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DO SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES MATTER?

A

***qualitative psychological study of Chinese
criminals in Aotearoa/New Zealand***

By

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ABSTRACT

Acculturation literature on Chinese immigrants and international students indicates that low language proficiency, over-emphasis on losing face and the consequent acculturative stress, may hinder the development of both language skills and socializing competence and lead to psychological and behavioural dysfunction. Contemporary research into the socio-cultural issues of immigrant prisoners, particularly Chinese prisoners, is sparse in New Zealand. Thus, some baseline information on the existence of socio-cultural issues and their related acculturative stress of this group of individuals is needed.

The purpose of this study was to find out whether the socio-cultural issues, particularly language barriers, social isolation, anti-social peer pressure and acculturative stress were present among these Chinese prisoners prior to their offending. In addition, the researcher intended to discuss the possible links between these sociocultural issues and the participants' offending in New Zealand society.

The individual interviews of 13 Chinese inmates, or 13% of the total Chinese population in New Zealand prisons were conducted with the support of the Department of Corrections.

The data suggested that low language proficiency and face-protection-oriented voluntary separation from the host society and the resulting social isolation and anti-social peer influence were major issues for most of these individuals. Many of them expressed very negative emotions or mistrust towards others and

meaningless life experience with little support both from their family and the host society. Consequent depression and anxiety just before their offending were evident in the responses, particularly from some female prisoners. As a result, it is suggested that the socio-cultural issues that the participants in this study had encountered, may have contributed to their undermined psychological well-being and behavioural dysfunction and contributed to the resultant criminal action.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Literature review

Nearly 200 million people in the world are migrants and of these, almost 35 million are of Chinese ethnicity (China Network Television-CNTV, 2010). The Asian population in America has tripled from 9% to 27% of the total immigrant population in the last three decades (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Chinese immigrants, in particular, in the latest census, make up the third largest foreign-origin population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011); the third largest population group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006); the third largest foreign-born residents in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009-10); and the second largest group of foreign applicants who have obtained permanent residence in New Zealand (Department of Labour, 2010).

This international trend of increasing numbers of Chinese immigration has led to a significant interest in the socio-cultural issues that could affect their integration into the host society, particularly the effects on their psychological and behavioural wellbeing. Research indicates that social isolation, language barriers and their consequent acculturative stress are the greatest risk factors to the quality lifestyle and positive cognition among immigrants who come from non-Western societies (Cacioppo & Hawkey, 2009). They state:

...social isolation is a risk factor for, and may contribute to, poorer overall cognitive performance, faster cognitive decline, poorer executive function, increased negativity and depressive cognition, heightened sensitivity to social threats, confirmatory bias in social cognition that is self-protective and paradoxically self-defeating... These differences in attention and cognition impact on emotions, decisions, behaviours and interpersonal interactions that can

contribute to the association between loneliness and cognitive decline and between loneliness and morbidity more generally. (P. 447)

It is suggested that, acute cultural conflicts and problematical psychological adjustment process can affect Asian immigrants' quality of life and psychological well-being. In a study of 83 Chinese immigrants in America, Lieber (2001) and associates found that some of the respondents showed negative emotions, a sense of futility about cultural differences and a feeling of unimportant self-adjustment. The participants also described their emotional states as anger and confusion, feeling rejected or isolated, and they also reported a loss of identity. Yeh (2003), through a study of 319 Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrant youths, argues that age, acculturation, and cultural adjustment difficulties have significant predictive effects on mental health symptoms. The author also found more severe mental problems among older Asian adolescents than those in their early teens. This suggests that the older adolescents may experience more socio-cultural related acculturative stress, which may contribute to their increased emotional struggles. The study also revealed that the participants with stronger Western identity reported fewer mental health problems than their counterparts.

A New Zealand longitudinal study concludes that low levels of mental health such as anxiety and severe depression are evident even among Chinese skilled immigrants irrespective of their employment status. These reduced life enjoyment and psychological abnormalities were suggested as emanating from a combination of interpersonal and sociocultural adjustment difficulties, underemployment, and occupational stress from a perception of being an outsider (Pernice, Trlin, Henderson & North, 2000; Pernice, Trlin, Henderson, Nother & Skinner, 2009). Despite the psychological vulnerability and mental health susceptibility among

Chinese immigrants, they are less likely to seek psychiatric help and receive psychopharmacological treatment than their Caucasian counterparts (Cuffe, Waller, Cuccaro, Pumariega & Garrison, 1995; Zito, Safer, Dosreis, Magder & Riddle, 1997). This is a significant phenomenon, as undiagnosed and untreated mental problems may manifest in a lack of self-awareness and societal empathy.

Yeung & Chang (2002) suggest that given the cumulated everyday stress from financial hardship, language problems and unemployment or underemployment, Chinese migrants who encounter some exceptional life events may suffer or be prone to a relatively common psychiatric disorder, adjustment disorder (AD). AD usually occurs 4 weeks to six months after some extreme external stressor(s) with symptoms of depression and anxiety associated with risk/suicidal behaviour (APA, 2000; WHO, 1992). The prevalence rate ranges from 12% to 23% among general psychiatric patients (Despland, Monod, & Ferrero, 1995; Snyder, Strain & Wolf, 1990). In a study of AD aetiology, Bisson and Sakhuja (2006) state that AD is associated with young age, psychosocial and environmental problems but absent from previous psychiatric history. A study of 100 AD sufferers reports that young patients are more prone to develop comorbidities of major depressive disorder and antisocial personality disorder (Andreasen & Hoenk, 1982).

Collectivistic culture vs. individualistic society

Spiritually embedded collectivistic ideology may act as a significant factor leading to the delay of acculturation and social adjustment for Chinese immigrants who are trying to resettle into a new environment where individualism is the dominant social concept. In general, people from collectivist cultures demonstrate

strong interdependent relationships between themselves and the group they belong to (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001). In contrast, people from individualistic societies tend to be emotionally independent from their families and communities (Hofstede, 1980).

People from collectivist cultures tend to be less self-centred and more willing to attach oneself to their in-group emotionally; more often to identify oneself with their in-group status (Hofstede, 1991; Kagitcibasi, 1997). “The status of an individual depends largely on the status of his or her family” (Thakker, 1997, p. 75) and people “expect other in-group members to look after or protect them in case of needs or crisis” (Sun, Horn & Merritt, 2004, p 319). Collectivist societies wherein interdependent relationships are predominant are common in China, Japan, and India. In contrast, Individualist societies embed people with self-centred, self-sufficient ideology and encourage the pursuit of personal interests and individual achievement (Hofstede, 1991; Kagitcibasi, 1997).

Triandis (2001) proposes that people of collectivist cultures tend to be more self-effacing and self-depreciating which might explain their limited life satisfaction and pessimistic attitudes. Moreover, upwards comparison between individual group members perhaps brings more disgruntled and frustrated feelings when their own state of being is seemingly inferior to others (Sun, Horn & Merritt, 2004). However, individual focused Western societies encourage people to enjoy personal life style and appreciate individual diversity.

In collectivist societies, maintaining harmonious relationships within in-group and avoiding loss of group/family reputation/face is extremely important (Wong &

Ahuvia, 1998), and in some situations making close family members happy and proud is also a prerequisite to individual goals and achievement. As a result, Chinese people tend to be more frustrated and display avoiding help-seeking behaviour when encountering personal failure or psychological difficulties which may have been perceived as a family shame (losing face) and causing personal distress in close relatives (Kleinman, 1977; Parker, Gladstone, Chee, 2001; Sun, Horn & Merritt, 2004). On the other hand, people of individualist societies are more likely to focus on individual improvement and responsibilities when they confront life challenges and frustrations (Hofstede, 1991; Kagitcibasi, 1997).

