public transportation. Although only two in five of subjects report having a car, three in four respondents think it is necessary to have a car to live in Auckland. The great attraction of having a car is the mobility it provides.

However, Chinese international students' driving ability and attitude to driving seem to be problematic. Although almost three-quarters of the subjects have some kind of driver's licence, less than one-fifth of participants have gained a full New Zealand licence. Subjects appear to passively react to friends driving without a licence. On the one hand, they do not want to follow those friends' footsteps by driving without a licence; in fact, nine in ten subjects reject copying such behaviour. On the other hand, they also show little willingness to intervene in their friends' dangerous driving, such as stopping them. About 30 percent of respondents do not mind gaining help from those dangerous drivers when they need it. In addition, half of the subjects do not see those students driving without a licence as absolutely bad people. Participants tend to agree that their peers who drive dangerously do so because they are young and rich. In the opinion of most Chinese international students, there is no single effective way to prevent dangerous driving. The most effective solution seems to be a combination of the following strategies: improve the efficiency of public transportation, strengthen the law for the punishment of dangerous driving, and set up a specific test for students who hold an international driving licence. As can be seen, international students expect a more convenient public transportation system to satisfy their needs, and a more effective social monitoring system to discipline them.

In the case of social activities, passive reactions again appear to be common. Chinese international students show little interest in social organisations. More than half the participants do not recognise that they are members of the Auckland Student Movement (AuSM), and report that they do not join any social organisations. However, in fact, an AUT student must be a member of AuSM, because the membership fee is automatically charged with their tuition fees. In addition, Chinese international students tend to be guests rather than hosts in social activities. One in three subjects would like to participate in social activities if their friends wanted to go, but they are not very keen to go to such events; while one-quarter of subjects say they would like to gain an invitation first before they participate in such activities or events. In addition, although most Chinese international students appreciate the opportunity of meeting different cultural groups, they have little confidence in making friends at such events. Generally, improving their English and getting to know other cultures are likely to be the expectation when Chinese international students participate in such activities. The most common difficulty, which prevents Chinese international students from enjoying such events, is the language barrier, followed by a lack of social or cultural knowledge. Chinese international students hope that the university and students association will make greater efforts to improve the quality of their social life. Furthermore, Chinese international students' favourite commercialised activities, according to the survey, are various types of entertainments, particularly watching films and sports.

This passive social attitude is likely to affect Chinese international students' media consumption as well. Thanks to the development of international communication technology, Chinese international students are able to contact home

frequently. As a result, most subjects withdraw emotionally from New Zealand social life by effectively seeking support from family and friends in their homeland. Such emotional withdrawal can also be reflected in their weaker sense of belonging in New Zealand, and neutral intention of staying after graduation. In fact, most participants consider that compared to academic performance and financial problems, social isolation is the worry that least stresses them. In general, the Internet plays an important role in Chinese international students' media consumption. Over three in four participants have another personal Internet account apart from the one on the campus. More than half the subjects spend one to three hours on the Internet surfing apart from study purposes.

It is a surprising result that participants use more English media than Chinese. It was expected that they would use more Chinese media than English, as they seek information, e.g., accommodation, mainly through Chinese newspapers. One possible explanation is that Chinese international students tend to trust English media more than Chinese media, although technically they spend more time on Chinese media. In fact, one subject commented, "the inaccuracy of Chinese media stops me from trusting and using their information". To enjoy English media, Chinese international students need to beat some barriers. Language ability appears to be the most common difficulty, followed by different cultural values. Overall, subjects show a wide interest in New Zealand social issues. Even for the least attractive topic, New Zealand Elections, one in three participants report that they are interested in this. Naturally, the most attractive topics for international students are related to New Zealand immigration policy and the Chinese government.

Unsurprisingly, Chinese international students have a limited understanding about the New Zealand lifestyle. Three in four of them do not have a personal General Practitioner (GP). About half of them do not buy any insurance, although most of them knew that this is important. Just one in four participants bought health insurance, one in ten bought car insurance, and one in hundred had contents insurance. Two-thirds of participants knew a little or even less about the Treaty of Waitangi, although more than half of them seem to consider the treaty to be important. In terms of knowing the New Zealand legal system, over half of participants think they only knew a little about it, although one in four of them had some kind of experience with the law in New Zealand.

As far as legal issues are concerned, respondents tend to treat them as private problems. Friends are likely to be the primary group to they look for advice. Official organisations, such as the government or university, are unlikely to be their first choices, but are seen as useful resources for international students. Participants appeared to hesitate in asking for legal advice from their parents, as many subjects tried to avoid answering the question. The response rate to this sub-question was the lowest in the whole questionnaire. However, the low answer rate for the question may reflect that most participants respond to the questionnaire seriously, otherwise they could conveniently tick an available answer box if they did not care if the answer represented their view or not. Another surprising finding is that most subjects tend to adopt a positive attitude to unfairness. Official complaint and compensation were the most acceptable method among subjects of resolving disputes. Nevertheless, New Zealand appears to be a safe place to live and study. Sixty percent of respondents did not become

involved in any kind of legal problems in two years of living in New Zealand.

