

Voices of Asian Youth



Project Team: Bruce Meder
Community Development Adviser
Papanui Service Centre

Helena Zhang
Liaison Officer
Papanui Service Centre

Jennifer Pitcher
Senior Policy Analyst
Christchurch City Council

Wendy Matthews
Executive Officer
Papanui High School

Ingrid de Meyer
Community Development Adviser
Fendalton Service Centre

Maria Lodge
Recreation Development Adviser
Sockburn Service Centre

Denise Galloway
Community Development Adviser
Sockburn Service Centre

Richard Tay
Senior Lecturer
Lincoln University

Report Prepared by: Dr. Richard Tay

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FOREWORD

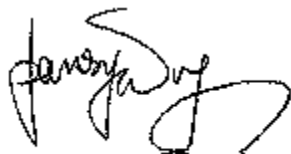
Congratulations to the Papanui Community Board for initiating this study. I would like to acknowledge especially Ms. Yvonne Palmer, community board members and all members of the project team for their dedication and commitment. This study signals a positive message of Christchurch, embracing our developing multi-cultural status and care for the well being of all our citizens, residents and visitors.

This study highlights the diversity and enormous differences among Asian community members, this in itself is important to highlight so as to avoid generalisations. The technique of interviewing students helps to humanise the findings and I personally believe this will endear the report to its readers. In order for government, schools and various organisations to make full use of this study, it obviously requires further work; nonetheless, this is an important step.

We are at a very momentous time of history, straddling between two centuries. New Zealand in the last twenty years has gone through quite a dramatic cultural evolution. Official recognition of past grievances and Treaty of Waitangi settlements have led to a resurgence in the pride of Maori language and culture. At the same time, however, we need to acknowledge other communities and empower them to come forward to show confidence and pride in their ethnicities.

When individuals are confident and feeling secure, and matching that with a progressive society and economy, we will then embrace people and new challenges more readily. Everyone will maximise his or her fullest potential when our multicultural society is realised and accepted.

This study is indeed another important step towards our dream of one New Zealand; many people with shared values.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pansy Wong', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pansy Wong MP

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST ASIAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Asian population in Christchurch has increased dramatically during the last ten years, from 3,816 (1.5%) in 1986 to 10,122 (4.1%) in 1996.¹ One of the main reasons why Asians choose to migrate to New Zealand is that they view this country as a nice place to live; in particular, a good place for their children's overall education. The garden city of New Zealand therefore attracts more Asian students than any other city in New Zealand due to its attractive living conditions and good academic environment.

As a result, the Asian youth population in Christchurch, aged between 10 and 19 years old, witnessed a stronger growth, from 1.5% in 1986 to 8% in 1996, as compared to the national average of 6.3% in 1996.² Interestingly, almost three-quarters of the Asians live in the northwest region of Christchurch, which includes the suburbs of Shirley/Papanui (13%), Fendalton/Waimairi (30%) and Riccarton/Wigram (30%).

This change in the demography has raised several concerns among the local community, especially the schools and community boards in these areas as Asian students became an important component of the student population. For example, Papanui High School currently has over 330 Asian students, among whom 85 are fee-paying while the remainder are either citizens or permanent residents.³

Furthermore, there have been some debates about the strategy taken by several high schools in Christchurch to actively recruit fee-paying students from Asia to supplement the revenue the school gets from the government. On average, each foreign student pays about NZ\$10,000 a year to their high school for tuition and other fees.⁴ It is obvious that the supplementary income constitutes a very significant portion of the school's total operating income⁵ and has become critical to many schools for maintaining their competitive edge.

¹ Source: Statistics New Zealand.

² Source: Statistics New Zealand.

³ Source: Director of International Students, Papanui High School.

⁴ Source: Director of International Students, Papanui High School.

⁵ The percentage of school income from local funds has increased from 9.1% in 1993 to 11.6% in 1995. The increase in local funds was mainly due additional fund raising and increases in income from investments, trading and overseas student fees (Source: 1996 New Zealand Schools, Ministry of Education).

Even though the proportion of Asian students enrolled in the school is relatively high and is expected to increase further, the staff of Papanui High School and the Shirley/Papanui Community Board have expressed concerns that the needs of these students are not well met. Similar concerns were echoed by staff of several other schools in the region and also those from the Fendalton/Waimairi and Riccarton/Wigram community wards.

Although faced with a large number of problems due to the big difference between Asian and New Zealand cultures, most Asian high school students try their best to adapt to the New Zealand environment. They have to confront many problems, both inside and outside of the schools, including problems in their studies, school activities, social life and home-stays. Many of these students also have to constantly struggle with their own sense of identity. Trying to achieve the right balance between retaining their cultural roots and adapting to the New Zealand life-style is not an easy task.

High school teachers also face many problems because of the limited English language skills of some Asian students and their parents. To compound the problems, Asian students rarely ask for help from people beside family members or close friends. As a result, school administrators and teachers are not able to provide help for these students effectively.

To accomplish the difficult task of providing a smooth transition for Asian high school students, education providers must work together with the Asian community groups and other stakeholders to understand the issues and concerns of the students, and to develop a feasible strategy to address these concerns.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE

Although research has been conducted to study the migration and adaptation of Asians in New Zealand (Boyer, 1995; Redmond, 1995; Ho, 1995) and the acculturation of Asian students in other countries (Chataway & Berry, 1989; Ward & Kennedy, 1993), relatively little research has been conducted on Asian students in New Zealand.⁶ Policy makers, therefore, need more information to assist them in formulating their programmes to better meet the needs of Asian students in New Zealand.

The objective of this research was to identify the issues, concerns and needs of the Asian high school students in the Shirley/Papanui, Fendalton/Waimairi and Riccarton/Wigram community wards. Specifically, the research aimed to achieve this objective by:

- developing a preliminary profile of Asian students in Christchurch;
- examining the factors influencing their choice to come to New Zealand;
- exploring the problems Asian students faced in settling into New Zealand;
- identifying their concerns in school;
- discovering the difficulties they faced outside school;
- determining the assistance that they required;
- providing recommendations to the relevant stakeholders; and
- suggesting areas for further research.

This analysis will provide valuable information for the various organizations, such as the school administration, Ministry of Education, Community Boards, City Council, and providers of social, health and recreational services, that are responsible for, and will benefit from, the well-being of the Asian students. It will assist these organizations in formulating their policies and programmes to better help the students integrate into the school and society so as to maximize the students' potential and contribution.

⁶ There were a few papers written by college students over the years but they tend to focus only on a particular segment of the Asian students (mainly Malaysians) in a single college (Noor, 1968; Kong; 1975; Leo, 1983). In addition, Bennett (1998) provides a historical review of Asian students in New Zealand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acculturation, or changes resulting from first-hand contact with another culture, can be very stressful and problems often arise from differences in language, cultural expectations, physical appearance, and environment (Chataway and Berry, 1989). Three theoretical frameworks, summarized by Searle and Ward (1990), are widely used in the literature for studying cross-cultural translations: (a) clinical perspectives, (b) social learning models, and (c) social cognition approaches.

Clinically oriented models have conventionally drawn attention to the role of personality, life events, changes, losses, and social supports that facilitate or inhibit the adjustment process. Within the stress and coping framework, personality variables and social support may mediate adaptation to a foreign milieu. Personality and situation variables will interact to determine the cultural fit between the sojourners and the host culture, and the better the fit, the lesser the stress. In addition, social support is also thought to act as a buffer against stress but there is considerable debate on whether fellow nationals or hosts provide the most effective source of support.

Social learning models emphasize the acquisition of culturally appropriate skills and behaviors through contact with hosts, cross cultural experience and training. This approach posits that friendships with hosts are crucial for learning the skills of a new culture. Implicit in this approach is the influence of cultural distance between the sojourners and the hosts. The greater the distance, the fewer the culturally appropriate skills the sojourners have for negotiating daily social encounters, and thus the more difficulties they will experience. Also, consistent with the stress and coping model, greater cultural distance implies greater life changes, which in turn, implies a higher level of stress for the sojourners.

Social cognition models instead highlight the importance of expectations, values, attitudes, and perceptions in the cross-cultural adjustment process. The values and attitudes of the sojourners will affect their contact with the hosts, which will determine their perceptions and the level of stress experienced. Obviously, unrealistic expectations will hamper the adjustment process but there is no consensus on whether realistic or modest expectations will better facilitate adjustment.

In recent years, Asians constituted a substantial component of the migrants to New Zealand and changed the human landscape considerably. The demographic portraits of the Asian population living in New Zealand are presented in Statistics New Zealand (1992) which tabulated the statistics on ethnicity, age, sex, marital status, education, religion, employment, income and geographical distribution. In addition, McKinnon (1996) also contrasted many of these statistics against those of the general population. The importance of Asia to New Zealand and its economy is no longer deniable and is well documented in Cremer and Ramasamy (1996).

Asian students, both tax-paying (residents) and fee-paying (foreign), have consequently become a significant part of the New Zealand classrooms. Despite their increasing importance in the education system, relatively little research has been conducted to understand their concerns and formulate strategies to better meet their needs, especially for the non-tertiary students. Most of the research on foreign students were conducted by either students or staff from the universities and thus they tend to focus only on a selected group of students, usually Malaysian and Singaporean university students. For examples, Hwang (1971) conducted a small-scale survey of Malaysian and Singaporean students at Victoria University and Koh (1980) studied a sample of 55 Malaysian Chinese students at the University of Waikaito. James and Watts (1992) provided a succinct summary of many studies by and on university students in New Zealand.

Several more recent studies, however, have broadened the sample to include secondary school students and students from other Asian countries. Searle and Ward (1990) conducted a survey of 105 Malaysian and Singaporean university and high school students, and Ward and Searle (1991) surveyed 155 tertiary students from 42 countries studying in New Zealand. Bennett (1998) provided a historical perspective on Asian students in New Zealand and Keating (1998) provided a different but interesting perspective to the issue by looking at the challenges for tertiary educators created by increasing demand for Asian studies in New Zealand.

Also of interest were several studies conducted overseas on the problems faced by Asian students and their adjustment processes in their host countries. Chataway and Berry (1989) surveyed 42 Chinese, 43 French and 42 English students studying at Queens University in Canada and Tanaka et al (1994) surveyed 237 international students (77% Asians) studying at

7 universities in Japan. Burns (1991) surveyed 76 Australian students and 133 overseas students, mainly from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, who were studying at the Australian National University. Barker et al (1991) surveyed two samples of university students in Australia: the first sample consisted of 105 Asian students, 105 urban Australian students and 112 rural Australian students, and the second sample comprised 101 Australian and 101 ethnic Chinese students from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore.

Another interesting study by Ward and Kennedy (1993) should also be highlighted because it examined 178 secondary school students from New Zealand who were participating in the American Field Service programme. These students were placed in 23 countries around the world including Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Turkey.

Whether they are Asian students in New Zealand or New Zealand students in Asia, students from one culture will experience some difficulties in coping with their studies and trying to adapt to different culture and environment. The degree of difficulties will depend on the student's characteristics, the school environment and the differences in the two cultures. The problems could be quite severe if the two cultures are completely different and relatively little support is provided by the school to assist the student in adapting to the new environment.

For example, in a study on Chinese students in Canada, Chataway and Berry (1989) found that these students experienced, in order of importance, problems related to the uncertainty of their future, homesickness and loneliness, and the highest predictors of stress among these students were loneliness, prejudice experiences and language problems. As expected, the Chinese students experienced higher acculturation stress than their French and English counterparts, experienced less social support, tended to use passive or avoidance coping techniques, and appeared to be less satisfied with their academic performance and coping abilities, even though they had a relatively higher academic average. In addition, having immigrant status did not affect the responses of the students. The French students, on the other hand, experienced more social support and fewer problems with communication, prejudice and adaptation difficulties.

In a summary of the early research conducted on overseas students in New Zealand, James and Watts (1992) concluded that the students were concerned socially with their lack of acceptance by New Zealanders beyond a superficial level and with not being able to cross

social barriers. As a consequence, and in response to their needs for security and cultural identity, many of these students tended to associate with people with the same ethnicity. This grouping had occasionally led to misunderstanding and tension within the community. Consistent with the above findings, Barker et al. (1991) also found that the Asian students in Australia experienced more difficulties in making friends with Australians, getting to know them in depth and taking initiatives in conversation. Asian students also had more difficulty than Australian students in going to pubs, attending formal dinners, dating, being intimate with a member of the opposite sex, and dealing with someone who was angry or aggressive.

The students' transitions and adjustment outcomes, however, will also depend on their personalities and social support available. Searle and Ward (1990) found that extraversion was conducive to the well being of Malaysian and Singaporean students studying in New Zealand because this personality trait resembled more closely to those of the host culture.⁷ In addition, satisfaction with relationships with New Zealanders, rather than fellow nationals, appeared to be more salient in predicting the psychological adjustments of these students.

Besides social adjustment problems, Asian students often also faced academic problems due to the difference in culture of their home and host countries. Some of the common academic problems included difficulty with the language, particularly in oral expressions, difficulty in adjusting to academic requirement, especially participation in discussion; and difficulty with the more informal teacher-student relationship (Barker et al., 1989; Burns, 1991; Chataway and Berry, 1989; James and Watts, 1992). Fortunately, most of the Asian students in New Zealand indicated that their English competency improved over time which, in turn, lowered the level of difficulty they experienced in school (James and Watts, 1992).

Interestingly, Barker et al (1991) found that Asian students were more likely to use problem-focus coping strategy including information seeking and problem solving as ways of coping with difficult situations. For example, they were more inclined than their Australian counterparts to find out more about the situation and make follow up plans. In contrast, Australian students were found to rely more on emotion-focus coping when dealing with

⁷ Being extravert is not necessary more conducive to the transition process. Armes and Ward (1989) found that extraversion was linked to higher level stress in Anglo-expatriates in Singapore because of poorer cultural fit with the norms in the host country.

stress, and were thus more prone to emotional discharges such as drinking, eating and smoking.

Bennett (1998) claimed that the trendsetters in New Zealand education market, with regard to Asian students, were more likely to be found in secondary schools rather than the tertiary institutions. Teachers and Boards of Trustees perceived cultural and financial benefits as the greatest advantages, in addition to others such as the benefit of good role models in work habits, the challenge of making teachers more creative and the fostering of trade links. Some of the students, however, strongly resented Asian students for speaking their own languages and sticking together. Some references were also made regarding Asian students' excessive demand on the teachers' time and the students' limited English abilities.

Many secondary schools have implemented programmes to facilitate the integration of Asian students into the mainstream. Examples of these schemes include a buddy system, nominated counsellors, orientation programme, encouragement to participate in sports, Kiwi home-stays, and limiting the number of students from one nationality (Bennett, 1998). Nevertheless, social interaction is difficult and host institutions need some particularly devoted teachers and administrators to smooth over difficulties. Also, it is imperative to deal immediately with any problems of racial intolerance (Bennett, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODS AND SCOPE

Before the launch of this study, a preliminary focus group was conducted with a sample of 8 Asian students as a simple pilot test to determine whether there were significant issues and concerns among the Asian high school students. The students also provided valuable inputs to the design and structure of the research. In addition, several discussion sessions were held with concerned stakeholders including representatives from schools, churches, city council, police, parliament, shopping malls, recreational providers and Asian community groups.