Collectivist individuals tend to associate well with in-group members but are less likely to cooperate with people from other groups (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). This may also contribute to their perception of being an outsider and increase the acculturation stress when immigrating to a Western society. Contrarily, people in individualist cultures generally cooperate with others and easily form new in-groups as the primary concept of 'self' is a basic unit rather than group identity (Hofstede, 1980; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, 1988).

As a result of the aforementioned collectivistic characteristics which may contribute to acculturation delay and the socio-cultural maladjustment to Chinese immigrants, the following paragraphs will argue that the accumulated acculturative stress can be a significant predictive factor to Chinese immigrants' psychological disorder and problematic behaviour.

It has been suggested that people from large and/or historical collectivistic ethnicities have strong cultural identities. These individuals would experience intense acculturative stress as the extreme cultural conflicts emerge when immigrating to an individualistic society (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Chinese immigrants' acculturative stress has been understood primarily from two aspects: low linguistic proficiency and the traditional face-oriented interpersonal relationships (Yeh & Huang, 1996). In many social contexts, poor language skills result in face losing consequences, and social contacts with locals will then become a negative reinforcement of language practice. Therefore, these two problems are affecting one another and become relevant characteristics of Chinese immigrants in Western societies.

Poor language proficiency

Low linguistic proficiency and its related socio-cultural issues has been one of the frontline topics of many multidisciplinary studies in the area of sociocultural and psychological wellbeing of Chinese immigrants. Tong (1996) argues that "the relationship between language and culture is important in determining the degree of acculturation" (p 524). In other words, the language is a cultural tool which smoothes the psychological processes and social interaction (Bronckart, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Through frequent spoken communication with locals, the language proficiency can be improved and the cultural understanding and adaptation may be facilitated (Nwadioar & McAdoo, 1996). Yeh and colleagues (2008) investigated 286 young Chinese immigrants in the United States and argued that English fluency and consequent active help-seeking behaviour, multidimensional acculturation and social support contribute to young Chinese

immigrants' academic and intercultural competence. It has been suggested that the better the Chinese adolescents manage the targeted language communication with people of the mainstream society, the less cultural tension and acculturative stress they would experience which would contribute to a more satisfactory cultural integration (Li, 2009).

In addition, other researchers have argued that the strong original cultural identity of Chinese youths in English speaking countries is correlated with their severity of English deficits. These language deficits can be very stressful as they can be detrimental to one's self-esteem and lead to feelings of humiliation and other psychological problems (Eyou, Adair & Dixon, 2000; Kim, 1996; Lee, 1996; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001). An American quantitative study which focuses on immigration-factor-related mental problems among Asian immigrants has revealed two main outcomes: most of male immigrants with strong collectivistic cultural identity demonstrated poor English communication skills; and poor linguistic proficiency is correlated with higher rates of mental disorders (Takeuchi, et al., 2007). As a result, the level of language proficiency of a Chinese immigrant has been suggested as being one of the determining factors for the process of acculturation, social interaction proactivity, academic achievement and psychological wellbeing.

Problematic sociocultural integration

It is suggested that larger ethnic immigration populations which have strong historical cultural identities may have less social involvement with their host societies (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Yeh & Huang, 1996). Particularly, the

Chinese philosophy of protecting one's face and his/her family's reputation is very strong and appears to create difficulties in social interactions (Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001). With little social background knowledge or positive experience of profound spoken communication with locals, Chinese immigrants usually feel embarrassed when perceived as being an outsider and respond inefficiently in conversations. This embarrassment leads to intense social anxiety and avoidance of social interactions (Clement, Noels & Deneault, 2001; Ye, 2006). From an investigation with a relatively large sample size of 700 college students, Xie and colleagues (2008) found that the intense social anxiety and interpersonal hesitance among Chinese participants were mostly driven by perceived embarrassment and inferiority in fulfilling traditionally prescribed interpersonal-related reciprocity. Most Chinese international students and/or immigrants felt frustration, embarrassment or loss of face when encountering "conversation break down" (Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007). This vicious circle of frustration, embarrassment and avoidance of verbal communication may have contributed to their cultural conflicts and problems with social integration (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Eyou (2000) and colleagues conducted an investigation among 400 adolescent Chinese immigrants in New Zealand society and found that poor sociocultural integration and cultural marginalization were associated with the participants' low self-esteem, cultural conflicts, pessimistic attitude/ depressed mood. Many young Chinese immigrants reported social distance between themselves and those of native or more acculturated peers (Li, 2009). The reality of developing friendships in immigrating countries is more ethnically segregated. Immigrant adolescents

believe that they have been perceived as a different or even inferior group in the eyes of their counterparts. For example, the taking of language or other extra classes at schools seem to imply differences and lead to inferiority complexes among immigrant students. At the same time, the perception of an academic hierarchy and the feeling of superiority may prevent local students developing friendships with immigrant youth. Those immigrant adolescents might then have no chance to associate with local classmates but to develop bonded relationship via common school activities with co-status students (Vaquera & Kao, 2006).

Many Chinese immigrant adolescents in Canada find themselves being segregated from the Canadian classmates and immersed in a likeminded ethnic group in order to obtain peer support, safe socialization and self-empowerment (Li, 2009).

Similarly, in the United States, many Chinese immigrants' early employment and social adaptation to their host society initiated from Chinatown, and it has been theorised that the continuous and growing attachment with Chinatown hindered the immigrants' sociocultural integration with the mainstream community (Tong, 1996). In short, problematic sociocultural integration and segregated social networks may contribute to Chinese immigrants, especially junior immigrants' feeling of inferiority and delay the process of psychological adjustment and acculturation.

Anti-social behaviour and peer pressure among immigrant youth and foreign prisoner populations

Winfrey (1999) suggested that peer pressure and peer modelling are thought to be one of the major sources of youth behaviour. In seeking of emotional support and avoiding bullying, immigrant youth may approach protecting groups, sometimes

anti-social type, and participate in some risky activities in order to prove their determination and loyalty (Hitchcock, 2001). With poor English skills and less emotional support from families and friends in conjunction with stressful life events, Asian immigrant youth are more likely to imitate anti-social behaviour and develop violent crimes under the influence of anti-social associates (Ngo & Le, 2007; Winfree, 1999). Findings from a crime and justice survey supports the above suggestion and states that youth who have associated with anti-social peers interacting with broken relationship with parents, failed intimate relationship and financial difficulties are more likely to develop anti-social behaviour and 50% more possibility to commit serious offending (Madoc-Jones, 2006).

Very few studies have been conducted with the purpose of discussing socio-cultural issues and their psychological effects contributing to offences committed by Chinese immigrants, although the aforementioned extreme and rapid acculturation stress appears to lead to some degree of psychological disorder and problematic behaviour. This is perhaps because of the relatively small number of the Chinese immigrant prisoners, and their characteristics of heterogeneity and language variations. Some aggregate research studies, in which different ethnic groups are combined, have been conducted and analysed providing valuable data and significant cultural comparison information among well-established immigrant receiving countries. One of these studies concludes that social deprivation and stress mismanagement partially explain foreigners' criminal conduct (Albercht, 1987). Some multidimensional research studies in America were organized through interviewing Asian-American community leaders, regional police officers, related families and friends. The results suggest that

understanding the underlying cultural issues such as communication difficulties, lack of social and family support, and different social and individual values are significant for both preventing immigrant crimes and reducing reoffending (Day, 1997). An Australian investigation of their Philippine prisoner population indicates that helping Asian-born prisoners to overcome their acculturative stress and language barriers should be the priority by, for example, developing prison education programmes to help prevent reoffending (UNICRI & Australia Institute of Criminology, 1999).