Finally, the majority of subjects are not satisfied with their formal experience of learning about New Zealand society. They think much of the unhappiness they experienced could have been avoided by more information beforehand. The majority of Chinese international students feel that it is easy to find information about accommodation and public services, but it is difficult to gain legal assistance and employment. Therefore, most subjects think that an introductory programme about New Zealand society as a compulsory component in their academic qualification could help them to have a better start in New Zealand society, if provided at no extra cost.

### **Discussion**

According to the survey, three common characteristics can be found in Chinese international students' social practices.

First, Chinese international students tend to psychologically withdraw from local society. Many facts reflect this characteristic. For most Chinese international students, the primary goal of their New Zealand experience is to gain an internationally recognised qualification. Chinese international students not only show neutral intention in relation to stay in New Zealand after they have graduated, but also give little thought to having a career in New Zealand. Most Chinese international students choose business-related subjects without giving consideration to future employment in New Zealand. Clearly, Chinese international students tend to treat New Zealand as a pathway rather than a destination in their personal development. In addition, thanks to modern

information technology, Chinese international students can gain emotional support from their homeland with the help of modern telecommunications, which significantly reduces the stresses of social isolation. As a result, because of the weak long-term commitment, and being able to escape from social loneliness emotionally, Chinese international students often psychologically withdraw from New Zealand social reality. Consequently, Chinese international students tend to pursue immediate enjoyment rather than building a start in New Zealand in their social practices.

Second, Chinese international students' social activities seem to be dominated by commercially based pastimes. Chinese international students show limited interest in political and religious events. The most popular pastimes seem to be watching films, playing sports, and surfing the Internet. Clearly, Chinese international students feel more comfortable in a commercial environment than in organisational structures. The advantage of being a consumer is that the all customers who can pay are likely to be treated equally. When Chinese international students over-rely on the commercial activities in their social life, the financial pressures they face are likely to be out of proportion. According to the survey, financial stress is one of the most significant worries among Chinese international students. An increasing desire for money can lead people to commit crimes. In fact, in most kidnapping cases that Chinese international students have been involved in money does seem to be the biggest motivation (TV 3, n.d).

Third, Chinese international students expect to receive more effective social guidelines. Most Chinese international students want the university and student associations to play bigger roles in their accommodation and social event

arrangement. In the case of transportation, more effective education programmes are required. The majority of Chinese international students believe that much of the trouble they experienced could be avoided, if they had received better guidelines in the first place. However, such expectations among Chinese international students, to a large extent, are likely to appear in thought rather than in action. Although they would like to have more information and support through organisations, friends presently seem to be the primary reference group when Chinese international students seek guidelines in social practices.

Clearly, these general characteristics in Chinese international students' social practices are often deeply associated with their social identity.

As a social group, there is overlap in Chinese international students' identity as both resident and visitor. In terms of social practices, Chinese international students are likely to have similar social experiences as residents, especially migrants. According to the survey, Chinese international students normally need to stay in New Zealand for five years to complete their tertiary education, two years for pre-degree study, and three years for bachelor study. By living in the society for five years, international students need to go through the most parts of the residential process, such as housing, schooling, and working. However, the official identity of international students is as visitors. Therefore, the social identity of Chinese international students should be defined as temporary residents.

Referring to the discussions in theoretical formwork, people's social identity fundamentally provides social spaces and

limitations for individuals to demonstrate their personality (Cote & Levine, 2002). Therefore, Chinese international students' collective behaviours in their social practices should be primarily decided by their common social identity. The survey results effectively support the hypothesis that New Zealand's social structures work as a hidden instructor in terms of Chinese international students' social practices. In fact, the social identity of temporary residents places Chinese international students in a problematic social position.

Current New Zealand social structures favour either visitors or residents. In general, tourists' interests are protected by the travel industry through effective contracts, and residents' rights are ensured by the democratic political system. For tourists, after several decades of development, the travel industry has established effective communication channels with customers. For example, travellers can arrange their accommodation and transportation through agents before they depart from home. All hotels have written regulations to guide guests on how to use the facilities. Information centres provide convenient access for travellers to seek information. In addition, the industry prepares language guides for people who do not speak English. In short, both service suppliers and consumers in the travel industry have good understanding about what their rights and obligations are. For permanent residents, because New Zealand government is based on election, they are given political power to influence the social services in New Zealand.