The importance of the preliminary work described above cannot be over emphasized. Owing to the sensitivity of the issues and the target population concerned, an enormous amount of groundwork had to be laid before the project could proceed smoothly. In particular, an extensive amount of networking had to be done among the various community wards, school administrations and Asian community groups to gain their trust and commitment to participate in the project. As a result of the extended consultation, several of the directions, scopes and objectives of the research were modified and refined.

The project itself was essentially an exploratory study since there was very little research conducted in this area, especially on the issues, concerns and needs of Asian high school students in New Zealand. Therefore, besides compiling and analyzing the secondary data available, this study also collected and analyzed primary data using a qualitative approach.

Secondary data from Statistics New Zealand, the various community boards, city council and high schools in the three relevant areas were compiled. In particular, demographic data and statistics on the Asian high school student population were analyzed with respect to the age, sex, and country of origin of the students to provide some insights into the trends and possible areas of concerns.

A qualitative approach was preferred in this study, for primary data collection and analysis, due to the exploratory nature of this research (Sekaran, 1984; Kinnear and Taylor, 1996). Consequently, several interviews and focus groups, which involved partially structured discussion facilitated by an experienced researcher, were conducted with selected groups of Asian high school students and teachers.

There are several advantages of using small discussion groups for exploratory study (Sekaran, 1984; Kinnear and Taylor, 1996). They are relatively inexpensive to conduct and yet they provide fairly dependable data within a short time frame. Also, small discussion groups provide a free-flowing situation designed to stimulate ideas and insights to a problem, particularly unexpected views on the issues that would not be captured in structured surveys.

The main disadvantage of using a qualitative approach is that the results are difficult to generalize to the relevant population due, in part, to its lack of known statistical properties.⁸ Although the extent of the bias present cannot be estimated, this problem can be minimized by the careful selection of respondents.

One problem encountered in selecting the appropriate respondents is that Asians comprise a great diversity of people based on race, religion, language and culture. Covering about one-third of the land surface of the earth and housing about two-thirds of the world's population, Asia is home to more than 3,000 languages and several hundred ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). It is also the birthplace of the four most popular religion in the world: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Geographically, Asia can be divided into four main regions:

- West Asia which includes parts of the Middle East and Near East countries like Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan;
- South Asia which constitutes the Indian sub-continent and includes countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan;
- East Asia which comprises countries like China, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan; and
- South East Asia which consists of Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Kampuchea (Cambodia).

After some preliminary analysis of immigration statistics and initial consultation with the stakeholders, it was decided that this study should focus on the students from East and South

⁸ See Zikmund (1993) for a discussion on the various research methods.

East Asia. In addition to these students, the project team also decided that it was essential to interview a group of teachers, especially the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)⁹ teachers since they were in closer contact with the Asian students in schools.

The primary targets for this research were the three largest groups of Asian students: Chinese, Koreans, and Malaysians. A standard focus group that consisted of six to ten students were conducted for each of these three groups. The Chinese group included students from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan because of their similarities in race, culture, religion and language. Although the Koreans share many similarities with the Chinese and Japanese, they are quite distinct and should be treated as a separate group. To minimize resources, the Singaporeans and Filipinos were grouped with the Malaysians because all these countries are multicultural and English is very widely used in these countries.

The secondary targets consisted of students from other East and South East Asian countries with fairly significant representation in the student population. Five smaller group interviews, comprising two to five students each, were conducted for the Japanese, Indonesian, Thai, Cambodian and Vietnamese students.

Consistent with guidelines, from both the University of Canterbury and Lincoln University, on research involving human subjects, the respondents all participated voluntarily and were informed of their rights and issues pertaining to confidentiality and the Privacy Act.

The sample consisted of 50 Asian students from 11 secondary schools in three community wards in Christchurch. Thirteen of these students were chosen from St. Bedes College, Papanui High School and Marian College in the Shirley/Papanui ward. Another 13 students were selected from Burnside High School, Christchurch Boys High School and Rangī Ruru Girls High School in the Fendalton/Waimairi ward. The remaining 24 students were chosen from Christchurch Girls High School, Middleton Grange School, Hornby High School, Riccarton High School and Villa Maria College in the Riccarton/Wigram ward.

⁹ Also widely known as English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.

Categorized by their country of origin, the sample of 50 students consisted of five mainland Chinese, four Taiwanese Chinese, one Hong Kong Chinese, three Singaporean Chinese, six Malaysian Chinese, two Filipinos, ten Koreans, four Japanese, five Indonesians, four Cambodians, four Thais and two Vietnamese. Except for the English-speaking group comprising the Singaporeans, Malaysians and Filipinos, interpreters were engaged to assist in the discussions.

To ensure a more accurate representation of the student population, the respondents were selected from a good mix of both male and female students, and students from two age groups. Of the 50 students, 21 (42%) were males and 29 (58%) were females; 28 (56%) were between 13 and 16 years old and 22 (44%) were between 16 and 20 years old; 18 (36%) were fee-paying students and 32 (64%) were either New Zealand citizens or permanent residents.

To better fulfill the objectives of this research, the proportion of fee-paying students in the sample was chosen to be slightly higher than its population share. Fee paying students contribute proportionally more to the resources of the schools involved, enhance the international reputation of New Zealand as a center of education, and more importantly, they may have more difficulties in adjusting to the New Zealand environment and are in more need of assistance.

Last, but not least, six ESOL teachers from Hornby High School, St. Margarets College, Burnside High School, Shirley Boys High School, St. Bedes College and Papanui High School were also interviewed for this study. They provided valuable insights on the difficulties faced by Asian students from a teacher's perspective, as well as useful suggestions for addressing these problems.

Even though an additional focus group with some Kiwi students may provide a more balanced approach to the research, the project team felt that this was beyond the scope of this research. Similarly, extending the research to include the other areas of Christchurch had been considered and rejected due to the low benefit to cost ratio because 75% of the Asian students live in the Shirley/Papanui, Fendalton/Waimairi and Riccarton/Wigram community wards.

Harder to reject was the suggestion to follow up this research with a confirmatory survey of all high school students in these areas. A more comprehensive survey would provide the research with the requisite statistical basis to generalize the results and to help prioritize the issues raised by the respondents during the interviews. The project team, however, was not in a position to conduct the survey. As a result, this research remained as an exploratory analysis, albeit a very insightful study.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The entire population of New Zealand is ultimately the consequence of immigration (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). The original source of migrants was restricted to the Pacific Islands and most of the immigrants were Polynesians. About three hundred years ago, however, Europeans began their exploration into this part of the world, and soon after, settlers started arriving from the British Isles and other parts of Europe (Statistics New Zealand, 1995), with the first Pakeha woman arriving in 1806 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). In 1840, New Zealand became a British colony when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by the British Crown and the Maori Chiefs.

The first batch of Chinese immigrants began arriving in Otago towards the end of the early gold rushes in the late 1860s due to the shortage of labour in these gold mines after a large number of miners left for the mines in the West Coast (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). When the gold mining industry began to decline, New Zealand began to restrict the number of Chinese immigrants. A poll tax of £10 was imposed on Chinese immigrants in 1881, which was progressively raised to £100 in 1896, and in 1899, the Immigration Restriction Act limited immigration to British subjects. The 1916 census recorded 2,147 Chinese in New Zealand.

Between 1939 and 1952, the immigration policy began to shift towards family reunification and there was a gradual removal of the laws that discriminate against Chinese immigration (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). The number of Chinese in New Zealand recovered slowly to nearly 5,000 in 1945, and in 1951, the Chinese gained the right to be naturalised. These changes gave a more stable social structure to the community, and the Chinese population doubled to about 11,000 between 1945 and 1966 and more than doubled again between 1966 and 1986 (Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

Besides the Chinese, the Indians constituted the only other Asian group that has any significant representation in New Zealand. They faced lower barriers than the Chinese immigrants because India was, for a period of time, part of the British Empire. The Indian population grew from 181 in 1916 to 1,554 in 1945 (Statistics New Zealand, 1995) and over 15,810 in 1986 (Vasil and Yoon, 1996).

With the removal of immigration barriers based on ethnicity in 1986, the Asian population grew steadily over the last decade. In 1991, the total Asian population in New Zealand reached 99,576, which represented an increase of 82% since the previous census (Statistics New Zealand, 1995)¹⁰. The rise in the number of people with Asian ethnicity accounted for 42% of the total growth in New Zealand's total resident population, which grew only 3.4%. Although their growth rate was relatively large, Asians still comprised less than 3% of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 1995) and there was no real cause for alarm.¹¹

Besides looking at the various growth rates of the Asian population, it is more important to analyse their contribution to the economy relative to their demand on resources. To accomplish this difficult task would require detail data that are not readily available. At the national level, however, it is quite clear that New Zealand has benefited from the increased presence of the Asian population (Keating, 1998; Bennett, 1998; Cremer and Ramasamy, 1996; Vasil and Yoon, 1996; Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

Statistics New Zealand (1995) provided some information from the 1991 census that might be useful for a general analysis. Firstly, as evident from Table 1, the Asian population was relatively young compared to the European population.

Table 1: Age Distribution

Population	Children		Working Age		Elderly	
	1986	1991	1986	1991	1986	1991
Asian	29.3%	27.5%	67.5%	69.9%	3.1%	2.6%
Total	24.4%	23.2%	65.2%	65.5%	10.5%	11.3%

Source: Statistics New Zealand (1995).

¹⁰ The racial distribution of the population is difficult to estimate due to the large share of children from mixed marriages. In the Census, respondents were simply asked to indicate their ethnicity and some had indicated more than one. These respondents were counted in all categories indicated.

¹¹ The popular mood towards Asian immigration, as exhibited in opinion polls, calls to talkback radio shows, letters to the editor and private conversations seemed to extremely negative relative to the data and official policy on immigration (McKinnon, 1996; Bennett, 1998).

More importantly, the proportion of working age adult (15-64 years old) was relatively higher for the Asian population, which implied that their relative expected contributions to the national resources was higher than their counterparts. Furthermore, their relative expected demand on the national resources, especially on government expenditures, as indicated by their smaller dependency ratio (the ratio of children (below 15 years old) and elderly (65 and above) to working age adults), was lower than their counterparts.

The ratio of elderly people to people of working age for the total population, including Asians, was 17.2% in 1991 but only 3.8% for the Asians (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). More importantly, the ratio for Asians had actually fallen from 4.6% in 1986. These differences in the ratio implied that the expected demands for income support, especially superannuation, and health services by Asians were significantly lower. Since superannuation and health were clearly two of the biggest expenditures of the government, Asians was expected to contribute positively towards the government's financial position.

Similarly, the ratio of children to working age adults among Asians had fallen from 43.5% in 1986 to 39.3% in 1991. These ratios, however, were still slightly higher than those of the total population, which implied that the expected demand on educational resources by Asians would be relatively higher. Since the total dependency ratio was still significantly lower for the Asian population and expenditure on education was lower than expenditures for superannuation and health, Asians, on the whole, contributed relatively more and demanded relatively less from the national resources. Furthermore, with a younger population base, their expected contribution in the future would also be relatively higher.

The average Asian family living in New Zealand in 1991 was, in some respects, closer to the traditional New Zealand family of 15 to 20 years ago (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). The majority of the Asian families in 1991 consisted of a couple with dependent children, a family type that would arguably provide a more stable social environment. Unfortunately, this family type accounted for only 38% of all New Zealand families in 1991 as compared to the 54% in 1976. One reason for this difference was the lower rate of divorce and separation, 6.5%, among the Asian population as compared to the 13.4% among all New Zealanders. Children in Asian families were therefore half as likely to be raised by a sole parent (Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

Another striking difference is the education attainment of the Asian population, which had 20.4% of its population having university qualification and 22.1% having no qualification as compared to 8.0% and 31.8% respectively for all New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). If education can be used as a gauge for the relative contribution to the society, as argued by many proponents of education as a merit good, then the Asians' contribution to the society would be relatively higher. In addition, Asians are also less likely to receive any income support from the government; 39.2% received some form of support as compared to 57.2% for all New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

At the next census in 1996, the Asian population reached 160,683, which represented a slower increase of 61% over a period of five years (Statistics New Zealand, 1997). The growth rate appeared to have declined and may continue to decline unless there are some changes in the immigration policies. Even though they constituted only about 4% of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 1988), their increases were quite prominent because most Asians were concentrated in the urban areas, especially in Auckland.

As shown in Table 2, the growth of the Asian population in Christchurch, however, was slightly lower than, but still consistent with, the national trends.

Table 2: Asian Population in Christchurch

Year	Total Population	Asian Population	Asian Share	National Average
1986	282,216	3,819	1.4%	1.6%
1991	289,007	5,934	2.1%	2.6%
1996	309,027	12,598	4.1%	4.4%

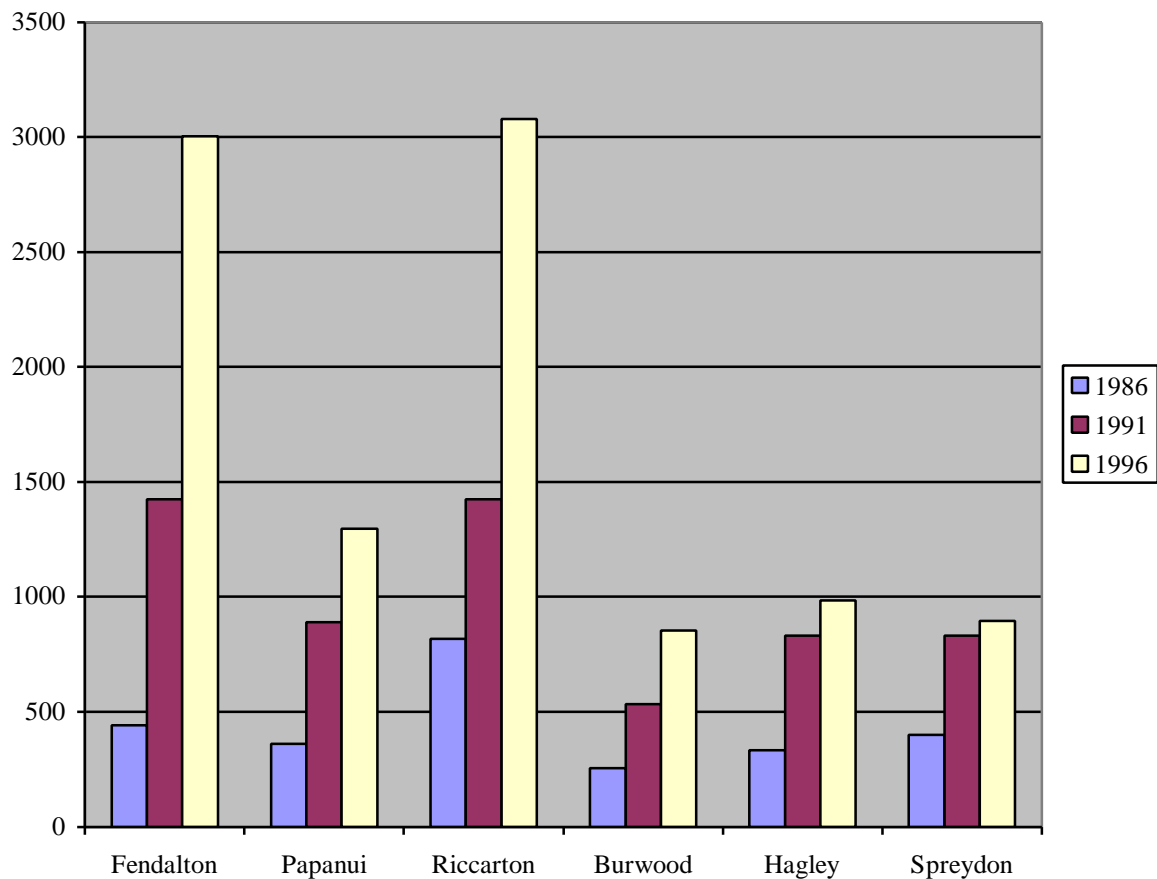
Source: Statistics New Zealand.