Research has also been conducted in Japan which is one of the few countries that have a very high foreigner crime rate. Imai (2002) argued that the poor socio-economic status of the foreign-born population mainly contributed to their crimes. Canadian criminology experts agreed that poverty seemed to be an important contributor to immigrant crimes but also pointed out that antisocial peer pressure was another major risk factor (Canada and the World Background, 2002). In addition, young age and rapid acculturation or maladaptation caused culture-conflicts and acculturative stressors leading to higher delinquency rates than other immigrant age groups (Shoham, 1962).

As discussed earlier, some typical collectivist cultural factors, such as excess face protection and mal-managed relationships, may have had some negative effects in some Chinese nationals who committed criminal activities in Western societies. Investigators in Netherlands suggested that two cultural aspects: '*mianzi*' (face/ honour/ pride/ acknowledgement) and '*guanxi*' (gateway/ relationship/ close bonding with others) (Burton & Stewart, 2008) have been practiced thoroughly by hierarchies of Chinese drug racketeers in transnationally organized precursor

chemical trafficking networks. People involved in these networks have been revealed as usually sharing the same origin, dialect, related families, hometown and villages. This *guanxi* network probably reflects the idea that people from collectivistic culture are more likely to trust in-group members with great loyalty (Brody & Luo, 2009; Curtis, Elan, Hudson & Kollars, 2002; Huisman, 2008). *Mianzi* (face) is also believed to be extremely important within these networks. Directly in saying 'no' to an offer or a money making opportunity from a higher level member of in-groups, is perceived as a rebellious action. Meanwhile, it is an admission of self inability when rejecting risky but lucrative opportunities from associates in the same level. Both negative responses might jeopardize his/her *mianzi* (face) and destroy *guanxi* (relationship) (Chin, Zhang & Kelly, 2001).

Thus, some research studies suggested that young immigrants in Western societies with poor local language skills and environmental support in association with some stressful life events would be more prone to participate with anti-social associates and develop problematic behaviour even crimes. Despite the small amount of research that has been done on foreign-born prisoners among several immigrant receiving countries, it is quite clear that age, psychological problems, socio-cultural issues, anti-social peer influence and collectivistic cultural factors are correlated with foreign-born population offending.

The situation in New Zealand

New Zealand has a similar proportion of foreign-born people to that of Australia, Switzerland and Canada, at about 19.5%. The Chinese are a diverse and heterogeneous population in this country. They are composed of both native-born

and foreign-born individuals who come from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam and so on (Walker, 2001). There are approximately 98 Chinese inmates, or 0.1% of the total New Zealand prison population (Department of Corrections, 2010), and there has apparently been no scholarly research to date on this population. The media, however, has drawn attention to some extreme cases, such as kidnapping, drug dealing and murders, and this has affected New Zealanders' attitudes towards Chinese who were previously described as "law-abiding" people (Masters, 2011). On the other hand, some trends in the media indicate that an overestimation of Asian crime by the public does exist and that negative attitudes against Chinese, in particular, are rising (Steere, 2007; Steward, 2011). Ron Mark, a former New Zealand First MP, argued against the government accepting Asian international students as he pointed to the rapidly increasing Asian crime rate. He argued that without adequate services for these young people's social and psychological well-being, the combination of young age, lack of parental supervision and associated problems with moral judgement may make them the victims and perpetrators of crimes (2003). Huo (2007) supports this opinion and states that crimes involving people of Chinese ethnicity in recent years have been committed predominantly by international students not settled Chinese immigrants.

Given the expensive and periodically pre-charged international tuition fees and the strict criminal records checking system for a student visa to be issued, financial pressure and criminal history seemed to have little to contribute to their offending. Thus, an obvious question is: without historical criminal activities and

financial hardship, what kind of factors contribute to Chinese international students' or immigrants' offending in New Zealand?

The current investigation

Qualitative research has been recognized as a practical design targeting identified issues from quantitative studies or other previous research, and has relevant application to relatively small sized samples in a population (Morgan, 1998; Parker, 2004; Tewksbury, Dabney & Copes, 2010). Given the socio-cultural issues are widely discussed in many other research studies and the targeted group is relatively small in size, the current study utilises the qualitative research method. The researcher individually interviewed 13 Chinese prisoners aged from 22 to 44 (5 females, and 8 males regardless of their residence status) from two of the Department of Corrections facilities in the North Island. The interviews in this study were conducted in a semi-structured style using questions designed specifically for this research. Semi-structured interview and the question design of the interview will be explained later in this chapter.

The hypotheses of this study are:

- Some socio-cultural issues existed among this unique group of individuals prior to their offending. These sociocultural issues are:
 - language barriers;
 - social isolation from the host society;
 - the influences from antisocial associates;
 - the acculturative stress related psychological or behavioural dysfunction.
- these issues may have contributed to their offending

As a Chinese immigrant, previous international student, ESL speaker, and a researcher in the psychology field, I feel that I am well-placed to conduct research in this population. I believe that my experience and cultural/language background is advantageous in this study. It eases communication between myself and the participants and assists them to entrust me with their thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, my familiarity with the participants' language and culture allows me to examine narrative data as an insider, interpreting their experiences from a similar horizon. This preliminary study intends to gather some baseline information from this unique group of individuals. It is hoped that the results could bring some interest and consideration to the professional fields of socio-psychology and immigrant criminology. It is also anticipated that research in this area will ultimately assist in the reduction of foreigner crimes and/or the development of effective intervention programmes in corrections facilities.

Semi-structured interview

The interviews carried out within this study were semi-structured allowing for flexible conversations and mutual communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Although semi-structured interviews focus on the topic or extended concerns based on the interviewer's research interests, the interviewee is encouraged to discuss his/her personal opinions and beliefs (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Each interview in this study was expected to last 60-90 minutes and most of the items were open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are questions which usually cannot be responded to with simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. They are designed to encourage the respondent to express deep feelings and true opinions with less leading from the interviewer or the question itself in order to gain

objective results (Hruschka, Schwartz, St.John, Prcone-Decaro, Jenkins & Carey, 2004; Kurasaki, 2000; Powell & Guadagno, 2008; Rapley, 2001). For example, in this research, questions such as “tell me about your childhood” or “what kind of emotional state did you experience before the offending?” are all typical open-ended questions which have the aim of encouraging the participant to explore their own thoughts and feelings.

Design of the questions

The interview questions focused on the participants’ experiences of their early childhood, life style in New Zealand and sociocultural issues before their offending. It begins with the demographics section. One of the functions of the demographics section is to assist establishing rapport and engagement for the formal interview. The rapport establishment and maintenance have been suggested as significant components throughout an interview (Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Oakley, 1981; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). For particular interviews with prisoners, Collins and colleagues (2002) state that “establishing rapport between interviewers and subject whether in clinical experimental or forensic settings is likely to enhance the quality of the interview” (p. 70).

The second part of the interview focused on the situation before the offence including childhood experiences, new arrival in New Zealand and social support and emotional states before their offending. It is generally recognized in the criminal conduct field that childhood victimization and/or neglect is one of the significant predictors of delinquency and adult criminality (Andrews & Bonta,

2010; Borum, 2000; Christoffersen, Fracis & Soothill, 2003; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Farrington, 2000; Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Participants' childhood experiences and the potential link to their offending may partially exclude or reduce the influence of socio-cultural issues that they encounter when they come to New Zealand. In other words, the participants' childhood trauma might be a contributing factor in their offending rather than problematic social interactions within the host country and its related psychological and behavioural problems.