However, in the case of Chinese international students, the social status of temporary residents neither provides clear social contracts to guide their social practices, nor gives them voting power to draw local leaders' attention. Consequently,

Chinese international students' social identity marginalises their ability to gain normal support from New Zealand's social structures.

On the one hand, the social contracts between the export education industry and Chinese international students seem to be much more ambiguous than those of the travel industry. Technically, international students' interests should be looked after by the industry, but because of the long period they spend in New Zealand, the industry has difficulty in providing comprehensive services to Chinese international students. In the travel industry, after negotiation, the suppliers know clearly what they should provide, and the visitors also gain a good understanding of what they should expect on the tours. As a result, tourists can have sound expectation and make suitable preparation for their trip. However, for many international students, such foreknowledge and preparations are superficial. Presently, the export education industry is mainly interested in selling educational qualifications. Most institutions have limited desire and social ability to deal with international students' residential issues. For example, the institutions can advise international students how to use public transportation, but the institutions cannot ensure the bus is on time or effective.

On the other hand, there are few available social channels for international students to have their voices heard within New Zealand political framework. As a consequence, the communication between local residents and Chinese international students appears to be very inadequate.

Although local Chinese communities have certain interests and obligations to look after Chinese international students, the

relations between these two parties are likely to be intricate. Referring to the previous information of New Zealand Chinese, because of social and economic differences, Chinese international students are likely to have difficulties fitting into most Chinese immigration communities. First, Chinese international students may not be able to communicate with the traditional Chinese communities effectively, as the traditional Chinese community tends to be more New Zealand than Chinese in the sense of cultural and social practices. In addition, it is also unlikely for Chinese mainland students to fit into the Chinese community, which mainly represents Taiwan or Hong Kong immigrants' interests, due to the differences in the social systems in their place of origin. Moreover, because of the significant differences in economic capacity, Chinese international students are likely to have different concerns from mainland immigrants in social practices as well. Consequently, because of their ambiguous social positions, it is not easy for Chinese international students to find social organisation in which they feel comfortable to explain their needs. In fact, there are few social organisations that represent international students' needs specifically. Based on the survey, university and students associations seem to be trusted mostly by Chinese international students. They expect university and the students association to make greater efforts on helping them to live easier, in terms of arranging accommodation and seeking information,

As can be seen, because of their temporary resident social status, Chinese international students' social needs are likely to be marginalised in New Zealand social structures, and it is this that deeply plants the seeds of problem behaviours. Their marginalisation in social structures significantly contributes to ineffective delivery in social support to Chinese international

students. However, ineffective social services indirectly encourage Chinese international students' short-term social behaviours by reinforcing their temporary status. Generally, when people are without a long-term commitment to the society, problem behaviours are likely to be produced, especially among young adults. Consequently, many potentially social harmful consequences can be activated by the accumulated problem behaviours.

One most significant consequence seems to be the increasing hostility between international students and local residents. Because of the lack of communication, social expectations between international students and local residents are likely to be mismatched. Being long-term visitors, international students unavoidably make closer social and cultural contacts with local residents. Unlike tourists, international students tend to become directly involved in New Zealand society. Therefore, the rapidly growing number of international students causes rental rate to rise, adds to local traffic problem, and changes existing consumer patterns in local society. However, as the communication between these two groups is ineffective, both Chinese international students and local residents tend to blame the other party when one or the other does not behave properly. Chinese international students may think New Zealanders are not responsible hosts; while, the local residents may believe that Chinese international students do not respect their lifestyle. For instance, a landlord may expect the international students to pay extra for food and the language environment, and look after the house as a local could; while international students may regard the accommodation as a hotel, and show little commitment to it. If the misunderstanding is not effectively resolved, aggressive behaviours could be produced because of an increasingly

hostile attitude between the two social groups, which might significantly increase the social and economic risks for New Zealand society.

Moreover, an ineffective social support system can encourage the growth of “underground forces”, such as gangs, among international students. According to the survey, friends play a vital role in Chinese international students' social life. Friends establish a network for individual students to seek information about social support and protection, such as finding accommodation, employment and legal advice. However, there is no objective quality control in friendship. When massive economic resources can be involved, friends might easily become enemies. Therefore, the absence of effective official support creates the social space for some students to take advantage of others. According to the survey, the majority of Chinese international students were about 20 years old when they first arrived in New Zealand. As the only child in the family, it would not be uncommon for many Chinese international students to not know how to look after themselves. In that condition, when current social services are ineffective, many Chinese international students might accept their peers' advice blindly. In some extreme cases, being attracted by effective but incorrect social support, such as the protection provided by gangs, some young or weak international students can become victims.