The increase in the Asian population in Christchurch has to be interpreted from at least two perspectives. On one hand, the growth rates of the Asian population per se are very high. Between 1986 and 1991, the Asian population grew by 55.4% compared to the non-Asian growth rate of 1.6%, and between 1991 and 1996, the corresponding growth rates were

112.3% and 4.7%. From this perspective, the differences in the relative increases are alarming. On the other hand, the Asian share of the total population are relatively small growing from a negligible 1.4% in 1986 to 2.1% in 1991 and finally to 4.1% in 1996. From this perspective, however, there is absolutely no support for the fear of an “Asian Invasion.”

The growths of the Asian population in the different community wards within Christchurch, nonetheless, have not been evenly distributed. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the Asian population tended to congregate in the northwestern community wards of Fendlaton/Waimairri, Shirley/Papanui and Riccarton/Wigram. In particular, the increases in the Asian population in the Fendalton/Waimairri and Riccarton/Wigram community wards between 1991 and 1996 had been relatively large.

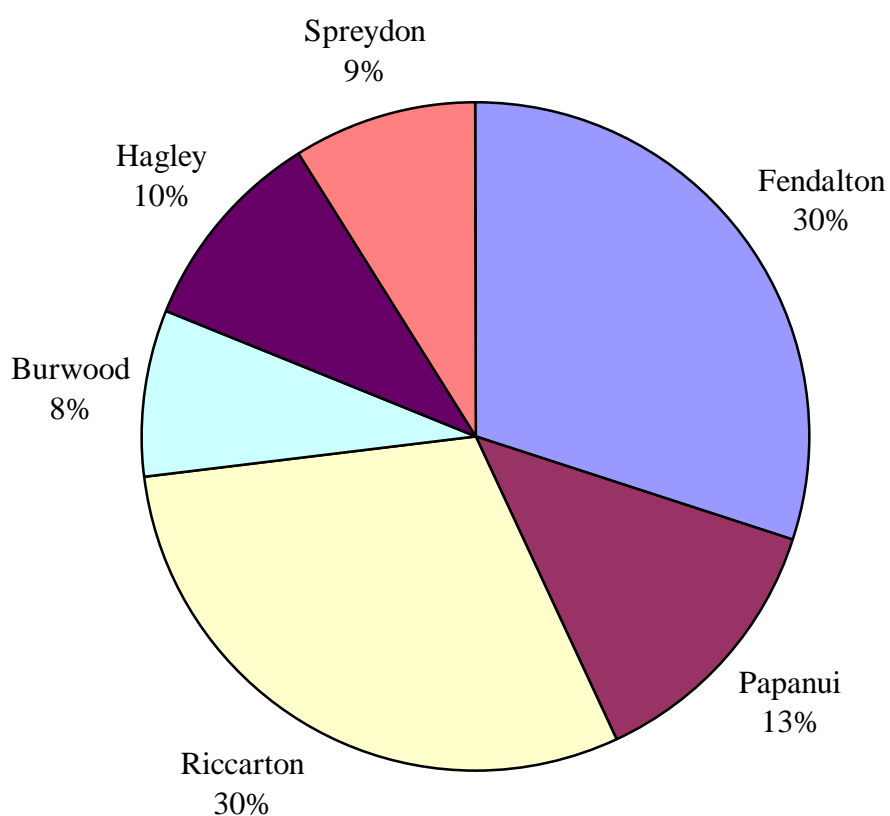
Figure 1: Asian Population by Community Wards



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The share of the Asian population in the three community wards in the northwest region of Christchurch has been increasing over the last decade: from 62% in 1986, to 63% in 1991 and 73% in 1996. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the Asian population, according to the latest census data, in the six community wards in Christchurch.

Figure 2: Geographical Distribution of Asian Population



Source: Statistics New Zealand.

Again, it is important to note that even though the actual increase in the Asian population in Christchurch is quite significant, especially in the Fendalton/Waimairi and Riccarton/Wigram community wards, they still constitute only a small percentage of the total population and there is no real cause for alarm. In the two community wards with the largest number of Asians in 1996, for examples, Asians constituted only 5.8% in each ward while in the two wards that have the smallest share, they comprised only 1.7% in each ward (see Table 3).

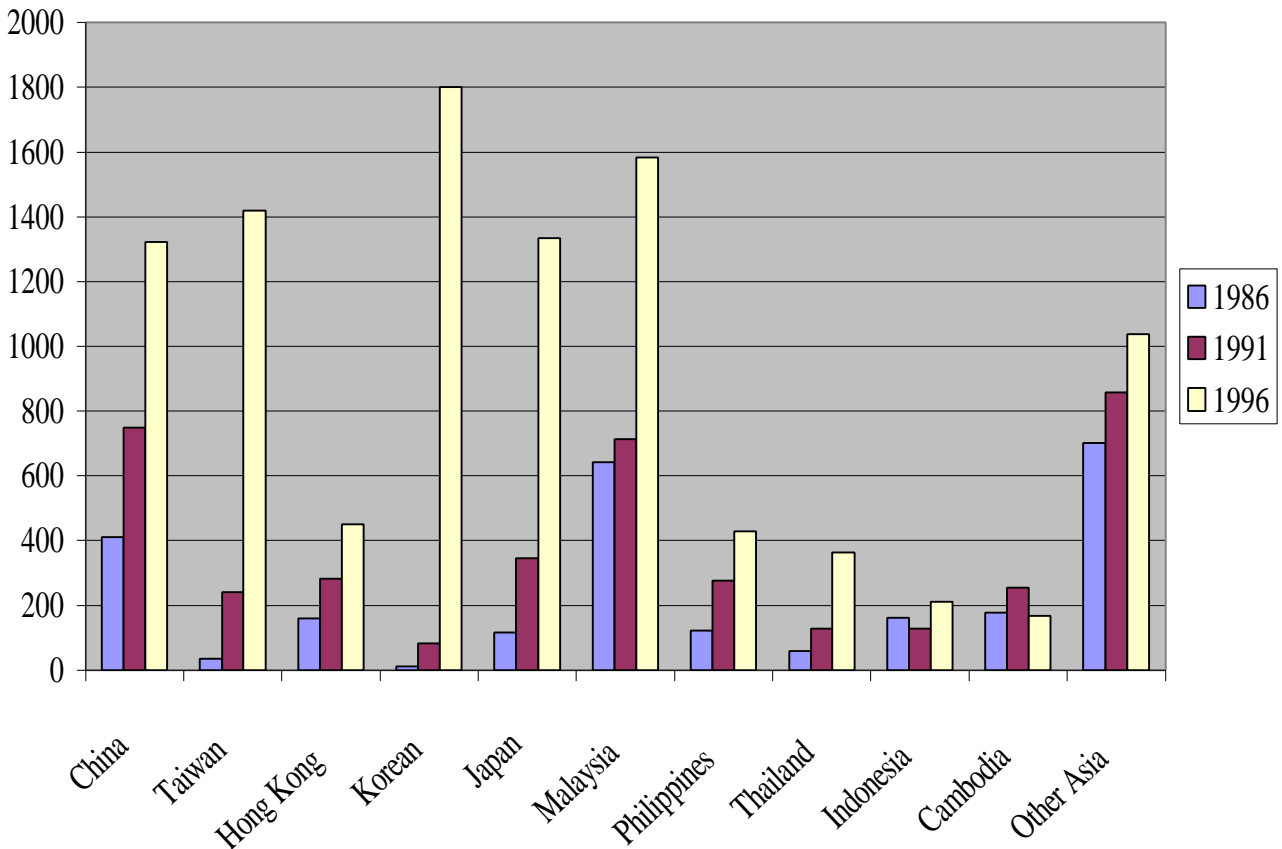
Table 3: Asian Population in Christchurch by Community Wards

Community Wards	Total Population	Asian Population	Asian Share
Riccarton/Wigram	52,850	3,078	5.8%
Fendalton/Waimairi	51,758	3,003	5.8%
Shirley/Papanui	52,061	1,296	2.5%
Hagley/Ferrymead	50,999	984	1.9%
Spreydon/Heathcote	50,883	897	1.7%
Burwood/Pegasus	50,477	855	1.7%

Source: Statistics New Zealand.

Besides being unevenly distributed geographically within Christchurch, the Asian population was also unevenly distributed according to the countries of origin (see Figure 3). The four largest groups in the 1996 census were the Koreans, Malaysians, Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese. The Korean population, in particular, has grown significantly over the last decade from a negligible 12 people (0.46% of the Asian population) in 1986 to 1,800 people (14.3% of the Asian population) in 1996. However, with the closure of the immigration offices in Malaysia and Korea recently, the expected influx of immigrants and fee-paying students from these countries is likely to decrease in the near future.

Figure 3: Asian Ethnic Groups in Christchurch



Source: Statistics New Zealand.

For the purpose of this research, we can judiciously group a few segments together in order to economize on resources. The first obvious group consists of the People's Republic of China (Mainland Chinese), Republic of China (Taiwanese) and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kongers). Racially, the people of these three "countries" are mainly Chinese and share a common culture even though they have different political and economic structures.¹² Together, these Chinese from Northeast Asia accounted for 25.3% of the Asian population in Christchurch.

¹² There had been numerous heated debates about the sovereignty of Taiwan and the political future of Hong Kong. Whether these are separate countries or one country is a very sensitive issue and its discussion is beyond the scope of this research.

Another possible grouping for this study consists of people from Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines. These countries are multicultural and English is widely used, which implies that people coming to New Zealand from these countries will experience a relatively smoother transition. This group represents over 16% of the Asian population in Christchurch.¹³ Together with the Koreans and Chinese groups, they constituted the majority of the Asian population in Christchurch and were thus the primary targets for the focus groups.¹⁴

As discussed earlier, the Asian population in New Zealand is relatively younger and this trend is also reflected in the population distribution in Christchurch. As evident from Table 4, contrary to the general trend, the number Asian youths (10-19 years old) in Christchurch has been increasing over the last decade. This difference has resulted in an increase the relative share of Asian students in Christchurch. The 1996 share of 7.9% is also higher than the national average of 6.3% (Statistics New Zealand, 1997).

Table 4: Asian Youth Population in Christchurch

Year	Asian Youths	All Youths	Asian Share
1986	736	48,423	1.5%
1991	1,143	43,623	2.6%
1996	3,393	42,849	7.9%

Source: Statistics New Zealand

It is important to note that, similar to the national trend, the total number of youths in Christchurch has been declining over the last decade. This decline is one indication that the population of New Zealand is aging over the last decade and will continue to shift towards the aging population over the next two decades. In addition, the growth of the resident population, particularly among the Pakeha population, has been negligible or negative. These trends suggest that immigration is needed in New Zealand to sustain any population or economic growth. Furthermore, the current system of social and economic support for the

¹³ The 16% include only Malaysians and Filipinos only because Singapore was classified under the Other Asian category and could not be properly accounted for.

¹⁴ The Japanese (10.6%) is the only other group that has more than a 10% representation in the Asian population in Christchurch.

elderly residents may not be sustainable in the near future without further injections of young adults and in particular, injections of immigrants.

Also, there is apparently little support for the claims made by the Post Primary Teachers Association that there is an increasing demand for secondary school teachers since the number of youth has been decreasing over the last decade. Any alleged expected increase in demand therefore has to arise from sources other than expected increasing student enrollment. However, due to the increasing share of Asian youth in Christchurch, there may be a resulting increase in educational resources to cope with this non-tradition demand.

Also, several high schools in Christchurch has been actively recruiting fee paying students from overseas, especially from Asia, to supplement their operating income and provide their students with a more internationalized education. In addition, teachers and Board of Trustees also perceived the academic benefit of good role models in work habits and the national economic benefit of fostering trade links and integration with Asia (Bennett, 1998). With each foreign student paying approximately NZ\$10,000 in fees, the income thus generated formed a substantial portion of the many schools' operating revenue¹⁵, and many of these schools need the money (Bennett, 1998).

The number of international students attending schools in New Zealand has more than doubled between 1992 and 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996). In 1996, there were 5,603 foreign students in New Zealand schools and the majority of these students (72%) were enrolled in forms 5-7. Of the 5,603 students, 4,772 were fee-paying¹⁶, 308 were supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and 527 were exchange students. While the majority of those supported by MFAT were from the Pacific Islands, the majority of the fee-paying students were from Asia (94.2%). Table 5 reports the Asian fee-paying students in New Zealand schools.¹⁷ Korea provided the largest share with 22.0%, followed by Japan with 21.8%, Thailand with 18.1%, Taiwan with 13.6%, Hong Kong with 10.4%, Malaysia with 7.2%, and the other Asian countries made up the remaining 6.9%.

¹⁵ Source: Papanui High School.

¹⁶ If each student pays about NZ\$10,000 in fees, the secondary school sector itself will generate about NZ\$50 million per year in foreign exchange. Also, there are significant spill over effects into other sectors such as housing, transport and food.

¹⁷ Another 4,408 Asian fee-paying students were enrolled in the tertiary institutions in New Zealand.

Table 5: Asian Fee-Paying Students in New Zealand

Countries	Number in Schools	Countries	Tertiary Sector
South Korea	987	Malaysia	2,320
Japan	982	Japan	408
Thailand	815	Thailand	260
Taiwan	613	Hong Kong	296
Hong Kong	467	Indonesia	244
Malaysia	322	Singapore	227
Indonesia	101	Taiwan	196
China	63	South Korea	182
Other	145	Other	275
Total	4,495	Total	4,408

Source: Bennett (1998).