In terms of questioning any environmental influences, as Eckert (2006) states, adaptation of a new environment is affiliated with the people in that environment, the places one lives in, and the ethnic/religious groups to which one belongs. Therefore, the participants' early living environment, friends, employment, study process and the social support situations as well as their emotional states before offending were explored in order to gain a primary insight on their satisfaction/disappointment when they moved to the new environment, in this case, New Zealand.

As mentioned earlier, acculturative stress could be one of the predictive factors of some psychological and behavioural problems (Berry, 2005; Chen, Mallinckrodt & Mobley, 2002; Heppner, 2006). It is possible that these accumulated psychological and behavioural problems could contribute to some of the criminal activities. According to this concept, the third segment of the questionnaire extends the exploration on whether social issues such as interpersonal or environmental related financial and/or employment difficulties, lack of support, language barriers, antisocial peer pressure, feeling of inferiority, lack of

appreciation and excess culture shock were present and contributing factors to their offending.

It was theorised that enquiring into the offenders' self-reflection and self-censure on their crimes might reveal underlying causes of the offending (Ward & Maruna, 2007; Ward & Salmon, 2009; Whitehead, Ward & Collie, 2007). Therefore, in the self-reflecting section, the questions were designed to elicit information about any environmental factors that could have been overlooked in the previous sections.

Summary

The increasing number of Chinese immigration has led to significant concern about the sociocultural issues that could affect their quality of life, psychological well-being and cultural integration. Given varied and contradictory cultural heritage and social norms between collectivist communities and individualistic societies, Chinese immigrants with strong cultural identity and poor social adjustment skills in Western societies could encounter intense psychological challenges and severe acculturative stress. Low linguistic proficiency and problematic sociocultural integration are suggested to be the main sources of psychological distress and delayed acculturation. Multination studies suggested that excess acculturative stress related mental problems, language barriers, young age, low socio-economic status are correlated with foreign-born population offending.

Some research studies of anti-social behaviour and anti-social peer pressure among immigrant youth suggested that with poor language skills and inadequate environmental support in conjunction with stressful life events, this population is

more likely to develop anti-social behaviour and consequently commit serious offending. However, apart from sometimes ambiguous and extreme Chinese crime reports in the news media, there has been a void in the psychology and criminology fields of formal research on Chinese offenders in New Zealand.

As a Chinese immigrant, a previous international student, ESL speaker and a researcher in the psychology field, I have an inherent interest in applying my research skills, psychology knowledge and language facility in an attempt to discover some answers which may lead to guiding and directing future resources to assist Chinese immigrants in natural acculturation and become good citizens. It is hoped this preliminary research will initiate some consideration in the fields of social psychology and immigrant criminology study. It is also hoped that this study can gather some baseline information and the results may assist in the reduction of immigrant crimes and/or the development of effective intervention programmes in corrections facilities.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

The initial application to conduct interviews with prisoners was crucial to this study. The external research approval was obtained after a period of interaction between the Department of Corrections and the researcher. Twenty-eight Chinese inmates were visited and 13 complete interviews were conducted among participants in custody at two of the corrections facilities in North Island, New Zealand: Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facilities (ARWCF) and Spring Hill Corrections Facility (SHCF). The researcher spent a considerable amount of time searching for literature but could not find any previous interview questions that had been designed for Chinese prisoners and used for similar research purposes. As a result, a 28 item questionnaire was designed for this particular study for the purpose of detecting social issues that Chinese prisoners could be encountering before their offending. This chapter will begin with a description of the initial contact with the authorities in order to set up visit schedules. The details of the interviews, the process of transcription and the content analysis will then be discussed.

The initial list of the potential participants

The initial list of all potential participants was provided by the Department of Corrections following the official approval of the research. All inmates on the initial list were incarcerated in three prisons in North Island, New Zealand: ARWCF, SHCF and Waikeria Prison. The list included 45 male and female inmates who were selected as possible participants of the study based on their Chinese-sounding names and/or Chinese nationality. The researcher then chose

twenty-nine inmates from the list on the grounds of prisoners' Chinese ethnicity regardless of their gender, age, country of birth and offender status (i.e. sentenced or remands accused). One Chinese male prisoner was later excluded at the suggestion of the Department of Corrections for security and economic reasons as he was jailed in a High Security Unit and was the only one in Waikeria Prison, Te Awamutu. When the final visit schedule was established, 6 female inmates aged from 26 to 31 from the Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility (ARWCF) and 22 male inmates aged from 22 to 58 from the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (SHCF) were selected as potential participants.

Visit and interview schedule

The security manager of each prison was assigned as a liaison to organize and support each visit and interview schedules for the study. The researcher contacted the liaison personnel through emails and telephone to explain the interview process and to set up visit timetables and sequence.

In the first week of working at the ARWCF, the researcher visited 5 out of 6 female potential participants (one had been released) and obtained each participant's consent. In contrast, visiting and conducting male interviews in SHCF took three weeks to complete due to the number of the potential participants and the complexity of the visit process. In sum, 9 males out of 22 inmates consented to participating in the study however 8 out of the 9 completed the interview.

Formal participants and their categories of offending

Five Chinese female participants from the ARWCF aged from 26 to 31 years and 8 Chinese male participants from the SHCF aged from 22 to 44 years completed interviews for this study. Table 1 shows 2 female and 5 male participants reported their offending as illicit drug dealing. Two life-sentenced male participants committed kidnapping and murder, and one male participant reported his sentence was a result of a conviction for selling stolen goods. Two female participants' imprisonment was for their assault on others and the remaining one was accused of manslaughter but had not yet been sentenced.

Table 1
Formal participants and their categories of offending

| Number of participants | Gender | Type of offence |
|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 2 | Female | Drug dealing |
| 2 | Female | Assault |
| 1 | Female | Accused manslaughter |
| 5 | Male | Drug dealing |
| 2 | Male | Kidnapping & murder |
| 1 | Male | Selling stolen goods |

Interviews

Due to the interviewer's Chinese cultural background and language advantage, these Chinese participants could choose to speak Mandarin or English in their interviews. Twelve out of 13 participants chose to speak Mandarin and only one male participant spoke English during their interviews.

In the ARWCF and the SHCF, each participant was called in to an interview room where the researcher was waiting. After self-introduction and a warm-up conversation, the research information was explained to the potential respondent and then she/he was invited to participate in the interview. Following the agreement, the participant's consent form was signed by the inmate and the researcher explained the interview questions and the participant's rights fully and voluntarily. Each participant received a set of hard copy documentation (which is attached in the appendices) including an "information sheet for participants", a "consent form for participant", and a "question sheet of the interview". The audio record request was explained to each participant and 4 out of 5 female participants, and 6 out of 8 male participants consented to the recording during the interview and the use of the information in the research report.

All interviews were completed and the duration ranged from 36 minutes (the shortest) to 3 hours (the longest). The researcher interviewed each participant individually according to the pre-designed but semi-structured questions. The researcher asked one question at a time and the participants were allowed to respond at length and with as much or as little detail as they wanted. Prompt questions were asked if the responses were incomplete or the participants were hesitant in responding to certain questions. However, the participants could refuse to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with (although this did not happen in all interviews conducted in this study). All responses were recorded either by handwriting or via the audio recorder.

Interview questions

The interview questions focused on social issues and consisted of 4 segments (28 questions) including: demographics, childhood and life before the offence, crisis period in New Zealand, the exploration of the offence and expectations for the future.