As can be seen, Chinese international students' problem behaviours significantly relate to their ambiguous social identity. Being neither long-term residents, nor short-term visitors, Chinese international students' social needs are marginalised in terms of New Zealand structural services. Because of a lack communication channels and effective

social guidelines, aloof attitudes and alternative forces among Chinese international students can find rich social soil to in which to grow. Theoretically, the most rational relation between international students and receiving societies should be a social contract. Therefore, the New Zealand government and the export education industry should make more efforts to improve the quality and the effectiveness of social contract with international students.

### **Recommendations**

The most rational solution to reduce the social problems associated with international students should be to strengthen the social contract between the New Zealand export education industry and Chinese international students. As Chinese international students need to stay in New Zealand for a relatively long period of time, the industry should look after their social life comprehensively. Improving the social contracts in the export education industry is, in fact, a social project other than business planing. The implementation of the Code and the Levy is a significant step toward effective contracts in export education.

However, to make the social contracts in export education industry more effective, it is recommended that some strategies are adopted to reduce the risks associated with Chinese international students' behaviours by providing structural support to them.

First, the industry needs to give more definite instructions about customers' rights and responsibilities. According to the survey, the majority of international students are unsatisfied with the social information they received initially. Therefore,

the industry should make the information delivery system work more effectively. A short-term course seems to be necessary in helping international students understand what they can expect and are expected to do when they live in New Zealand. The industry could make the course a compulsory component in international education. For example, the industry could launch the course as a primary lesson to all institutions, and assign a certificate to those international students who complete the course. Subsequently, the authority could include the certificate as an essential criterion in entering or graduating from any tertiary institution. Thus, the certificate could help the industry clarify the customers' rights and responsibilities in the first place, which should significantly decrease the possibility of problem behaviour occurring among Chinese international students. Students of language schools are most likely to benefit from the programme. Because they are younger and newer, language students normally become easy targets for problems and harmful influences. However, by giving them effective social guidelines and instructions, language students could fit into the society more smoothly and not suffer from misleading information.

Second, because international students are directly involved in New Zealand society, the government and the industry should establish effective channels for international students and local residents to communicate. As newcomers, international students are likely to know little about local people's expectations, especially when they are from a very different cultural background; at the same time, the existing social services are also likely to ignore some international students' needs in practice. Therefore, it is important to build social channels for international students to communicate with locals

and make their voices heard in respect to their natural needs. The survey indicated most Chinese international students expect the university and the student associations to make more effort to improve their accommodation arrangements and social life, which shows that they trust these two organisations most in their social life. Therefore, it would be helpful if the industry pushed the institutions further to make them take on the role of representatives of international students through specified student organisations, e.g., international students associations, especially in languages schools. In order to ensure their work is recognised, the industry should organise events to link individual international student organisations together.

In addition, the communication should include the voices of international students' parents. International students rely on their parents' support significantly. Technically, students' parents are the real consumers of the industry, because they pay the services their children receive in New Zealand. Therefore, the industry needs to create some channels for parents to participate. For example, the immigration services can arrange a booklet in Chinese about New Zealand social guidelines which could be posted to international students' parents together with the student's study visa. Thus, those Chinese parents can gain a basic understanding of how New Zealand social systems operate. Therefore, when they are involved in unexpected events, such as a call to ask for ransom money, they know where they can look for help. Furthermore, by knowing more about New Zealand social systems, Chinese parents can make better financial arrangements for their children. Thus, through active communicating channels, Chinese parents can gain more objective information about

international students' performances, and have more active influence in assisting the institutions to educate the students.

Moreover, the industry should develop services to help international students manage their financial resources. The social status of international students places them in a high-risk position. They are young people with limited social experience and social protection, but can access huge amounts of capital. Although subjective reasons are the most fundamental force making people commit crimes, objective factors, such as material temptations, also play important roles in stimulating criminal motivations. Presently, most international students have to take personal care of their financial resources. However, the industry could create a Trust to help international students' parents organise a budget plan for their children who live in New Zealand. For instance, directly delivering tuition fees to the institutions and providing weekly or monthly instalments of financial support would reduce the financial risks for individual Chinese students.

Furthermore, the government may need to consider establishing some filter-policy to control the quality of Chinese international students. The social risks tend to increase by allowing those students who cannot meet the basic English criteria after two years of study to stay in New Zealand indefinitely. Those students without proper learning skills or motivation are likely to lose hope for building a better personal future. Consequently, they are likely to adopt extreme approaches to satisfy material desires, which normally lead to crime. Therefore, it would be wise for the government to control the entry of this type of international student to reduce the potential costs to society. However, the actual selection

criteria of the filter programmes are not the intention of this study, and need to be investigated in further research.

As can be seen, the goal of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of social contracts between the export education industry and its customers cannot be achieved merely by imposing business regulations. It demands comprehensive cooperation in educating the members of society, regulating business behaviour, and reforming social support structures. Nevertheless, the goal is achievable, if government and the industry work together responsively.

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