One apparent observation from Table 5 is that the secondary school sector and the tertiary sector seems to be quite independent, drawing from different sources for their students. The “staircase effect” appears to be rather weak internally; that is many of the foreign students attending secondary schools in New Zealand do not proceed to the tertiary sector in New Zealand. Bennett (1998) claimed that there is evidence that many students who excel at Bursary go on to more prestigious, non-New Zealand universities.¹⁸ If this is indeed true, then the tertiary sector should work together with the secondary school sector to better facilitate the transition of these students into the tertiary sector in New Zealand.

Besides prestige, students are also concerned with other factors such as cost, living environment and quality of education. For students who have been through the local secondary schools, their satisfaction with their schools and their relationships with fellow students will also significantly affect their choice. Perhaps more effort should be channeled into increasing the customer satisfaction and strengthening the ties between local and foreign students in order to develop a stronger customer loyalty so that the foreign students would continue to choose New Zealand as their tertiary education provider. The results of this study therefore should also be of great interest to tertiary education providers in New Zealand.

¹⁸ Bennett (1998), however, did not provide any evidence or any reference to the evidence suggested.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

The Chinese Focus Group

None of the Chinese students in the group were born in New Zealand and two were fee-paying students. They either followed their parents who migrated here or were sent here by their parents to attend the local schools. Most of them did not have a choice or much input into the decision to go overseas, even though some were able to choose the country they went to. Several students were happy to leave their home countries because of the tremendous pressure in the schools there.

My dad first came to New Zealand in 1986 to do his Ph.D. and decided to migrate here. I was told (by my mom), honey, you got to go to New Zealand and I said, "What New Zealand, where's that?" My mom said, "here's your passport, here is your visa, that's it, you got to."

I came here for fun, got nothing to do in Taiwan. I came here because my cousin was here. May think about going to Canada in another two years.

I came here to learn English. My uncle lives here.

My parents decided to come to New Zealand. I really wanted to come here because less pressure, I feel the pressure to study in high school in Taiwan.

Several members of the group experienced varying degrees of difficulties with the English language, especially with the Kiwi accent, slang and colloquialisms. Their lack of language proficiency, particularly in oral communication, was considered a major problem.

What we learn about English in China is quite different from what we are using here. It's American English in China. I just can't understand what they (kiwis) are saying for half a year.

When I first came here, communication was the only problem I had. It's hard to make friends with the Kiwis.

Besides communication problems, differences in culture also contribute significantly to the difficulties foreign students encounter in coping with their studies.

I find the way the class is run is very different from what I am used to. The teacher behaves quite different and the class is very noisy.

Kiwi students, they joke in class all the time, they don't treat their classes seriously.

Teachers here are more like friends than those in China.

When I first came to New Zealand in 1990, I went to Lincoln Primary School, that was a totally countryside school. I was the only Chinese guy there and every body else is European, they got some kind of strange feeling, but later on they got used to me.

I was kind of disappointed at the amount of homework; because I was told in China that if you don't work, you're just going to be a drop out. In China, we have like 6 hours of homework everyday. When I came to New Zealand, we get like about 6 minutes of homework (in primary school). I was very worried.

I thought school in New Zealand is just too relaxed; no serious work.

When I first come here, I find it difficult to get used to the school rules. I went to the staff room to find the teacher and she told me that "you are not supposed to be here."

Some teachers here will explain over the subjects again if you don't understand. The class here is small. Back home, we have to get a tuition teacher.

The students, however, felt that they had been treated fairly by most of their teachers, except for a few. Most students, nevertheless, experienced difficulties because of the mismatch in the

students' English abilities and teachers' expectations. It is interesting to note that problems can arise from either an overly high or low expectation.

Some teachers get really moody because you don't understand their questions.

Some teachers are quite impatient when the Asian students try to answer questions.

In addition to the impact on students' studies, cultural differences also contributed significantly to their difficulties in adjusting socially.

When I first came here, we do not know how to behave ourselves because we come from different cultural background. Here, we don't put our hands over our friends' shoulders; in China we do it.

When I was in China, I thought cheese was very tasty but when I came here and first tasted cheese, it was yucks! My father, his dog (dish as in food) is very good but we cannot eat dog here. I don't know why it's not good to eat dog, what's the difference between a dog and a chicken?

When we go to the supermarket, we don't know what is in there (supermarket). We go to the Asian shops to buy them (our food) but they don't always have them (what we want).

Everything is so expensive. A little package of thing (food in the supermarket) is like NZ\$30; back in China it's a few cents.

Most students, who were not staying with their families, had mixed feelings about their home-stays. Again, differences in culture can create problems for the students.

The first one I stayed with was really horrible. I didn't know where to go to get Chinese food. I got to eat fish and chips with them all the time; it's so horrible. I ask my guardian to change my home-stay. Now this one, they always ask me what I want to eat. I stayed with this one for one and a half years already. They are really good to me, just like my grandfather.

In addition to a home-stay, a guardian is required for students whose parents are not staying here with the students, and most schools prefer to have a guardian who is not also the home-stay. However, most of the students, who had guardians, expressed dissatisfaction with them.

My guardian really do nothing for me. I pay the guardian fee and I hate it.

I don't know why we need a guardian. I was told it's because we are under-aged.

They do nothing. I think it's wasting money to get a guardian.

Most of the students had difficulties making friends initially. This is true for both Asian and Kiwi friends. Again, one has to remember that Asia comprises a large variety of different cultures and even among the Chinese Asians, there are very distinct differences in behavior depending on where they are from.

Even if we are all Asians (Chinese), we come from different countries; some come from Taiwan; some come from Malaysia; some come from China. There's quite a big difference in the way they speak Chinese. I couldn't get used to it when I first come here. The second thing is the way they are acting, behaving.

It's quite hard to get along with the Europeans because you are really different. They don't really like you and they look at you funny, like you are stupid or something.

Sometimes, it's quite hard to communicate with them (Europeans); I don't talk like them; I know who I am and I don't have to change; it's OK to just talk to them (casual conversation).

Whenever you talk to me, I'll talk to you. Whenever you don't talk to me, it's good-bye. If they have this kind of attitude, why bother to stick around with them.

Several students continued to face the dilemma of being caught between two cultures. Most students found it difficult to both retain their cultural heritage and mix with the Europeans,

and choosing either produced problems of its own. Several of the students felt that they were now neither Asians nor Kiwis.

After 4 years at Lincoln Primary, my English was almost perfect. When I went to Kirkwood, I was surprised to see so many Chinese but I forgot half my Chinese. I find it hard to communicate with the Chinese. They speak with a funny accent, not that their accent is wrong or anything. I find it more difficult to communicate in Chinese than in English. I decided to go for Chinese class; that's when I started making Chinese friends. I find that if you stick around with your Chinese friends, your English just went straight down hill. Now, I try deliberately to stick around with English people just to keep my English up.

When I first came, I went to Westburn, there was only one other Asian there. I don't really like her. So, I have to make English friends. I get to learn English; that makes my English improve a lot. Whenever, I saw any Asians, I felt really close to them; I felt like making friends with them because there are so few Asians in school. When you hang out with the Asian crowd, you find you can't get back into the European crowd anymore because it changes the way you think, the way you act. I have to choose what kind of friends I want. I think it's hard to make friends both ways. It's very sad, you just don't fit into any group at all.

The experiences of Asian students with their Kiwi counterparts were not all negative. In fact, several students had some good Kiwi friends.

I have heaps of European friends and Asians friends. I think my European friends treat me better.

I speak to my Kiwi friends all the time; sometimes, they are very helpful; they help me a lot in my homework.

I try to communicate with the Kiwis even if it's mostly one-way; I can understand them but they find it hard to understand what I say; at least it helps with my English.

When faced with difficulties, most of the students confided in their parents and friends. As expected, none of the students sought help from outsiders, such as school counsellors or local aid organizations, because such practices were not considered proper in most Asian cultures.

I call my parents; just tell them your happiness, your sadness and they sometimes comfort you. Sometimes, I talk to myself at night.

I keep a diary. I write what happened. In China, there's a proverb "failure is the mother of success" and the next time you learn from them; you learn from your mistakes.

I try to forget it.

Friends, particularly this friend (whom) I know three years ago. We talk a lot.

I've this group of friends, six of them; when I felt desperate and have to tell someone, I just call one of them. I don't like to share with my parents right now, they are quite different from me already.

(My preacher: translated from Mandarin) says when you have problems, talk to Jesus. If you have problems, they (people from church) will help.

Most of the students were not comfortable talking to outsiders about their problems, especially the school counsellors because they felt embarrassed to share their problems with a stranger. This predicament indicated that school counsellors, in general, did not project themselves effectively among the students as persons who were warm, friendly, trustworthy and helpful. Students still perceived them as strangers who served little purpose. However, a few students, or their friends, did have some positive experience with their school counsellors.

They do nothing.

They sit around and do nothing.

I don't think our school counsellor does anything anyway.

The seniors told him (my friend) that he won't achieve anything (going to the see the counsellor). He'll just look like a total idiot.

People are too embarrassed to go to them (counsellors).

I think it's very difficult to approach a stranger about your personal life.

If you see your counsellor about your teacher or other students, you don't know whether the counsellor will go talking about it in school and the teacher will ask you and makes you feel very difficult.

I did see my school counsellor once. There is this girl in school. She owes me a lot of money. I talked to the counsellor and she told me that this girl owes many people money. She (my counsellor) solved my problems.

There is this guy in class; the economics teachers hated him. He went to see the school counsellor and he (the counsellor) solved the problem. The three of them (student, teacher and counsellor) sat around and had a talk.

Compared with Kiwi students, Asian students have different preferences in after school activities. Although many Asians like sports, they are not “religious” about it like the Kiwis are. Asian students also prefer different kinds of sports. Whereas most Kiwis prefer rugby or cricket, most Asians like basketball, badminton and table tennis.

Sport is their (Kiwi students) life. If you don't play rugby or cricket, you don't have a life. If you play computer games, you are a nerd; that's their attitude.

I am representing my school for badminton.

I join the chess club and social basketball. I represent my school in basketball.

I am in the school basketball team and I am involved in the international festival. I will take part in the school play.

Many Asian students, especially female students, do not participate in the activities organized by the school. Most of the students would rather stay home to play computer games or the piano and talk to friends over the phone. Their favourite hangouts are the shopping malls and coffee shops.

I am not interested in the things they have (in school). I rather go to the library or play piano at home.

I don't play rugby because it's easy to get injury. I like table tennis but there is no table tennis table in school, so I play chess.

I mostly stay home and play computer games.

I mostly stay home and talk to friends (over the phone) and watch TV.

We go to the mall and sometimes to QEII.

I go to coffee shops quite often. We went to almost every coffee shop in Christchurch.

There were many suggestions provided by the students on how to improve their stay in school and in Christchurch.

Dances; although I never turned out at any before, I hope there will be a dance every Friday night; maybe next time, I get to go.

More basketball courts.

Computer games competition.

Not enough basketball courts. They (school) take off the net. The reason is that outsiders take it down and sell it.

The footpath outside the school; I heard that it is going to be build ages ago.

Even though most of them enjoyed themselves here, they would like to go back to their home countries. The overwhelming reason given was the lack of job opportunities in New Zealand. Many students have parents who experienced difficulties in getting a job even though their parents are very highly qualified.

Mixed feeling: 90% happy and 10% sad. New Zealand is really quite a peaceful place. The standard of living is really high compared to China but you miss the cultural stuff.

If I had a choice, I would not have come because it's nothing like I'd imagined. I am not exactly Chinese, not exactly European. I don't think I can go back to China because my Chinese is not half as good as what I need to be but my thinking is totally European. Later on when it comes time for employment, if they (employers here) have a choice between a European and you, even if you have the same qualification or better, they will probably choose the European.

Finding a job here is very tough. I will go back.

I think I am pretty lucky to have come here but there's a 80% chance I go somewhere. This place is too small and not challenging enough. I want to go somewhere bigger, more opportunity. It's a nice place for retirement.

I think I will go back to Taiwan after school. Will have trouble finding a job here.

I will go back (Hong Kong) or go to Australia. I find that there are not many career opportunities for Asians here.

Maybe go back to Taiwan. I think it will be difficult to find job here.

In summary, most of the students from this group were happy to be studying here although many experienced varying degrees of difficulties, at least initially, in their studies and social activities, due largely to their lack of language proficiency and partly to the differences in culture. Conversely, most of the students in this group did not foresee a bright future in this country because of the lack of career opportunities in general, and for Asians in particular.

The transition for Chinese students from East Asia into the New Zealand environment was not uncommonly difficult and the language barrier appeared to be the significant factor hindering a smooth transition. Although not truly multicultural, the Chinese comprises a fairly diverse group of people and are fairly accustomed to differences in cultural beliefs and practices. They, therefore, would experience a relatively easier transition compared to the more mono-cultural groups like the Koreans and the Japanese.

The Malaysians, Singaporeans and Filipino Focus Group.

Similar to the Chinese group, none of the students in this group were born in New Zealand and four were fee-paying students. Most of the students in this group, however, were not as apprehensive about coming to New Zealand. This confidence may reflect their better command of the English language and their greater exposure to the western culture.

I didn't choose New Zealand, my sister chose New Zealand a few years ago and I had to follow. I came with half a plane of friends.

My family migrated here 5 years ago. The main thing was for our education. They had to sell their business and all that; it was quite difficult (for them).

I came here before for a tour. It's quite a nice place.

Students with host-families were generally quite satisfied with the arrangement and happy with their host-families. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the Chinese group (although the majority of the students in the group are Chinese), most students in this group referred to the people whom they were staying with as host-families and not as home-stays which would indicate a much closer relationship.

Just like a relative, not a very close relative. You are staying with them (host-family), you can't help but to get to know them. I am just like an adopted daughter.

They (host family) are fine; they are good people.

Surprisingly, not many students expressed concerns over the quality of food in New Zealand. In fact, a few students even expressed their satisfaction with the food in school. This anomaly may, in part, be due to their exposure to western food in their home countries and the ease of these students in finding Asian food in Christchurch.

It's (the food in school) good; it's just expensive.

New Zealand food is good.

Since these students generally have a fairly good command of English, language is not a major barrier even though a few experienced some difficulties in understanding the Kiwi accent and slang. They have no problems making friends, both among the Asians and Kiwi students. Most of the students are able to accept the Kiwi culture even though some prefer to mix more with people of the same culture.

I have many Filipino friends, they are still my best friends, but eventually I found Kiwi friends who accept me as who I am. They are very sincere.

Kiwi students need to know that not all Asians are rich.

I am quite a flexible person, so I have no problem with both. It depends on what kind of person you are. If you come to New Zealand, you have to be an extrovert to make friends. The main problem with Kiwis is that they already have their own clique.