The demographics section of the interview was conducted to establish rapport between the researcher and the interviewee and explore the basic information of the participants. Questions include age, the hometown, the ethnicity of the participant, and the age of her/his first offending. During this section, the interviewer applied her cultural knowledge to initiate conversation and establish trust, for example, exchanging some developmental information about the participant's hometown and discussing his or her memory of the time when they left China.

The second part of the interview focused on the situation before the offence including childhood experiences, new arrival in New Zealand and social support and emotional states before the offending. The questions consist of childhood experiences, parental and sibling relationships, original purposes for travel to New Zealand, living circumstances in a new environment, social networks and emotional states before offending. In this section, the interviewer maintained the rapport and reinforced the trust during the childhood exploration with respect and empathy in order to commence the exploration of the environmental issues the participants may have experienced. In the process of exploring any influence from social networks and the participants' emotional states, they were given

enough time to allow for contemplation and discussion with the interviewer. In many occasions, the participants returned to previous questions and provided supplementary information.

The third segment was designed to be the extension of the second part of the questionnaire and included questions exploring the situation immediately before their offending. These questions were targeted to find out whether social issues such as interpersonal or environmental related financial and/or employment difficulties, lack of support, language barriers, antisocial peer pressure, feeling of inferiority or racial discrimination, lack of appreciation and excess culture conflicts were present and contributing to their offending.

In the final section, a question was designed to find out the participants' beliefs of the main causes of their offending. This self-reflection prompt was designed to draw any additional information about other factors that could have been overlooked in the previous sections. Finally, two questions on the present social/family support and the future expectation of the offender completed the interview.

Translation and transcriptions

During the interview processes, the majority of the participants spoke Mandarin or Cantonese, except one male participant who spoke English. Both written and audio interview content were translated from Chinese to English verbatim so that the content analysis could proceed.

Content analysis

Content analysis has been recognised for more than half a century as an objective, systematic and reliable method for communication analysis and has commonly used across a range of disciplines including media science, psychology, sociology, and business management (Bernard, 1952; Holisti, 1968; Krippendorff, 2004). According to White and Marsh (2006), content analysis is an empirical tool to study texts of open-ended questions, questionnaires and interviews with participants. It was therefore considered to be appropriate for analysing prisoner interview conversations. The process of content analysis can be flexible and carried out in a variety of different ways.

The content analysis of this study included four steps: overall reading; categorising meaning units and important words; identifying themes; and counting. The first reading of all transcripts and highlighting some outstanding or representative words and phrases led to the formulation of some basic ideas of participants' responses. The second reading was used to categorise the responses of each (group of) questions into different meanings/ levels in order to facilitate the following theme identification. The third step was to identify meaning units for each (group of) questions and to code these key phrases. For example, the responses to question 5 "tell me something about your childhood" were divided into 4 levels based on key words, phrases and inference meanings of 13 individual transcriptions, including the first level: "excellent/ very happy/ caring parents/loving family/quite happy", the second level: "it was ok/normal/ not bad/we were ordinary family/did not have strong feeling", the third level: "not very happy/ I was not a happy boy", and the fourth level: "I have never felt

love/physical punishment/ neglected”. Finally, the transcriptions were reviewed again and the numbers of various responses were counted and matched into different meaning units so the final results and explanations could be carried out. Some responses of certain questions overlapped, for instance, the question “emotional state experienced before offending” obtained multiple responses from each participant and every meaning unit/phrase/inference was counted.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

The results of the interviews are discussed according to the categories and number of responses to the questions (which are attached in Appendix B). Some responses were analysed individually due to their independent nature. For example, the questions such as “how would you describe your childhood?” and “why did you originally come to New Zealand?” were analysed individually. Other responses were studied contextually based on the question’s correlated characteristics, such as answers to: “If you were employed, did you talk to any people in your work place?” or “What kind of responses did you receive when you asked for help?”

The nine tables (from Table 2 to Table 10) below are drawn based on the categories of the responses of each question and the number of responses associated with the matching category. For example, the fifth question (tell me about your childhood) was identified as having five categories “spoilt child”, “excellent/ very happy.../the centre of my family”, “normal/ OK.../peaceful”, “not happy/ not a happy boy”, and “neglected/...physically punished” from all participants’ transcripts. The associated number of responses for each category was recorded in the next horizontal cell. Some questions with multiple responses from the participants have been individually labelled and explained.

Table 2 shows the details of the participants’ demographic information.

Participants in this study came from seven provinces and the Shanghai city of China and were aged from 22 to 44 years at the time of the interviews. The actual offending age of these inmates ranged from 19 to 43 years. All participants

identified themselves as Chinese and 3 out of the 8 of male inmates and 3 out of the 5 female prisoners reported that they also have New Zealand citizenship.

Table 2
Participants' demographic information

| Age | Hometown | Age of offending | *Number of responses | Ethnicity | *Number of responses |
|-----|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 22 | Shanghai | 21 | 1 | Chinese with NZ citizenship | 3,F3 |
| ? | Jiangsu province | 26 | F1 | | |
| 34 | Shanghai | 24,30 | 1 | | |
| 27 | | 26 | F1 | | |
| 31 | Hunan province | 31 | F1 | | |
| 33 | Guangdong Province | 32 | 1 | | |
| 25 | Guangdong Province | 19 | 1 | Chinese without NZ citizenship | 5,F2 |
| 26 | Sichuan Province | 21 | 1 | | |
| 27 | Guangdong Province | 26 | 1 | | |
| 28 | | 27 | F1 | | |
| 28 | Hunan province | 25 | F1 | | |
| 33 | Hubei Province | 31 | 1 | | |
| 44 | Taiwan | 34 | 1 | | |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;
An Arabic number= the number of male responses

In response to question 5, which explored participants' childhood experiences, five levels were identified, namely "spoilt child with unlimited freedom", "excellent/very happy...", "normal/...ordinary", "not happy", and "neglected/...physically punished".

Table 3 shows that 4 male participants and 1 female participant responded "ordinary/...peaceful" when the childhood experience was discussed. Some examples are:

My childhood was OK. Not much to say, I went to school like other children... (A male participant)

It's ordinary, I should say, I was a normal boy... (A male participant)

It was peaceful I can't recall any extremely good or bad things. (A male participant)

I grew up in a normal family. My parents were ordinary people and I was an ordinary child those days. (A female participant)

Table 3
Participants' childhood experiences, parents' relationship and siblings

| Childhood experience | *Number of responses | Parents' relationship | *Number of responses | siblings | *Number of responses |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Spoilt child with unlimited freedom | F1 | Very close | 2 | only child | 5,F 4 |
| Excellent/very (quite) happy/really close with my parents/caring parents/the centre of my family | 2,F2 | Normal/ not bad | 5,F1 | Brother (s) and sister(s) | 3,F 1 |
| Normal/ OK/ordinary/ peaceful | 4,F1 | Negative tension between parents | 1 | | |
| Not happy/not a happy boy | 2 | Separated/ Divorced/ single parent | F4 | | |
| Neglected/ very lonely/ a loner/ cry easily/ physically punished | F1 | | | | |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;
An Arabic number= the number of male responses

Four participants (2 males and 2 females) recalled their childhood with pleasant experiences. Some response examples are:

I was the centre of my family, not only among my parents but also my grandparents from my mother and father's sides. (A male participant)

My childhood was excellent, mum and dad love me very much. (A male participant)

Me and my parents were really close and we had a lot fun together... (A female participant)

They were caring parents. I had whatever I needed for school or play... (A female participant)

Two male participants reported unhappy childhoods. They said:

We were outsiders and poor with little money and land, the locals didn't like us. My parents had to work very hard to feed us. I can't recall any happiness in my childhood.

