

# **Living in an Exclusive Multinational Society: International Students in Australia and their Social Networks**

**Catherine J Gomes**

1 RMIT University, GPO Box 2476, Melbourne, VIC, 3001, Australia, catherine.gomes@rmit.edu.au

The literature on the experiences of international students in Australia and elsewhere highlights their lack of integration into the host society due to a general lack of local friends. Through in-depth interviews with 47 Melbourne-based higher education Asian international students, this study uncovers the reasons why these students have very few or no local friends and how they navigate a workable everyday experience in their host nation. The findings suggest that Asian international students live in an exclusive multinational society almost exclusively made up of fellow international students who primarily come from the home nation, the Asian region and elsewhere. This exclusive society allows international students to create a sense of community in Australia while being detached from local society. By investigating their social networks this study highlights the ways in which international students make use of them to navigate a workable experience in a foreign country. Doing so can be useful for industry service providers when it comes to better understanding the dynamics of international students from Asia as they live in transience.

## **Key Words**

Asian international students

Identity

Social networks

Multinational society

Community

Melbourne