They (Kiwis) are quite all right except a few; there are always a few; they (the few) tease you and call you names.

I tend to mix around with Asians more; with Kiwis, you don't know if it's OK if you do this or do that; you always have to think about these things but they are quite nice people.

Communication is the main criterion (for choosing friends among Kiwis); I don't understand the Kiwi accent.

Some Kiwis are nice but some are not; I mixed around with both; I mix around more with people of my same dialect (one version of spoken Chinese).

Language is not a problem; I find a group of people with common interest. Cultural background is not a problem; I just take it as a learning experience.

Similar to the Chinese group, there was a general consensus that the New Zealand school was not very competitive, at least academically, and the workload was extremely light when compared to that experienced by students in Asia. These differences in the attitude and workload of students in New Zealand versus their counterparts in Asia, may have contributed to the difference in their performances in the International Mathematics and Science Tests.

Most Kiwis just want to pass. Back home, you've to be the first in class (general agreement).

Basically, back home, the parents pressure them (the students). Here, the parents let the kids choose their interest; you don't do so well in school, you still have a life.

Workload is practically non-existent (general agreement).

Besides studies, several students participated in sports in their schools. In addition to the popular sports among the Asians such as basketball, badminton, and table tennis, a few students in this group also expressed their interests in volleyball and tennis. There were, however, several complaints about the availability of sports facilities in school.

I play volleyball for school.

I am in the basketball team.

I play tennis with my friends outside; unless you are very good, you really have no chance to use the sports facilities in school.

Ours (tennis court) you have to pay for it; there's no net.

The basketball court is always occupied by the school team; they take the ring off, you can't even play.

We have a school gym but we can't use it; we have this magnificent NBA basketball court but we can't use it; it's only reserved for the school team.

Several students also had positive experiences with other activities organized by the school such as field trips and club activities.

I went on a field trip; it was very nice.

I join the international club; it's very useful; you get to know a lot of people.

I join the Students Against Drunk Driving; it's boring; they are very disorganized.

I join the air training corps; I want to be a pilot.

In general, most of the students were quite happy with their teachers and did not experience any significant difficulties in communicating with their teachers. A few of the female students felt that they were able to share their concerns with a few selected teachers in school. The male students, however, felt comfortable only with seeking help on schoolwork.

Most of teachers are quite helpful and showed concern but some just want to get through with work and go straight on.

There's really no difference whether you're Asian or not.

Some teachers you can really talk to; it's really good to have someone to talk to.

Some of the teachers are really good, they're very supportive.

Again, most students were not familiar with or appreciated the role of the school counsellor. In fact, a few of the students did not even know such a person existed in their school.

Don't know; never thought to approach her. She's nice but you don't go to see the counsellor unless you have major problems.

I don't go to the counsellor because I don't really trust them. It's hard to communicate with a stranger. I feel very uncomfortable talking to someone in the administration.

As expected, most of the students felt more comfortable sharing their problems with their friends. Besides their friends, some of the students also shared their problems with their parents and relatives.

I have a group of close friends whom I share my problems with (general agreement).

I talk to my aunt; I'm staying with her.

I email my parents; occasionally my dad will respond to my complaints; my mom will type these long letters saying "don't worry dear".

I don't want to worry my parents too much, so I keep it to myself.

The first and foremost complaint, unanimously, was that Christchurch was a very boring place. Upon further discussions, however, it was discovered that most of the students actually participated in many activities organized by the City Council, visited many places of interest and frequented many entertainment centres. The majority of them had been to the QEII Park, the ice-skating rink, Jellie Park, 10-pin bowling alleys, Concert in the Park, the museum and the Art Centre. Although they still felt that there were an insufficient number of such activities and places, they felt that the lack of public transport was the bigger of the two problems.

Christchurch is a very boring place. (unanimous agreement)

Even though there's something happening in Christchurch, we usually don't know about it. They (organizers) need to advertise a bit more.

The museum is quite good; lots of information; needs more natural light in there.

Art Centre is expensive.

QEII is interesting but too far away; transport is a problem.

The concerts in the park are very nice. The McDonald parade and the Teddy Bear picnic are more for the kids.

In Christchurch, you can't really go anywhere; unless you have a car, you are stuck.

The places are too far apart; difficult to get around without a car.

I live in the north and the skating ring is in the south; to get there you have to take so many buses; it take 3-4 hours; then you have to get back; it's not worth going.

Christchurch is safe but too quiet for comfort.

The students provided many suggestions on how to improve the school. Field trips and practical work ranked high on their list, together with better sports and computing facilities. In particular, sports facilities should be made more readily available to the leisure players and coaches should also teach beginners how to play the games instead of just training the school team.

More activities: outdoor ones, field trips and practical work.

There was one trip for Geography and the principal cancelled it because there was not enough money.

Free access to Internet (several in agreement).

First you have to upgrade the computer; it's too slow (many agreed too).

More sports facilities for general use; hire coaches to teach students how to play (general agreement).

In addition, the students also provided many suggestions to the local authorities and other stakeholders on how to improve Christchurch and make it less boring. The top priority was improving the public transport, followed closely by providing more nightlife, especially those suitable for teenagers, not just adults.

I think they should really promote cultural activities; there's sort of a barrier; New Zealand is getting into the multicultural society thing; we should get to know other cultures; it's really important.

More nightlife; there's nothing at night (general consensus);

Disco places that don't have alcohol; most of these places are for young adults; for us, there's nothing (general agreement).

Shopping malls close early; it would be nice if they open till later (general consensus).

Eating places close too early; we go out for food around midnight, after visiting the other places; Denny is the only place that opens late (many agreed).

Carnival and theme parks; Rainbow's End.

An underground train? (general consensus); most cities have 24 hours train.

Improve the bus services; to go from one place to another, you have to take so many buses and it takes so long.

Provide cheap car rental.

What Christchurch has is so inconvenient to get to; where we can get to, there's nothing there (general agreement).

Most of the students knew about the clubs formed by the respective Asian community groups and participated in the activities organized by these clubs. However, they would like to see more activities catering to the youth, not just family orientated activities, and in particular, youth activities among the different Asian groups.

Potluck; Malaysian food.

Just be there and provide moral support.

Book places like Jellie Park for one hour; I understand that it may be difficult; you have to come out with the money, organised it, and then you have to drag people there.

More sports and games among the Asian students. I think sport is a good way to bring them together. Games that you don't get here.

Provide food and they will come. Music, many people like music.

I think everybody should come (including Kiwis). They will come if it's fun.

The idea of a youth support group was also strongly featured and discussed. Respondents preferred a generic Asian group rather than separate groups for each race or nationality. A list of volunteers should be provided to the school and distributed to all Asian students, especially to newcomers. The group should provide an information booklet telling newcomers where the facilities are, important rules and regulations that are different here, and some of the common Kiwi slang and cultural differences that they need to take note of.

Form support groups for the different age groups; when somebody new comes, they can tag along; with people of the same age you don't feel that you're just tagging

along. The first 6 months is the most difficult, if you get through it well, you will be fine (general agreement from respondents).

Not too much on regulations; they may feel that it's like back home again. More on how people behave here; don't say you can't do this or you have to do that but say people here do this and people here don't do that.

It is heartening to discover that most of the students enjoyed themselves here and would call Christchurch home. They found Christchurch to be a nice place and their stay here to be enjoyable. A few students, however, felt that their roots were still in Asia.

I would call Christchurch home (many years to the comment).

My heart is here but my roots are there (back in own country).

As discussed in the methodology section, the Malaysians, Singaporeans and Filipino students were grouped together because they are all from South East Asia, but more importantly, they live in multicultural societies in which English is widely used. It is not surprising, therefore, that this group of students experienced the least amount of difficulty in adjusting to the New Zealand lifestyle.

Both Malaysia and Singapore were former colonies of the British and gained their independence less than forty years ago. Although the Americans were not successful in formally colonizing the Philippines, their influence in the country cannot be over-emphasized. These countries, therefore, have all inherited a western-style government, even though political power there is not as diffused as in most western countries, and English is widely used in government, commerce and social activities.

More significantly, however, is the fact that their societies are very multicultural, which makes transition into another culture much easier for them. Singapore, for example, has four official languages (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) and all students are effectively bilingual, if not multilingual. It is compulsory for all students to take English and one other official

language, and many students choose a third language from either Japanese, German, Spanish or French.

Racial harmony is given top national priority because it is critical to the survival of these countries. Similar to Singapore, Malaysia also has the same three major races of people (Chinese, Malays and Indians) with vastly different cultures. Following the racial riot of 1969, the government formulated the Sixth Malaysian Economic Plan with the explicit objective of achieving more equity among the different races. Having lived most of their lives among different cultures, Singaporeans, Malaysians and Filipinos have developed a better understanding and willingness to accept different cultural beliefs and practices.

In addition, the Malaysian, Singaporean and Filipino communities in Christchurch are very active and fairly well organized. The Singapore Club, for example, has four issues of newsletters a year and these are sent to the New Zealand High Commission in Singapore and a copy of the most recent issue is displayed on its notice board. Any one applying for a visa to New Zealand is likely to know of the Club and many newcomers contact the Club before their arrival, although a few choose to remain apart.

It is therefore not surprising that most of the students enjoyed school here, and for the fee-paying students, their stay with their host-families. In general, they experienced relatively fewer problems in making friends with either Asians or Kiwis. However, like other Asians, when they needed help, they tend to seek assistance only from family members or close friends. Their main complaints revolved around the lack of public transportation and nightlife in Christchurch.

The Korean Focus Group

As expected, none of the Korean students in the group were born in New Zealand and there were quite a number of fee-paying students. Again, most of the students did not have any input into the decision to come to New Zealand.

I came here before with my parents (tour); they want me to study here.

I was (supposed) to go the USA but it's quite complicated to go up there, so I decided to go to New Zealand first; then I decided to stay here.

My parents want (me) to study in New Zealand.

I traveled once to New Zealand. It's quite nice.

My father's friend lives here.

With the exception of two students who had been here at a young age, most of the Korean students felt homesick initially. Loneliness was the main cause of the desolation but the lack of English proficiency also contributed significantly to their isolation induced despair. This phenomenon was particularly evident in female students, with a few of them on the verge of tears when the topic was discussed. This desolation also hit a very sensitive spot of a fairly shy male student.

Homesick; no one to talk to.

Very homesick; want to go home; don't know why I came.

If I study or play with my friends, I forget about that.

I was very homesick; I call my parents; they don't really understand; I feel very painful in my heart.

The sense of despair was very strong in students who were staying with New Zealanders because they could not communicate due to their poor command of English.

Translated: I've great difficulties with English; I cannot talk to my host-family.

It (home-stay) was very hard for me; my English is not good.

Many of the students will also have problems making Kiwi friends because of their low proficiency in English and their keen awareness of their cultural differences.

You feel like they don't want you here (several agreed).

I talk to representative of the Korean students; we got on well; I have friends now.

Food is a problem; what we eat, people "Errgh" (sound of disgust);

Also holding hands and things (several agreed).

Pointing; it's not really bad in my country (many agreed).

As expected, none of the students consulted with the school counsellor on problems other than their difficulties in coping with their studies, a problem that they tend to discuss more with their teachers instead.

I talk study things with teacher; sometimes the counsellor.

I talk (on the phone) to my parents in Korea.

In school, I talk to teacher on subjects and things. I found in Papanui High School, teacher help really good. I was about to change my school to private school but I decided not to go; I like the school because of the teacher.

Most students felt that their teachers did not treat them differently from the other students in class and some teachers in fact gave them extra help with their studies. The selection of appropriate subjects also had a significant impact on the students' abilities to cope with their studies because of the differential demand on English.

Geography and history is very difficult for me.

I take English, Music and Photography; Photography is fun; I spent a lot time on English; I studied very hard; I feel tired all the time.

Besides the language barrier, cultural difference is another major obstacle to a smooth transition for the students.

In Korea, we don't talk to teachers.

In Korea, we go to school early in the morning (before 8.00 am) and stop at 5.00 pm; then we go for more classes (tuition classes) until 9 or 10 o'clock.

We have forty something students in class (in Korea); 50.

In Korea, teacher talk, students listen; here, student talk, teachers listen; some students very rude to them (teachers).

We don't ask questions in Korea; people say, "Oh, he's up to something."

Again, except the two who had been in New Zealand for a much longer time and can speak well enough to be understood easily, most students did not participate in other school activities although the boys did play some games occasionally. Badminton and basketball are also the common sport for them. Most of the female students did not like sports and did not like to participate in activities that few Koreans were involved in unless some close Kiwi friends are involved.

I play badminton.

I don't like sports; the Kiwis are very good.

Korean girls don't like PE.

Last year, we had to walk like 15 km; it was really freezing; I didn't enjoy that.

I went to camp; I didn't feel very comfortable there; very lonely; in city, I can talk to my friends.

Last year, we had an Asian festival; I enjoyed it very much.

I am very proud of my school; we have Asian festivals.

Most students had been to many of the places of interest in Christchurch including the Art Centre and the museum. Even though they liked these places, all of them found Christchurch to be very boring and provided several suggestions to make Christchurch a better place to stay.

Fireworks (several agreements).

More activities for teenagers.

Most girls like shopping; more malls.

Karaoke; concerts; more movies.

Amusement parks; fun parks; Rainbow's End.

Get more people into the city, more life.

Make more shops, especially at night.

Make it close, hard to get there.

The buses; sometimes, we take 8 to 10 buses.

Most of the Korean students would like to return home after their studies even though they found New Zealand to be a very beautiful country. This was true even for students whose parents had migrated here with them. They felt that their parents were here because of their studies and they wanted to go back after they had completed their studies. Again, most students felt that New Zealand was a nice place to retire in but not suitable for young people.

Most Korean people including my parents feel that New Zealand is a very beautiful country; it is good for people to spend the rest of their life here (retire here); but it is very boring for young people.

I've been to America; it's a very different country; very large country; many, many cultures there.

New Zealand not multicultural; some people can't be accepted; like Asians; not mix easy.

If you have money, they welcome you; if you have no money, they kick you out.

Even though the Koreans share some similarities with the Chinese, they have a very distinctly different language and culture. The Koreans are also much more homogeneous and mono-cultural than the Chinese; and although Seoul City is very cosmopolitan, English is not as widely used in Korea as in many parts of South East Asia. It is therefore expected that among the three main groups of Asian, the Koreans will experience relatively more difficulties in adjusting to the New Zealand lifestyle.

One very striking issue raised by the Korean students concerns the assignment of students with very poor English proficiency to Kiwi home-stays, with very little support from the Korean community. The short-term effects appear to be very devastating to the students and the merits of this strategy in the longer term may be debatable. The sense of loneliness and

desolation were clearly projected by many of these students and the emotional scars inflicted may be difficult to heal.