I was not a happy boy, I could feel my parents' tension every day, and it was like I was in the middle of a cold war.

One female participant described herself as "a spoilt girl with everything she wanted".

Another female respondent reported her childhood was "neglected/...physically punished". She described her childhood as:

I had never felt happy, because my mum didn't want to take care of me and my siblings, so we had to live with my grandmother and my uncle and aunt. They only cared about their own children. I got punishment such as spanking on my back or buns if I cried or didn't respond as quick as they wanted me to...I was very lonely, my brother and sister didn't like me...

Thus, the two most frequent responses indicated that most participants' childhood experiences were happy and peaceful. However, there was a minority of responses such as "over spoilt" and "neglected with physically punished" received.

Table 3 also illustrates parents' relationship styles and whether the participants had siblings. Four types of parents' relationship were categorized, namely: very close", "normal, negative tension and "separated/...single parent" based on

participants' responses. Two male participants described their parent's relationship as "very close" while 5 participants recalled "negative tension" or even "separated/divorced". The remainder (6) of the participants explained the relationship between their parents as "normal". It is obvious that the majority of the participants responded non-positively or negatively when recalling the relationship between their parents.

In response to the existence of siblings, 9 out of 13 of the participants are the only child in their families while 4 of them have brother(s) and/or sister(s).

Table 4
Purposes and age of coming to New Zealand and living conditions

| Purposes of coming to NZ | *Number of responses | **Age of arrival | **Living conditions and neighbours | *Number of responses |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Visit | 1 | 20 | Living with friends | 1 |
| Immigration with family | 3 | 13,3,14 | Family home with Kiwi neighbours | 3 |
| | F1 | 24 | Living in relatives' home | F1 |
| Family reunion | F1 | ? | Living with boy-friend/husband and children | F1 |
| Business | 1 | 41 | Motel | 1 |
| study | 3,F2 | 17,23,14, 19,17 | Homestay and then moved out with Chinese friends/ family | 3, F3 |
| Boredom/admire Western culture | F1 | 16 | | |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number= the number of male responses

**Corresponding with the previous column

In response to question 7, almost every respondent reported the age of their first arrival voluntarily. Five responses (38%) are international students and with the age of their first arrival ranging from 14 to 23. Four participants reported that they immigrated to New Zealand with family members when they were 3, 13, 14 and

24 years of age. One female participant described her move to New Zealand as the consequence of her boredom in China and yearning for freedom in Western countries while another girl and her family came to join their relatives. Only one participant reported his purpose on arrival as:

...nothing but a visit of New Zealand since I had been deported from Australia and had nothing to do...

A middle aged male prisoner declared that he was a business person and came to New Zealand to trade in interior hardware.

In terms of living conditions in New Zealand, 6 participants answered “homestay for a while and then moved out to live with Chinese friends” and 5 were international students. Those who immigrated with their families responded identically as “living in family home with Kiwi neighbours”, except one female who lived in her relative’s home.

In sum, the majority of participants travelled to New Zealand to study and they lived in homestay for a while and then moved out to flat with their Chinese friends. Approximately a third of the participants immigrated to New Zealand with their families and lived in their own homes with local neighbours.

Table 5 (page 35) indicates the participants’ friendship/peer group circumstances and occupations before their offending. The most notable fact is that the Chinese participants in this study reported having no Kiwi friends at all before their offending, except one whose first language is English rather than Chinese (could not speak any Chinese but could understand simple conversations) due to immigration at an early age (3 years old). Among 12 out of 13 participants, 3 male

and 2 female participants reported they had no close friends at all and stated that they did not trust anybody. Below are some examples:

I didn't have any close friends, I only use people who I believe can help or complete the mission. I didn't trust anybody even my parents, they could destroy your plan if you told them what you want to do...I only told them the parts they needed to do... (A male participant who committed kidnapping)

Other people only want to use you or rely on you when you have power...when my father left us and my family lost our influence in China, my best friends turned against me...when I needed help from friends they left you faster than you could imagine...there is no friendship only using others and being used... (A male participant who committed drug smuggling)

I know people but it doesn't mean they are my close friends, right? I am old enough to think through and do things on my own...people judge you based on how much you earn from the business, how rich you are... there is no real friends only business associates...(A male participant who committed drug smuggling)

I had a lot of acquaintances but no close friends. They were my neighbours and my boyfriend's business associates (her boyfriend was the one who posted precursor chemicals to her). My boyfriend told me that I could not trust anybody only him because other people would report our business to the police. (A female participant who committed illicit drug distribution)

I didn't have close friends because they were jealous of me and my lifestyle...some people tried to approach me only because of my money, they wanted to have free accommodation and meals when they come to Auckland...I knew what they really wanted, I didn't care about their greed but didn't trust them as friends. (A female participant)

Three participants reported "1-2" close Chinese friends around them before their offending and the remainder of the participants stated that Chinese associates made up their peer groups prior to their imprisonment.

Former classmates, workmates and business partners were reported as the main sources of friendship for these participants. Three participants stated that their friends were a mixed group of people with different occupations. Some

participants had established their friendships with their Chinese drinking friends, neighbours/flatmates and homemakers.

Table 5
Participants' friend base and occupational circumstances before offending

| Number of friends | *Number of responses | Friends' occupations | *□Number of responses | Study/ employment before offending | *Number of responses | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Chinese Friends | | Business people | 2,F2 | Self-employed | 3 | | |
| 0 | 3,F2 | Students/ classmates | 3,F2 | Employed in a Chinese company/ shop | 1,F2 | | |
| 1-2 | 1,F2 | Mixed (students, small business owners, employed, unemployed, drug dealers) | 3 | | | Study with part-time jobs | 1, F2 |
| 3-4 | | | | | | Doing nothing | 2 |
| 5-6 | 1 | | | | | Study only | 1 |
| 7-8 | 1 | | | | | | |
| more | 1,F1 | Workmates | F4 | Employed in a Kiwi company | F1 | | |
| Kiwi Friends | | Drinking friends | F1 | | | | |
| 0 | 7,F5 | neighbours | F1 | | | | |
| 1-2 | 1 | housewives | F1 | | | | |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□overlapped responses

Six categories were identified from the question of participants' occupational circumstances before offending, namely, self-employed, employed in a Chinese company, employed in a Kiwi company, study with part-time jobs, doing nothing. In particular, "self-employed", "employed in a Chinese company", and "study with part-time jobs" received 3 responses each. Two male participants claimed that they did nothing but "wandering around" looking for opportunities to make easy and quick money. A female and a male responded as "employed in a Kiwi company" and "study only", respectively.

This indicates that most of the participants in this study had not established any friendships with local New Zealanders before their offending. Their friends were mostly previous Chinese classmates, workmates, and (legal/illegal) business associates. Before their imprisonment, most of the participants were employed and/or studying with only 2 out of 13 participants claiming that they were doing nothing.

