

# LIVING IN AN EXCLUSIVE MULTINATIONAL SOCIETY: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA AND THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS

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- ◉ 526,932 IS at the end of 2013
- ◉ Top countries: China, India, S. Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia
- ◉ A visible part of the ethnographic landscape, they are not considered part of Australian society primarily because of their transience
- ◉ Unfortunately very few local friends, if any
- ◉ Literature points to significance of local friends in the overseas (study) experience

- ◉ *How then do Asian international students create a workable existence in Australia if they are not making friends with locals?*

## METHODOLOGY

- Interviewed 47 Asian international students in Melbourne
- Self-perceived identities and social networks (friends)

Gender	M (18) F (29)
Age Range	19 to 24 yrs (28) 25 to 29 yrs (15) 30 yrs and more (4)
Education Pursuit	Diploma & Advanced Diploma (8) Bachelor degree (19) Masters degree & higher (20)
Home Country	Bangladesh (2) China (8) India (6) Indonesia (3) Japan (1) South Korea (4) Malaysia (5) Pakistan (3) Singapore (8) Vietnam (6) New Zealand, originally China (1)
Length of stay in Australia at time of interview	3 mths (3) 3.1 to 6 mths (5) 6.1 mths to 1 yr (7) 1 yr 1 mth to 2 yrs (15) 2 yrs 1mth to 3 yrs (7) 3 yrs 1 mth to 4 yrs (8) 4 yrs 1 mth and more (3)

## TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS AND IDENTIFYING AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

- ◉ 'For me I preferred to be called as a student, like international student if we talk about it - especially in Australia or like a country there' [M/Pgrad/Pakistan]

## SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NETWORKS

- ◉ On-campus places where international students meet (e.g. sitting next to each other in lectures)
- ◉ Outside the study environment (e.g. religious organisations, neighbourhood etc.)

## MAKING FRIENDS WITH OTHER ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Many many reasons for making friends in Australia: to socialise, to alleviate homesickness and loneliness, as replacements for family and community while away as well as to feel a sense of belonging in Australia, to have someone look after them in time of need, to feel a connection to the homeland, because of similar personalities, to improve their English-language skills, to learn new cultures and to meet new and different people, for self-development and for future professional endeavours such as investment and business

## MAKING FRIENDS WITH OTHER ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IS A.....

- Coping strategy while in transience- like finds like
- 'For me, it's like, you make friends that are similar to your language or the way you speak, because then you feel more at home [F/Ugrad/China]

## MAKING FRIENDS WITH OTHER ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ALLOWS FOR...

- ◉ sense of belonging is more strongly felt when the social networks are made up of international students from their home countries
- ◉ feel more comfortable because people from the homeland here understand them and there is comfort in speaking in their native language
- ◉ actively seek fellow international students from the homeland to help them adjust to Australia
- ◉ locals will not be able to provide advice that is specific to international students because of lack of specific IS experience

## EXPLAINING WHY NO OZ FRIENDS

- ◉ I just have a feeling like they don't really want to make friends with international students. I guess of the main reasons because of my broken English because I cannot talk with them. Sometimes I keeping asking them to repeat and repeat and they get frustrated and they don't want to get further into a friendship with me [M/Ugrad/Vietnam]
- ◉
- ◉ I feel like students, local students don't really mix much with Asian, except for local Asians they will mix around, but not Asian-Asian [F/Ugrad/Singapore]
- ◉
- ◉ basically I think Australian people don't think of other people from other things; this because they have a language difference - their accent different and they kind of prefer people from an Australian accent [F/Ugrad/Malaysia]

## FINDINGS SHOW THAT....

- ◉ *international students strongly identify themselves as international students and form a parallel multinational society made up of fellow international students that has very few connections to Australian society*

- ◉ Being Friends with Other International Students from Asia Provides Support and a Sense of Belonging
- ◉ Identifying as International Students Prevents Friendships with Locals
- ◉ Perception that Australians are White and the Inability to Connect with Asian-Australians

## CONCLUSION

- While the exclusivity in this parallel society is limited to (Asian) international students, there is diversity within this group in terms of not only the multicultural membership which in some ways is replicative of their home nation situation but also their openness to include other Asian international students into the fold.

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