The school coordinators responsible for assigning home-stays may want to take into consideration the level of language proficiency and length of stay the students had in New Zealand when selecting their home-stays. If the student possesses a minimum level of communication skill, then staying with a Kiwi family may accelerate her learning but if she can not speak a word of English, assigning her to a Kiwi family that can not speak their language, may be counterproductive.

The Korean community in Christchurch is relatively large and fairly well organized. Incoming Korean students should be informed of the existence and contact persons from the Korean Society. If the students felt the need, they can contact the Korean community for help. Members of the Korean Society can then provide the proper orientation for these new arrivals. Even though the students are assigned to Kiwi host-families, their transition into the New Zealand life can be much more pleasant with the support of the Korean community.

Like the other Asian groups, Korean students overwhelmingly feel that Christchurch is a very boring place. They reinforce the common notion, at least among Asians, that Christchurch is a good place for retirement but not for the young people. Having more activities, particularly in the evenings, also rank high in their suggestions as well as improving the public transport system.

Discussion with the Smaller Groups

Five discussion sessions were conducted with the secondary groups of Asians who have fairly significant representation in the high schools in Christchurch. These groups comprised the Japanese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Thais and Indonesians with the Japanese forming the biggest proportion. The results from the five separate discussions were summarized together due to resource constraint and also to reflect their overall significance in Christchurch as compared to the three major groups of Asians.

It should be noted, however, that these groups are very different politically and culturally. For example, the Japanese have a very distinct culture from the other Southeast Asian countries. Furthermore, many of the Vietnamese and Cambodians in Christchurch are political refugees who did not migrate willingly and face a very different set of transitional problems.

As expected, there were a wide variety of reasons for coming to New Zealand. Unlike the other Asian groups, a few of the Cambodians and Vietnamese were refugees who had never been to school before they were forced out of their homelands. Most of them, nevertheless, had a very good impression of New Zealand.

*In my junior high school (in Japan), there was an English teacher from New Zealand.
I was interested in studying English, so I wanted to come to New Zealand.*

*My mother (from Japan) came here for sightseeing 2 years ago; she liked it; I didn't
care where I go; I just wanted to study English.*

War (in Cambodia); no war here.

Brother come before.

My friend study here; contact her.

In general, the students faced acculturation problems similar to those experienced by the Koreans and Chinese students. As expected, most of the students experienced a varying

degree of difficulties in learning the English language, and their lack of proficiency in English is considered to be a major problem in adapting to the New Zealand life quickly. In addition, several of these students, especially the Japanese, experienced the same sense of despair expressed by the some of the Korean students.

When I first came, I couldn't speak any English at all; my home-stay is English; it was very difficult. I cried a lot.

Don't understand English; no one comfort.

English is very hard.

We find the Kiwi accent quite difficult.

We don't know English; we have to learn by ourselves; teachers help us.

When you are young (9-11 years old), it's easier to learn; the first few months or a year was very hard; after that you learn; you can speak English; not much; it's hard for old people.

Again, the mistake of assigning a foreign student who cannot speak elementary English to a Kiwi home-stay, without support from the ethnic community, is glaringly obvious. Another obtrusive problem raised by a student was the comparative and divisive approach taken by one particular home-stay towards the students living with them. This unhealthy approach to relationships is quite common and should be actively discouraged. Nevertheless, a few students found their home-stay approachable and helpful.

I talk to home-stay (about problems); sometimes they help.

Good home-stay; have young child to talk to and learn English from.

My home-stay; they talk bad things about the Korean girl to me and talk bad things about me to her.

The problems created by the mismatch between students and home-stays has to be considered together with the assignments of guardians because the problems seem to be particularly acute when the students cannot communicate with both parties. Almost all the students, in these groups and also those in the previous groups, who are not happy with their home-stays are not happy with their guardians either. On the other hand, most of the students who are happy with their guardians are happy with their home-stays, and the few who are not happy with their home-stays were able to get their home-stays changed through their guardians. Finally, students who are happy with their home-stays without much assistance from their guardians viewed the guardians as expensive and serving few purposes.

My guardian is expensive and did nothing for me.

My guardian lived in Japan for 2 years; he's easy to talk to; help with my homework and other things.

First guardian was Kiwi; couldn't speak to her. New guardian now is good.

My guardians helped me a lot; they are my parent's friends.

My guardian arranged my home-stay; help me with Visa and takes me to school.

My guardian visits sometimes; help with problem; they speak Thai.

The students' lack of proficiency in English resulted in some difficulties in coping with their studies, at least initially. These difficulties, fortunately, appear to diminish over time for most of the students.

It's quite hard to understand what the teacher assigns (homework); it's getting better now.

We study 16 subjects in Indonesia; here 5 subjects; it's quite difficult here because we are not using our own language.

Teachers; they talk too fast

Last year hard; this year better.

First year need help; after that can learn by self.

In addition to language problems, cultural differences also contributed significantly to the difficulties experienced by many students in coping with their studies. An interesting point brought out by a few Indonesian and Thai students, which may be applicable to many students from South East Asia, is their problem in coping with winter. One problem concerns the school uniform being unable to provide sufficient warmth during winter, and students are discouraged to wear additional clothes. Another predicament concerns the short hours of daylight in winter, which may cause certain problems for the biological clocks of some students.

The teachers (in Cambodia) are very strict; they hit you if you don't listen.

Uniforms are very expensive; cost about \$1,000.

Even if it is cold, you can't wear more clothes; you have to wear only the uniforms.

Winter is cold; it's hard to get up when it's dark.

Consistent with the opinions expressed by the other Asian students, most of the students in these groups also felt that they were treated fairly by the majority of their teachers.

Not very different from Kiwis.

I think they understand the way we struggle.

Some of the teachers knows we are foreigners; ask us “do you understand, if any problems, come see us.”

As a result of the language and cultural barriers, many students in these groups experienced difficulties in making friends with Kiwi students. Several of the students from South East Asia, unfortunately, experienced a fair amount of discrimination.

Make Asian friends first; don't know how to talk to Kiwis; like to make Kiwi friends.

For my survival, I thought I had to make Kiwi friends; I tried very hard but they find me quite strange; it's easier to make friends with Asians.

When we do talk; some Kiwis make rude noises.

It's easy to make friends with other races; it's hard to make friends with Kiwis; they ignore you.

Some Kiwis get drunk and they throw bottles from their cars; it's very difficult for Asians.

A lot of people (Kiwis) in school swears at me; sometimes, during basketball games, people hassle me; bug me; sometimes, I very angry.

Some people don't like Asians; use bad language; use (finger- vulgar gesture).

Tried to talk to Kiwis; they push me around; they are enemies of Asian.

I hold hands with my Asian girl friend; some Kiwi girl ask, “Are you lesbian?”

Fortunately, several of the students also found some Kiwis to be friendly and approachable.

Some Kiwis are friendly; you have to talk to them first; then they will talk to you.

Easier to make friends with Kiwis, some Asians can't talk English properly; always talk in their own languages.

Consistent with the typical Asian way of life, most of the students share their problems mainly with their families and close friends. Several of the students, however, did seek help from their guardians and teachers. Again, most of these students did not feel comfortable talking to their school counsellors.

My teacher helped me find where I can get Asian things; what kind of sports I like; where to get uniforms; that kind of things.

My Japanese friends help me.

My Kiwi friend help me; she can speak a little Japanese.

I pray to God.

I picked up the phone and call my parents.

People from church help with homework.

I talk to my principal; one guy in class was very mean.

Keep problems to myself.

Call overseas teacher (in Thailand); talk about my problems.

Again, the general lack of interest in many of the school activities is quite apparent among these students although several of the students, mainly boys, do play some common games like basketball and badminton. Occasionally, when encouraged by their teachers or close friends, some of the students do participate in other activities.

Not interested in school activities; not enough time.

My teacher asked me to join the band.

Play badminton at the YMCA with friends.

Play golf with friends.

Participate in fair.

Hockey; badminton.

It is surprising that none of the Indonesian students attended any of the activities organized by the City Council. Similarly, most of the Japanese students did not participate in these activities either. On the other hand, many of these students had attended activities organized by other Asian groups. The majority of the students, however, like shopping in the malls and several had been to the Art Centre, museum, Hagley Park and the Ice-skating rink.

Never attended (activities organized by City Council); it's too cold.

Never heard of it (activities organized by City Council).

Boring; only been to Christmas in the park.

Even though some of the students experienced a varying degree of difficulties initially, most of the students found their stay in Christchurch to be quite pleasant. Nevertheless, like the other Asian students, the majority of the Japanese, Indonesian and Thai students, except the Cambodian and Vietnamese students, would choose to return home after completing their studies. The main complaints, as usual, are that Christchurch is very boring for young people and the prospect of getting a job after graduation is quite slim.

Dad wants to stay here; I would go home to Jakarta; like to stay here and finish school; go to University of Canterbury.

Want to stay after study but very difficult to find job.

I would like to visit my country (Cambodia) but not to live there.

I like to visit Cambodia; not to live; too dangerous.

Will go back to Thailand for university; feel homesick; here too quiet.

Will go back to Thailand after university; New Zealand is nice; it's good when you retire; not for young people; too quiet.

The students provided many suggestions to the local authorities and other stakeholders on how to improve Christchurch and make it less boring. The top priorities are improving the public transport, having more amusement parks and entertainment centres, developing more places of interests and allowing more nightlife.

Improve the transport; when I was in Singapore, the bus came every minute; you don't have to wait; taking bus is no problem. Here, you have to take a bus to the square then take a bus to school. It's very difficult, especially in winter.

Night market; everything close at 6 o'clock.

Rainbows End; Disneyland.

In winter, if we have to stay back in school, it gets very dark at 5 o'clock; it's very quiet; very scary to wait for bus.

City is too dark at night, especially for ladies.

Give them a house (for the refugees); help them learn English.

Tell newcomers about the fishing law; in Thailand and Auckland (refugee camps), we have book to tell us what to do.

Hong Kong movies; translated into Cambodian or Thai.

Bring more people here; too quiet.

More activities; fun parks.

As discussed earlier, these groups of students are very diverse in culture and care should be exercised in interpreting the results. Although the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Thai are relatively similar, they are very distinct from the Japanese, and fairly distinct from the Indonesians. Furthermore, many of the Vietnamese and Cambodians are political refugees who had escaped the war in their countries to come to New Zealand.

Despite the diversity, most of the students were glad to be here even though many experienced severe problems initially. With the exception of the Cambodians and Vietnamese, most of the students would like to return home after their studies due to two primary reasons. First, like all the other Asian students, most of these students felt that Christchurch is a very boring place. Second, many of the students felt that there is a lack of career opportunities for them in New Zealand.

An interesting topic highlighted by the discussions revolves around the assignment of home-stays and guardians to students who do not have sufficient English proficiency. It is clear that assigning these students to home-stays and guardians who are both Kiwis, without knowledge of their language or culture, can cause severe trauma to the students. The school coordinators should thus bear this information in mind and perhaps seek the support of the various Asian community groups to assist newcomers in their acculturation process.

ESOL Teachers Focus Group.

Input from teachers who dealt with Asian high school students on a regular basis, particularly teachers who had constant contact with newcomers, were gathered to provide the project team with a more balanced view of the issues facing these students in Christchurch. Six ESOL teachers were, therefore, invited to provide their general assessment of the language proficiency of Asian students and the difficulties faced by both the students and the teachers in the transition process.

The general consensus among the ESOL teachers was that about 90% of the incoming Asian students would require some help to cope with the English language. In general, most of these students would be able to cope with their normal schoolwork within six to twelve months. However, about 10% of the students have serious difficulties and require much more assistance, which is normally beyond the scope of most ESOL programmes provided in the high schools in Christchurch.

There's a wide range of abilities (general agreement).

About 90% would need some kind of help (general agreement).

I would say about 10% can't cope. Some don't even have their own language mastered (several agreements).

Listening skill develop in 6-12 months.

Most experience problems in first year.

Most of them find verbalizing the biggest problem.

The level of assistance and difficulties will depend on the students' background. All non-English speaking students go into the ESOL programmes. Most schools tend to introduce these students to one or two other subjects at a time. A typical student usually starts with ESOL and Mathematics, and for some students, either Art or a science subject, for the first

school term. The ESOL programme usually takes up to twelve hours per week for ten weeks. Most students are able to proceed to taking the normal load of classes after attending the ESOL programme, even though many would take the ESOL programme again.

Most students go straight into their classes but many come back.

Can set up ESOL as an optional subject for 2 years. It would be better for some of the students.

On going support is provided by the ESOL teacher; ESOL students get more assistance than the academically disadvantaged Kiwi students.

Learning language is a very academic exercise and is highly related to the students' general abilities (several agreements).

We have a screening test to screen out the low achievers.

Sometimes, it is difficult to test their general abilities if their communication skills aren't good; it will be good to have an IQ test in their own language.

All our students stay in the boarding house. They are exposed to 24 hours of English and are forced to cope with it.

Approximately 10% of the ESOL students, however, require much more help. Many of these students do not speak a word of English and the ESOL programme is not appropriate for them. These students require specialized language classes, preferably in the bilingual environment with a very small teacher to student ratio. This type of service can not be efficiently provided by the high schools. Students in this category should therefore be admitted to a professional language school to learn the basic communication skills in English before being admitted to high schools.

If they can't speak a word of English, our programmes are not appropriate for them; they need ESOL teachers who are bilingual or have special teachers aides in class.

Mixing of races in ESOL classes can also be counterproductive.

The programmes in private language schools are more fun and more interesting for these students.

Students are assessed after the ESOL programmes. Currently all students are tested but each school has its own set of tests. The ultimate aim is to get the students to the level they want to be at, and for most Asian students, this means the ability to achieve an acceptable score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) that are required for entrance into universities or polytechnics. Passing the tests also give the students a sense of achievement.

The road to achieving proficiency in English is not smooth for many students. Besides, language difficulties, these students also have to contend with cultural barriers, and the process is complicated by the high expectations Asian parents placed on their children. Sometimes, it may facilitate the students' adjustments if they were to start in a class a year below their age.

It takes a lot of courage to cope with that kind of problems.

Asian parents often place unrealistically high expectations on their children. Most parents do not want their children to go into a class below their age group. Because of their language deficiency, many students are one year behind their NZ counterparts in learning abilities; it may be better to start them a year below their age.

The emotional and psychological effects of those who lagged behind their Kiwi counterparts are immense; some students start swearing and others sleep in class.

One boy shaved all his hair to show his shame; he saw it also as representing a new start, a new growth.

Many of the problems faced by Asian students are also experienced by other students simply because they are teenagers. Some of the problems, however, can be specific to Asians only.

The fact that they are teenagers causes a lot of problems; there's not this give and take with teens.

Often, misbehavior is a cry for help; when they are disciplined, they know that someone cares.

Some often wonder why they are here.

Culturally, they are not used to expressing themselves.

Some students are afraid to go to classes if there aren't others who are from their cultures there.

Many of the students find Christchurch to be boring.

Many are used to going out late on busy streets.