Question 13 received seven kinds of responses which are outlined in Table 6 (page 39): Positive social support, limited help from family and friends, support from illegal business associates, did not need any support, did not have any support, and negative feedback from other people. A majority of participants (7 males and 3 females) did not receive any positive social support at all for diverse reasons. Below are some examples of their responses:

People only cheated on me, three big guys (police officers) forced me on the ground to eat dirt just because I didn't understand their questions, my lawyer got my money and left me to confess and get criminal records, my ex cheated on me and took my boy's custody away from me, my ex boyfriend hit me and threatened me to death, my relatives humiliated me and threatened to punch me in front of my children, ...what else can I get... (A female participant)

I was the one to support my younger siblings and sick mother and there was no way I would tell them any of my problems... (A male participant)

I didn't get any support from others. I didn't need any though...I fix my own problems... (A male participant)

You don't tell others about your [drug] business, you only get advice from your associates...my boy friend called me 20 times a day and 6 seconds each call...he told me don't trust anybody but him, he won't let anything bad happen to me...(A female participant)

Two female participants reported receiving inadequate family and/or friend support when they encountered problematic situations. The examples are:

You don't tell your parents everything, I even didn't tell them my cohabitation with my boyfriend, as a result, I couldn't tell them anything about his [drug] business and the huge amount of money I spent and my suspicions...

My mother was very weak emotionally and physically at the time because of her own broken marriage... I didn't want to bother her, plus, what can she do for me, only cry...

The question about "emotional states" before offending obtained a variety of responses from the participants. The diverse answers formed twelve categories from the most depressed or suicidal mood to being relaxed or even having feelings of excitement.

The most common emotional state the participants experienced was being "under huge pressure" and the physical/emotional symptoms manifested in different ways.

Some examples are:

I couldn't sleep whenever I thought about my [drug] business. I had to take sleeping pills every night... (A male participant)

I felt there was no way out, I smoked a lot those days, I was scared about someone finding out, I was anxious about things not going well...my boyfriend called me every day from China and told me what to do...I didn't want to do it and I told him, we argued constantly, but he said this was the only way of making money for our future and everything would be just fine... (A female participant)

I lost everything, my boy's custody, many years of saving, my reputation and I had to suffer the physical abuse and emotional cheating every day...I was frustrated and devastated... (A female participant)

There were 5 responses categorized as "desperate/one-off risk taken". For example, a male participant described his feeling before the offending:

I was thinking about it [kidnapping] every minute, we had to do it, I didn't know why, but I was desperate to do it, get the money or life in prison... I made my decision...

Some participants also reported ambivalent feelings before their offending.

Particularly, two female participants used “confused” to express their emotional states. Below are some examples:

It was very confusing at the time, my boyfriend told me to do it so we could have some money for our future, but I didn’t want to do it because I was terrified every minute...

I was so confused because I knew it was wrong to do it and I knew the money was not clean, but I just got so overwhelmed by that kind of lifestyle...the luxurious hotels, overseas holidays, First class air travels and the high-end goods...

A male participant’s response indicated his ambivalence before his offending:

I didn’t know what to do, I thought I would be put in jail if I got caught but I was greedy, I guess, my friend told me it was a business of million dollar profit...

Three responses showed that the participants believed that luck was on their side and that they would not be caught although they were actually semi-prepared for the worst consequence. A male participant even predicted his imprisonment time from previous similar cases and weighed the benefits and the costs of his crime.

Only 2 participants expressed being terrified or scared by what they were going to do and what would happen to them. A young male participant explained his “fear”:

I was terrified when I found out the shop was involved with stolen goods, so I quit...

Two female participants reported that they had experienced severe depression and had made multiple suicide attempts.

Table 6
Participants' social support and emotional states

| Social support | *Number of responses | Emotional states | *□Number of responses |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Positive support from people around | 1 | Depressed/suicidal | F2 |
| | | Under huge pressure: sleepless, stressful, manipulated, anxious, hopeless, devastated, frustrated | 5,F5 |
| Family/friends support but not enough or they did not know how to support me as I covered my emotions | F2 | Terrified/Scared | 1, F1 |
| | | overwhelmed | F1 |
| | | | |
| Support from illegal business associates | 1,F1 | insecure | F1 |
| Did not need any support | 3,F1 | Ambivalent/confused | 1, F2 |
| Did not have any support/ Needed to support others but nobody supported me | 3 | Alcohol abused | F1 |
| | | responsible | F1 |
| | | Desperate/one-off/win or life in prison | 2,F3 |
| Negative treatment from other people | F1 | I could be lucky/I could get away with it /semi-prepared | 3 |
| | | Calm/no big deal/fully prepared/ Had no alert at all | 2 |
| | | Excited feelings | 1 |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□ Some participants expressed multiple emotional states before their offending

Surprisingly, 2 male participants described their emotional state as “calm, not a big deal, fully prepared” and not alarmed at all.

Alcohol abuse, feeling a sense of responsibility (to commit the crime) to avenge her family and being “excited” were emotional states that were each indicated once.

To summarise the above information, some participants believed that they did not need support from others while others expressed that help from others was absent or inadequate before their offending. For question 14, the most common emotional state among the participants was being under “huge pressure”. Some participants expressed the desire to take a “desperate risk”, while others indicated ambivalent thoughts of getting away with the crime. Depression and suicidal attempts were present in 40% of the female participants yet two male participants reported being calm and fully prepared psychologically before their offending.

The categories of responses and response numbers of difficulties the participants encountered (the 15th and the 16th questions), the people they approached to seek help and the responses they received before their offending (from question 17 to 22) are displayed in Table 7 (page 41).

Eight categories were identified from the responses to the difficulties the participants encountered before their offending. Five participants indicated “no difficulties” while the rest of the participants expressed diverse and sometimes multiple hardships. Three responses each fell into the categories of “intimate relationship dissolution” and “financial hardship for living”, while 2 responses expressed “social isolation” problems. The remainder of the four categories, namely, residency application, financial hardship for study, parents’ broken marriage and psychological and physical oppression shared one confirmation each.

Table 7
Difficulties and help seeking

| Difficulties before offending | *□ Number of responses | Who did the participant approach to seek help | *□ Number of responses | **The responses received when participant sought for help | *Number of responses |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| intimate relationship dissolution | 2,F1 | Did not seek help | 3,F1 | | |
| Residency application | 1 | Did not need help | 4 | | |
| No difficulties | 4,F1 | Did not tell anybody about the difficulties | 2,F2 | | |
| Financial hardship for living | 2,F1 | Banks/ financial investors | 1 | **Negative responses | 1 |
| Financial hardship for study | 1 | Chinese (Church) friends | 1, F1 | **Inadequate help | 1,F1 |
| Parents' broken marriage | 1 | Kiwi friend(s) | F1 | **Communication difficulties | F1 |
| social isolation | F2 | Parent(s), sibling(s) | F2 | ** Inefficient help: parents do not speak English and depend on my help/ family member could not help | F2 |
| Psychological and physical oppression | F1 | | | | |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□Difficulties and help seeking objects may be multiple

** Corresponding responses with the previous column

In terms of people the participant was seeking help from (questions 17 to 21), there were 4 responses each in categories of “did not seek help”, “did not need help”, and “did not tell anybody about the difficulties”. Two female participants

asked for help from their family members but received “inefficient help”. The examples of their responses are:

I told my mother and my sister a little bit about my problems here, but they are far away from me and they have their own problems...sometimes they only say ‘be patient’ or ‘my poor daughter’...

My father couldn’t drive or speak any English, so I had to take the responsibilities to get our money back. He relied on me, the whole family relied on me, what could I do?

Two of the participants reported that they “sought assistance from Chinese (church) friends”, but that “inadequate help” was received. There was an isolated confirmation in each category of asking help from “Kiwi friends” and “Banks/financial investors”, but consequent “communication difficulties” and “negative response” manifested, respectively. A female participant explained her action of seeking help from a Kiwi friend as “she was the only one willing to help me, but I couldn’t express my emotion and the tough situation in English properly, it was really frustrating”.