Whether generic to all teenagers or specific to Asians only, there are no simple answers to smooth the transition of Asian students into the New Zealand school environment.

It is more likely that students will relax and make friends with other ESOL students before they get to know New Zealanders.

They are very close knit outside of class but many are desperate to make Kiwi friends.

It may be easier for them to integrate in smaller schools.

Sport is a good way to integrate but many are not keen on learning sports.

Boys are more inclined to participate in sports; table tennis, badminton and basketball are the most popular among Asians.

We teach them New Zealand lifestyle and customs as part of our ESOL programme.

Besides creating problems for students in school, cultural differences can also pose serious barriers with their home-stays. The relationship between host families and student differs a lot and sometimes, a separate guardian can be useful. In fact, one school believes that the guardian should not be someone who is staying with the student. Usually, a coordinator in school will choose the home-stays for the students, and the parents can choose the guardian, but some parents will insist on choosing the home-stays as well. It is hard for the school to know who is appropriate for the students but most schools have some guidelines on screening home-stays. Schools can consult with the parents to change the home-stays but ultimately the parents will have the final say. Fortunately, 90% of the home-stays went well.

Some students go home from school and straight to sleep; they try to avoid dinners because speaking English is difficult for them.

We have a very good student, he was sent home by his so-called overly strict host parent and guardian who is a close friend of the student's father; what rights do the student have in this instance?

There was a 14 years old boy who was left alone in his townhouse because mom had gone home to visit sick relatives. The school or someone should be made aware of this.

The ESOL teachers also provided some valuable suggestions to facilitate the transition for Asian students and improve the quality of their stay in Christchurch.

Parents should be more realistic in their expectations; they should take the school's advice; let the students take it more slowly and better results will usually follow.

Organize more social events for the students; nightspots that are well supervised; more fun parks.

Most ESOL teachers are like mums and counsellors to the students; the majority of ESOL teachers are women.

Asian youth workers; would be nice to have one for each culture.

Educate the parents about life in New Zealand; to look at their needs; schools often become an advisory service for parents.

It is interesting to note that the views expressed by the ESOL teachers were generally very similar to those gathered from the students. This consistency implies that the concerns, gathered by the project team, were good indicators of the issues facing Asian high school students in Christchurch.

ESOL teachers, however, also expressed some concerns about the screening process when admitting newcomers. Students requiring a significant amount of help in their English proficiency should be encouraged to develop this core competency in a professional language school before they are admitted into the high school.

Another interesting issue, as pointed out by the ESOL teachers, is the impact of acculturation of parents on the ease of transition for the students. The relatively high level of pressure Asian parents impose, especially academically, on their children may do more harm than good in the New Zealand environment. Ironically, many Asians came to New Zealand because of the relatively low pressure in schools here.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Unlike North America or even Europe, Asia is a diverse place housing people of different races, religions, languages, political systems, social structures, and economic development. On one end of the spectrum, countries like Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore, are included in the top ten richest and strongest economies of the world. On the other end, however, are some of the poorest, most underdeveloped and war-torn countries in the world such as Cambodia, Vietnam and Burma. Conscious effort is therefore needed by anyone who is dealing with Asians to avoid the fallacy of erroneously stereo-typing them.

This diversity is exciting and challenging, but it also poses a serious problem in conducting research into Asian issues. To obtain a good representation across the different groups of Asians will necessitate a trade-off in the depth of analysis due to resource constraints. This study has opted for the former concern and focused on exploring the issues and concerns of a large segment of the Asian population in the high schools in the Northwest region of Christchurch. Some of the issues raised are quite generic to most Asians whereas others are fairly specific to selected groups of students.

As an illustration, consider the variety of influences that lead the students, or their parents, to choose New Zealand as the place for their education. Several Cambodians and Vietnamese students, for example, came to New Zealand under the refugees programme, a response that is specific to these people alone and would not be applicable to most of the other Asian students. An even more specific case was that of a Japanese girl who chose New Zealand because her English teacher in Japan was from New Zealand.

Even though it is very specific, the second case is worth noting because it can easily become a more generic reason if more Kiwis are willing to go overseas to teach. This is quite plausible since the job market in New Zealand for teachers has been rather tight over the last few years while the corresponding market in some Asian countries has been relatively good. Over 15,000 New Zealanders are currently living and working in Asia (Gibson, 1998), and if they are good ambassadors, they will be able to help recruit more students from Asia to come to New Zealand for their studies.

Some of the common reasons provided by the students for coming to New Zealand included the decision of their parents to migrate to New Zealand, the presence of friends or relatives in New Zealand and the favourable impressions from previous visits by either themselves or their parents. The last reason showed that the tourism and education industries appeared to be complementary in nature and should work more closely to provide support for each other in attracting both tourists and fee-paying students to New Zealand. Also, the positive word-of-mouth from their friends and relatives who have studied or are studying here contributed significantly to many students' decision to come to New Zealand. It is therefore extremely important that the needs of current students are well catered for, and understanding their concerns is a crucial first step in achieving this objective.

Regardless of the reasons for coming to New Zealand, most of the students had very little input into the decision to go overseas, although several had some say in choosing New Zealand specifically. Their feelings about coming to New Zealand ranged from bewilderment and despair to passive acceptance and obvious relief. Many of the students felt very homesick and often wondered why they were here but some of the students were just glad to be away from either the war in their countries or the tremendous pressure in schools there.

A large part of the negative feelings may be generated by the lack of input from the students into the decision to come to New Zealand. It is difficult, however, for the school to discuss this issue with potential students before they arrive in New Zealand. One approach worth considering is to require the students to submit a short essay discussing their reasons for choosing the school and the objectives they hope to achieve. A potential problem with this is that the school cannot be certain that the essay is actually written by the student.

Irrespective of its authorship, the school counsellor could then review this document together with the students when they arrived. This process would hopefully be able to instill a sense of direction and purpose for the students and channel their energies into more positive uses. In addition, it may be a good way to develop a rapport between the school counsellors and students so that the students would feel more comfortable approaching the counsellor with their problems subsequently.

The diversity in their background is also reflected by the varying degrees of difficulties the students experienced in adapting to the New Zealand environment. The two main contributors to the difference in the level of difficulties encountered by the students are their proficiency in English and their ability to adapt to cultural differences. Students from multicultural societies where English is widely used will therefore experience the least amount of difficulty in acculturation.

On the positive end of the spectrum are students from Singapore where English is one of the official languages and the main medium of instruction in all schools. Students from this country possess a high level of English proficiency, followed by students from the Philippines and Malaysia where English is also widely used. It is evident from the focus group with these students that communication is not a major problem in adapting to the New Zealand environment. These students are likely to form a large portion of the 10% of the Asian students who do not require much help from the ESOL programmes.

The majority of the Asian students, however, were deemed by the ESOL teachers to require a varying degree of help from the ESOL programmes. The amount of help the students needed depends on their background and learning abilities, with the majority of the students needing help in oral communication. Fortunately, most of these students were able to achieve a requisite level of English proficiency within six to twelve months, to enable them to proceed through the normal classes. These students usually had some exposure to and interest in the English language, and had at least an acceptable level of general learning ability.

The students' roads to achieving satisfactory results in their classes are sometimes paved with unintentional obstacles. Although most of their teachers are cognizant of the students' initial struggle with the language and are indeed very helpful, some teachers have an unrealistic expectation from students. At times, this mismatch in the teacher's expectation and the student's performance can create undue stress for both the teacher and the student. It is a difficult task, in general, for teachers to set the right levels of expectation for their students. Fortunately, the typical class in New Zealand is relatively small and the number of foreign students, especially newcomers, is quite small. This problem, therefore, is manageable once the teachers are aware of the need to adjust their expectations accordingly. It was heartening, nevertheless, to learn that all the students felt that their teachers treated them fairly.

An interesting approach utilized in some of the schools is to assign these students to a limited number of classes initially. A typical student is enrolled in the ESOL programme and one or two other classes that required a lower level of English proficiency such as mathematics, science, music, photography or craft. This approach should be recommended since it appeared to be fairly effective in easing the transition of newcomers, especially in the first semester.

A more comprehensive approach is to allow the students to simultaneously sit in or audit one or two other classes without the pressure of a formal assessment. This will expose the student to the materials covered in these classes and provide more opportunities for them to learn English. It will also facilitate a smoother transition for the student from studying a limited number of course to taking the full load.

Often, it may facilitate the students' adjustment if they were to start in a class below their age. However, most Asian parents did not like the idea because they tended to place a relatively high expectation, at least academically, on their children. Therefore, an orientation programme should also be conducted for the parents to help them understand the New Zealand education system and assist them in making the right choice for the benefit of their children.

There are, however, about 10% of the students who are considered by the ESOL teachers to suffer significant problems in learning the English language. Many of these students cannot speak a word of English and require special help that is beyond the scope of the ESOL programmes offered by most high schools. These students should therefore be admitted to professional language schools to acquire a rudimentary level of English before being enrolled in the normal high schools.

A related issue raised by the ESOL teachers was the change in the behaviour of several Asian students who fell behind their Kiwi counterparts in class. These reactions ranged from the simple acts of falling asleep in class or cutting classes to the more dramatic displays like shaving their heads. For obvious reasons, these actions were not discussed by the students, but they are of significant interest to both their parents and the schools. Both students and parents should be counselled so that such negative outcomes can be avoided. Counsellors, however, need to be aware that many Asian parents tend to rely too heavily on disciplining their children

instead of tackling the cause of such misbehaviour. A more balanced approach in helping the students must be taken by the parents and the school administration.

Students who are extremely weak in English can be identified, before being admitted into the local high schools, by either a more rigorous check on their background or requiring them to take a simple test. Such screening processes are conducted in some high schools but not in others. This information is important in helping the student learn English effectively, guiding the student's overall course of study, and assisting the school to choose the appropriate guardians and home-stays for the student.

One of the most striking issues raised by several students involves the assignment of students who cannot speak a word of English to Kiwi home-stays without much support from the Asian community. The short-term effects appear to be very devastating to the students and probably to the home-stays as well. The sense of loneliness and desolation were clearly projected by several of these students and the emotional scars inflicted may be difficult to heal.

The problems created by the mismatch between students and home-stays should be considered together with the assignments of guardians because the problems seemed to be particularly acute when the students could not communicate with both parties. The majority of the students who were not happy with their home-stays were not happy with their guardians either. On the other hand, most of the students who were happy with their guardians were happy with their home-stays, and the few who were not happy with their home-stays were able to get their home-stays changed through their guardians. Finally, students who were happy with their home-stays without much assistance from their guardians viewed the guardians as expensive and serving little purpose.

Even though the students might be assigned to Kiwi host families, their transition into the New Zealand life could be made more pleasant with the support of the Asian communities. Schools should contact the local Asian community leaders to assist newcomers in adjusting to the New Zealand environment. Many of the Asian communities in Christchurch were very active and well organized, and were able and willing to assist any newcomers who required some kind of assistance.

One suggestion raised by an ESOL teacher is to recruit an Asian youth coordinator for each ethnic group. Although this suggestion represents an expensive proposal beyond the means of most schools, the idea of an Asian youth coordinator is worth pursuing at a smaller scale. The city council could employ one coordinator who would serve as the liaison between the schools, student volunteers, and the Asian community groups to provide the appropriate support for new Asian students.

A list of the ethnic clubs and student volunteers should be provided to all newcomers in a booklet that will explain to them some of the relevant issues including common Kiwi slang and cultural differences, the location of relevant facilities and important rules and regulations. One suggestion regarding the information booklet that is worth considering is to present the rules and regulations in terms of differences in behaviour and expectation between the local people and people in Asia, which may be more palatable to young people.

From some teachers' perspective, the fact that they are teenagers is sufficient enough to cause a lot of problems. Teenagers tend to be more idealistic and less willing to compromise, and often, their misbehaviour is a cry for attention and help. When these misbehaviours are dealt with effectively, the students know that someone cared. Again, a balanced approach between discipline and guidance should be adopted because teenagers are very sensitive and react strongly to one-sided treatments.

Several of the problems encountered by Asian students, however, were more specific to them because of their different cultural background. Asian students were more accustomed to a one way student-teacher relationship that involved little input from the students. The classroom atmosphere that most Asians were exposed to was relatively more serious and working hard was often encouraged and rewarded. Students were seldom encouraged to query the teacher or provide their opinions, and if the students did not understand the material taught in class, they often had to engage tuition teachers to explain the material to them after school. Private tuition and cram school in the evenings are common in Asia because students face tremendous pressure, both in school and at home, to perform well academically.

This pressure is, in part, due to the differences in the value society placed on education and also on the perceptions of rights, privileges and responsibilities of the individuals and the

society. In Singapore, for example, the government is very concerned about the outcomes and performances of the public sector. Unfortunately, outcomes in the education system tend to be measured solely by the students' performance in national examinations because they are the most "objective" and cost effective means of measurement. To get to college, a student has to consistently perform well in a series of "elimination" examinations beginning with the first in primary three. Thus, it is not surprising that students from Singapore and several other Asian countries like Korea and Japan performed extremely well in international tests in both mathematics and science.

In contrast, the New Zealand education system is relatively kinder and gentler to the students, who tend to enjoy their education much more than their counterparts in Asia. In particular, most of the Asian students in New Zealand like the more practical approach adopted in their courses, especially the field trips organised by the schools. Some students, however, feel that there is a lack of academically more demanding classes and are also worried about the lack of homework to reinforce their learning.

Although most Asian students were not as devoted to sports as the average Kiwi students, many of them, especially the boys, did participate in sporting activities. The most popular sports among the Asian students were basketball and badminton, and several students were also interested in table tennis, soccer, volleyball, golf and tennis. One frequently raised concern was the availability of sports facilities to the average student. For examples, the rings in the basketball courts and the nets in the tennis courts were often removed after the school team had finished their practice, and most schools did not have tables for table tennis.

Both the schools and the community boards could contribute towards making these sports facilities more accessible to the average student. Basketball courts, for example, were available in most of the schools but their uses were often restricted. These restrictions could easily be relaxed, at least for a few hours on selected days of the week, so that the students could enjoy the game at leisure with their friends, and the schools could utilize their available resources more efficiently. These expected gains should outweigh the small cost incurred, especially if the schools in the same community ward could rotate among themselves in providing the service. To minimize the costs, responsible student volunteers or members of the school

Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) could be used to supervise these sessions and ensure that the facilities were well cared for.

An interesting suggestion proposed by a student was to have coaches teach students how to play the various games at the introductory level instead of just coaching the various school teams. Increasing the accessibility of both the facilities and coaches would benefit all students, not just Asian students. By getting more students involved in a wider variety of sports would also help to bridge the difference between students with different backgrounds and preferences; more Asian students could learn to appreciate cricket and rugby, and more Kiwi students could pick up table tennis or badminton.

Besides sports, many Asian students also participated in other activities organized by the school. By far, the most popular activity in school was the international festivals and many students had expressed their appreciation of the effort their school had invested in organising such events. The Asian community leaders had also expressed their interests in participating in such events. Care, however, should be exercised in order not to simply stage cultural shows that are overly traditional or fitting the stereotype images of Asians. Instead, it should also take the opportunity to highlight some of the cultural differences that might create problems during the normal course of interaction between Asians and Kiwis.

Apart from the international festivals, several students also took part in their school plays, and joined clubs and societies like the Chess Club, Air Training Corp, International Club and Students Against Drunk Driving. Nevertheless, many Asian students, especially female students, did not participate in the activities organized by their schools. Unlike the typical Kiwi student, most of these students preferred indoor activities such as playing computer games, practicing the piano, watching television, playing chess (both Chinese and International), going to the libraries, hanging out in the malls, and visiting cafes.

One reason, given by a subgroup of Asian students from Southeast Asia, for not participating in outdoor activities was their adversity towards the cold weather. To put this in proper perspective, one must remember that these students came from tropical countries and were not accustomed to the cold weather. Ironically, winter might be the least troublesome season because even the Kiwis realized that it was cold. The temperatures in spring and fall, and even

in summer, are considered to be relatively cold when compared to the norm in Southeast Asia.¹⁹ Therefore, even though the schools might consider it warm enough to organise certain activities, many Asian students felt that it was still too cold to participate in outdoor activities. Interestingly, despite being accustomed to the winter in Korea, one student still complained about participating in outdoor activities during the colder seasons.

The cold weather not only discouraged participation in outdoor activities but also created several problems for some students. One problem concerned the school uniform being unable to provide sufficient warmth during winter, and students were discouraged to wear additional clothes. Another predicament concerned the short hours of daylight in winter, which might cause certain problems for the biological clocks of some students who found it difficult to get up in the morning when it was still dark.

Whereas there was little the schools could do about the students' biological clock, they could certainly be more sensitive to the needs of some students to keep themselves warm. This insensitivity had also been a major concern of many Asian parents, especially those with children in primary schools. A possible solution was to educate both the students and their parents about alternative means of keeping the students warm such as using thermal underwear that would not interfere with the external appearance of the students. This approach would satisfy both the needs of the students to keep warm and the policy of the schools to require their students to wear the proper uniforms. Also, schools should allow students to don their winter uniforms for a longer period than currently stipulated.

In addition to their studies and participation in other activities organized by the schools, the cultural difference between Asian and Kiwi students also created some problems in social interactions. For example, it was an acceptable social practice in Asia for students to place their arms over the shoulders of their friends from the same sex but not over those from the opposite sex. The reverse, however, was true in New Zealand and placing one's hand over the shoulders of someone from the same sex had a drastically different implication. This difference in cultural interpretation of such a simple act had led to several embarrassing situations between Kiwi and Asian students.

¹⁹ The temperature in South East Asia generally falls between 28-35°C for the entire year. When it does fall

Another area that often created problems was the consumption of some relatively more exotic food by many Asian students. The repertoire of food consumed by Asians was generally more encompassing than that consumed by most New Zealanders. The consumption of certain types of food or the way they were consumed by Asians had stirred some debates that often resulted in strong criticism from many New Zealanders. Conversely, several major religions in Asia forbade the consumption of certain food commonly consumed by Kiwis. For examples, the consumption of beef is forbidden in Hinduism, consumption of pork is sacrilegious in Islam, and consumption of any kind of meat is considered to be a sin Buddhism.

It is extremely important in a multicultural society that everyone accepts the choices of people with different religions and cultures. If one particular group of people adopts the “moral-one-eye” attitude, then racial harmony and cultural enrichment in the society would be extremely difficult to achieve. Mutual respect and the willingness to make the necessary adjustments when interacting with one another are again the keys to success in any multicultural relationships.

A major concern expressed by some students is their difficulty in adapting to the New Zealand life while trying to retain their Asian roots. This dilemma is particularly relevant to students from East Asia whose parents had migrated to New Zealand several years ago. It is difficult for these students to adapt because they think of the problem as one in which they have to choose either one or the other culture. If they do not clearly choose one of the two cultures, then they feel that they become neither and do not have a sense of identity. This negative way of thinking should be discouraged and the students should instead be encouraged to think that they have the best of both cultures.

This problem, on the other hand, is not as severe to students from Singapore or Malaysia who are accustomed to living in a multicultural society. Usually, Singaporeans and Malaysian can “switch gear” when interacting with others from a different culture. This perspective is fairly unique and important because it allows the person to retain his/her own identity and at the

below 28°C, many Singaporeans, for example, will don sweaters.

same time be able to make the necessary adjustments when interacting with people from different cultures.

It is important to note that trying to assimilate one ethnic group into another may not be the best strategy for achieving racial harmony. In some cases, it may be better to encourage the minority group to retain its own identity as long as all groups are willing to make the necessary adjustments when interacting with one another. This approach would add more variety to the nations' culture and enhance the quality of life for its people.

New Zealand is heading towards a multicultural society and has a lot to learn from countries that have a good record in achieving racial harmony among its people. Many Asian students in New Zealand still encounter racial discrimination fairly frequently. These discriminations include passive neglect, verbal abuse, and occasionally, physical harm from things thrown at them. Society as a whole must indicate clearly that such actions will not be tolerated in the multicultural New Zealand today.

Fortunately, not all the experiences Asian students encountered are negative. Most of them instead found the majority of the Kiwis to be friendly and approachable. This is particularly true for students with a reasonably good command of the English language. These students tend to have a higher level of self-confidence and are able to seek out friends with similar interests regardless of their race. The negative experiences, unfortunately, tend to have a much stronger impact on peoples' memories and, if these incidents are not dealt with quickly and effectively, they can cause serious damage to New Zealand's reputation as a nice and safe place to live. Also, the damage will extend to New Zealand's trade and investment relationships with its Asian neighbours, and ultimately, hurt the economy as well.

When faced with problems, social or otherwise, most Asian students shared them with their families and close friends. Some of the students also shared their problems with members of their churches while several kept the problems to themselves. The majority of Asian students, nevertheless, were not comfortable sharing their concerns with outsiders including the school counsellors. In fact, many of the students did not even know of the existence of counsellors in their schools. This predicament indicated that school counsellors often did not project

themselves effectively among the students as persons who were warm, friendly, trustworthy and helpful. Many of the students still perceived them as strangers who served little purpose.

The problem appeared to lie more in the incorrect perceptions of students who had little contact with the counsellors. The majority of the students, or their close friends, who had actual contact with the counsellors instead found them to be fairly helpful. Again, the process of reviewing the students' statement of purpose or objectives might help the counsellors to break the ice between the students and themselves. Also, the counsellors could collaborate with the proposed Asian youth coordinator to bridge the gap and provide a better service to the students.

In addition, the youth coordinator and counsellors could also work together with other aid agencies to provide a more comprehensive network of services. Again, the awareness among the students of these aid agencies has to be promoted and communication channels opened. Representatives from these agencies could be invited to the schools to give seminars, workshops and conduct recruitment campaigns for volunteers. These agencies should position themselves as both providing help to students and also seeking volunteers among the students. The latter aim should be emphasized explicitly even though it may be the secondary purpose in order not to discourage students from attending them.

Notwithstanding the varying levels of difficulty experienced by the students, most of them found their stay in Christchurch to be pleasant, which was a great tribute to this beautiful garden city. The majority of the students, however, would choose to return home after their studies, even though many of their families had migrated here. The main concern was the perceived lack of career opportunities in general and for Asians in particular. This perception was probably formed from witnessing the large number of highly qualified Asian immigrants who could not secure any jobs in New Zealand.

In addition, consistent with the opinions of most Asians, the students interviewed unanimously felt that Christchurch was a nice place for retirement but a very boring place for young people. Even though most of the students had participated in many of the activities organised by the City Council, visited many places of interest and frequented many entertainment centres, they felt that there was an insufficient number of such activities and places. The majority of them

had been to the QEII Park, the ice-skating rink, Jellie Park, 10-pin bowling alleys, Christmas in the Park, the museum and the Art Centre.

As a result of both the lack of career opportunities and entertainment, many of the students would choose to return home after their studies or move to a larger country that had more opportunities. However, despite their decision to leave, the students were very keen in providing suggestions to improve the quality of life for teenagers in Christchurch in general and Asian high school students in particular.

Improvements to the public transport system, including increases in both the inter-suburban routes and frequencies of the bus services, were given the highest priorities by most students. Increases in the inter-suburban bus routes would probably increase the efficiency of the public transport system compared to the radial routes currently in use. Increases in the frequency of bus services, however, might be more problematic because of the low patronage experienced in the current services. However, with improvements in the bus services, there might be a corresponding increase in the demand for public transport which might offset any increase in costs; otherwise, the Canterbury Regional Council might have to increase its subsidies to the operators.

Besides improving the bus services, there were also suggestions on providing subsidies for car rentals and taxis to increase the mobility of those without access to private vehicles. Another popular suggestion was to build a rapid transit system or light passenger train, which is very common in many cities. This option, however, would probably not be cost effective due to the low population density in Christchurch. The low population density would also severely limit the feasible options available to improve the public transport system.

Another popular suggestion for improving the quality of life for the students in Christchurch is to provide more nightlife that is suitable for teenagers. The shopping malls and many other places of interest in Christchurch close relatively early and teenagers are not permitted in pubs and other adults only entertainment centres. The Christchurch City Council could provide, or encourage private operators to provide, more nightlife for teenagers such as disco and karaoke pubs that do not serve alcohol. Another possibility is for the City Council to allow night markets and public performances by local artists in the city centre on selected evenings. These

additional activities would help to revitalise the city centre and draw people into the area. These activities, however, should be conducted between Saturday and Wednesday nights so that they would not compete with the late nights at the shopping malls.

Also very popular is the demand for theme parks and a one-stop entertainment centre. Although it may not be cost effective to build a Disneyland, a theme park that is on the scale of Rainbow's End may be feasible and would greatly boost the tourism industry in Christchurch. Alternatively, a theme park that provides a combination of amusement park rides, local entertainment, night market and food stalls would also be very appealing to both tourists and local residents.

Another highly demanded activity is the international fair and other such cultural events. As discussed earlier, many students were very proud of their schools for organising such events and many Asian community leaders had expressed their interests in participating. In fact, several of the Asian community groups had begun the slow process of increasing the interaction between the Asian and Kiwi communities. For example, the Singapore Club in Christchurch has been inviting both Kiwis and other ethnic communities to participate in many of their activities.

Nevertheless, the students would like the community groups to organise more activities that cater specifically to the teenagers instead of just the more family orientated events. Specially mentioned were sporting events and potlucks among the various ethnic community groups, including Kiwis. In addition, they also recommended that the Asian community formed support groups for the different age groups to help newcomers adjust to the new environment, especially during the first six months of their arrivals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of Asia to the New Zealand economy cannot be overstated and the new international economic and political realities have persuaded many New Zealanders to look towards building a closer relationship with the countries of Asia, especially with the East and Southeast Asian countries. Foreign students, mainly from Asia, are estimated to spend about \$500 million a year in New Zealand (source: NZEIL) and this income is greatly needed by many schools and local communities. However, there have been some concerns about understanding and meeting the needs of the Asian students, both fee-paying and rates-paying students. This research is an important step towards addressing these concerns. It discovered several areas of concern, provided a broad discussion of these concerns, and highlighted some main recommendations.

One of the most difficult problems experienced by a foreign student initially in the host country is coping with loneliness. To alleviate this problem requires good social support from both fellow and host nationals to provide the following:

- Orientation booklet with information about:
 - ✓ Support available from community groups.
 - ✓ Support available from student groups.
 - ✓ Support available from school.
 - ✓ Support available from the City Council and other aid agencies.
 - ✓ Getting the basic essentials products and services.
 - ✓ Getting Asian products and services.
 - ✓ Recreational, entertainment and sports facilities available.
 - ✓ Differences in the cultures that could create difficulties.
- Network of friends, especially youths of the same age group.

One of the major barriers to smooth acculturation for many Asian students is the language barrier. Since students experience different levels of difficulty, it is recommended that:

- All schools should conduct an appropriate screening and testing procedure to identify:
 - Students who are fluent enough in English to proceed with normal courses.

- Students who need some help in English but can take on a reduced workload.
- Students who need special attention in English.
- Although the current ESOL programmes are able to provide the essential help, a more comprehensive programme may be useful for many students.
- For the better students in the second category, they should take ESOL and one or two courses that require less proficiency in English, and perhaps audit one or two other courses to provide them with more opportunity to improve their English.
- For students with slightly more severe English problems, in addition to taking the ESOL, it may be more beneficial for them to enroll in some courses that are slightly below their age or ability levels. However, it may be advisable to discuss this approach with their parents first to gain their support.
- Students in the last category may need to enroll in profession language schools before being enrolled in the normal high schools. Alternatively, they should receive specialize assistance in addition to reducing their other workload.

One common problem experienced by many foreign students, particularly those with only limited proficiency in English, concerns the guardian and home-stay programmes. To improve the effectiveness of the programmes, it is recommended that:

- The roles of both the guardian and home-stay have to clearly defined and discussed with the students.
- Preferably at least one of the two parties should be familiar with the student's culture, and if the student's English proficiency is low, at least one of the two parties should also be able to speak the student's own language.
- Guardians should communicate with the students on regular basis and the school should institute some procedures to ensure that they do.

One recommendation suggested by many students, teachers and stakeholders is the appointment of a youth coordinator with the following responsibilities:

- Act as the liaison officer between the students, schools, city council and Asian community groups.
- Act as the liaison officer between the students and the school counsellors.
- Act as the liaison officer between students from various schools.

- To provide necessary assistance to the students.
- To promote awareness of Asian cultures in schools.
- To encourage students to adopt the best of both cultures.

Most Asian students are not as ardent about sports as the Kiwi students and are not keen on nor know how to play cricket or rugby. However, many do like to play other games such as Basketball, Badminton, Tennis, Table Tennis and Soccer. Unfortunately, many of these facilities are not readily available to them. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- Schools make these facilities available to students on selected times of the week.
- Coaches should teach students a wide variety of sports at the introductory level.

Although most of the students find their stay in Christchurch to be pleasant and that the Garden City is a beautiful place to retire in, they unanimously feel that it is rather boring for the youth and suggest the following:

- ✓ Improve the public transport system.
- ✓ Provide nightlife that is suitable for teenagers.
- ✓ Encourage shopping malls and food stalls to operate later into the night.
- ✓ Develop a theme park or one-stop entertainment centre.
- ✓ Organise more international fairs and cultural events.

The various community groups in Christchurch and providers of educational, social, health and recreational services should work together to provide a comprehensive and effective programme to meet the needs of the Asian Secondary School students. To facilitate this process, it is recommended that a working party be established to review the issues and concerns raised in this research. The working party could comprise one Board member from each of the three community wards, selected representatives of the high schools, Asian communities and staff from the community wards.

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