To sum the above information from Table 7, it is clear that intimate relationship conflicts and living costs were the most common difficulties that our participants encountered. Most participants did not seek any help at all while a few attempted to seek help from family members, (Chinese) friends and financial investors and received inadequate assistance or met language barriers.

Table 8 (page 43) consists of responses from the participants on language barriers and racial discrimination. Five categories of response indicate degrees of language barriers for the participants in New Zealand society. Seven out of 13 responses indicate no feeling of language barriers due to little contact with English speakers.

Three responses from the participants who did communicate with local people indicated the severest level of language barriers. Two participants reported that language barriers existed in the early stage of their arrival in New Zealand. A male participant claimed English as his first language while another one believed the barriers evolved not only due to the language but also the differences of culture and social ideologies.

Table 8
Participants' experience of language barriers and racial discrimination

| Language barriers | *□Number of responses | Racial discrimination | *Number of responses |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| English is my first language | 1 | Not at all | 1, F1 |
| Did not feel language barriers as I did not have any contact with Kiwis/ did not know because had no Kiwi friends/not much talking with Kiwis, so not so bad/had no long or deep conversation with NZ people | 5,F2 | Didn't feel any/ I had no contact with Kiwis anyway | 6, F2 |
| Yes, in the beginning of my arrival to NZ | 1,F1 | Yes, some are non-sympathetic people/ they think we are stupid | 1, F1 |
| Yes, not only language barriers but also culture and social understanding | 1 | | |
| Yes, language is my big barrier of expressing my feeling to Kiwi friends/ customers/ police/ lawyers | 1, F2 | Was treated badly because of my ethnicity | F1 |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□Multiple responses

The majority of the participants (8 responses) claimed no racial discrimination experiences as they did not have any serious relationship with New Zealanders. A male participant who speaks only English and a female former Kiwi company

employee stated that there was no racial discrimination existing within their experience. However, three participants reported the manifestation of racial discrimination as inconspicuous to obvious depending on situations.

Two self-analysing questions on communication deficits and possible causes for offending and the response details are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Participants' communication difficulties and self-contemplations of their offending

| Reasons of not communicating | *□Number of responses | Main causes of the offending | *□Number of responses |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Embarrassment/ loss of face (dignity) | 2,F1 | Lack of legislation knowledge | F1,2 |
| Immature thinking: I can fix it | 1 | Impulsion | F2 |
| Personality/avoiding help-seeking behaviour; wouldn't listen to others ; personal characteristics of not to bother other; Distrust others; big brother doesn't confide | 8, F4 | Anti-depressant medication and alcohol | F2 |
| | | Greed for money/ money is the only evidence of success | 4, F1 |
| | | Boyfriend manipulation/ boyfriend influence | F2 |
| | | Immature and lack of life experience/too young to have too much freedom | 3,F2 |
| Being Manipulated not to tell others | F1 | Peer pressure | F1 |
| Cultural differences | 2 | Family and social influence | 1 |

*F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□Some participants may have multiple responses

Most of the participants gave multiple answers to these two sensitive questions.

Particularly, avoiding help-seeking behaviour, personality and mistrust of other

people were explained as the reasons for not communicating with others (12 in total). Some examples are:

I didn't listen to other's opinions... once I decided something nobody could change my mind. I was just like that...so I didn't need to tell others... (A male participant)

There was no need to bother others. It was my characteristics to not bother others...you deal with your own problems... that's what I believe... (A male participant)

I didn't trust others; I only asked them to do things that I believed they had the ability to complete. I didn't discuss my thoughts with anybody, that's my rule... (A male participant)

You don't tell other people what you feel or think including your parents. It is my way of life. I only told my parents things that I thought appropriate for them to know... (A female participant)

I have been big brother to my younger siblings for years and it is in my blood to listen to and help their problems not to confide... (A male participant)

Three responses fell into the category of embarrassment as the reason for not communicating effectively with others. Feelings of embarrassment and losing face (dignity) were common when participants responded to the question of the reasons for not discussing their financial difficulties with others. The oldest participant of this study described his inferior feeling as "If other people knew that you have no money, you can't even lift your head up in front of them and they see you as a failure..."

Two participants believed cultural differences were the reasons of not communicating with or seeking help from local people. They perceived New Zealanders as lacking in understanding about other cultures, and suggested that the communication barrier is difficult to overcome.

A male participant who had been raised in New Zealand described his communication problem with his parents as he wanted to show his independence. He believed that his immaturity was the reason for over-estimating his personal strength to overcome the life challenges. He explained “I thought it was not a big deal, I can fix it, so I didn’t tell my family and friends”.

A female participant responded “being manipulated not to tell” was the fundamental reason for not communicating with other people. She said:

My boyfriend told me to not trust anybody, don’t tell others about our business, he is the only one who won’t hurt me and we will get married and start a new life in China after we make a lot of money.

For question 26, 5 responses each fell into the category of “greed for money” and “immature and too young to have too much freedom”. The participants who stated that greed for money was their main reason for committing a crime also believed that material wealth was the only evidence to prove personal success and gain *mianzi* (reputation). A male offender described his definition of success as “the consequence of getting money without worrying about the process and means”.

Another male participant claimed “nobody cares about how you get the money but how much you get”. One of the female participants who claimed that her boyfriend’s extremely generous spending on her was one of the reasons for her offending also admitted her own greed for money and her belief of money bringing *mianzi* (in this context *mianzi* represents privileges) led to her demise.

Five participants believed their young age and associated psychological and financial independence were the main reasons leading to their offending. A male participant explained:

I was 17 when I first came to New Zealand. I didn't have any life experience as my parents used to manage everything of mine. I even believed a theory of killing a human is just as evil as killing a pig, so only those vegetarians may accuse me if I murder a man...

A male offender described his lifestyle in Australia as a 14 year old teenager:

All of sudden, you had to decide everything for yourself. It was too easy to stop study and just do whatever you wanted to do, like drinking or gambling or, for me I chose to earn some quick money and being more independent...

A female participant stated:

I came to New Zealand when I was 17 and later that year I was cheated several times by my friends and those agents. I was dying for a reliable shoulder that I could go to, so I trusted my boyfriend and did whatever he wanted me to do...

Three responses of "lack of legislation knowledge" were obtained on self-analysed reasons of offending. A female participant explained her offending as an accident but not a crime:

I went to that lady's house and only wanted our money back, I was 7 months pregnant and I didn't intend to harm anybody, it was an accident...but my lawyer told me that forced entry into another people's property no matter what the reason is an offence...I was shocked...

A former male computer shop assistant complained:

I was suspicious about the goods I was dealing with but I thought I was an employee and did whatever the boss required me to do... I have no idea why I ended up in jail...

Other categories of the participants' underlying offending contributors such as impulsiveness, alcohol and drugs effects, and manipulation by boyfriends or influence by peers obtained 2 responses each.

A male participant who immigrated in his teens claimed that his parents' unhappy marriage and negative social pressure were leading factors in his offending.

In sum, the most common response on the reason of communication deficit shows in Table 9 is “personality avoiding help-seeking/...big brother does not confide”. The categories of “greed for money” and “immature and lack of life experience” are equally important factors when participants discuss the leading causes of their offending.

Table 10 shows the multiple responses of present contact and the future expectations from the participants. Parental contact and support was the most popular response among younger participants of this study. Siblings, friends and spouse form the remainder of the responses although these responses are in a minority.

Table 10
Participants' contacts and expectations for the future

| Contact with family and friends | *□Number of responses | expectations of the future | *□Number of responses |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Brothers and sisters | 2 | Going back to China and starting over | 4, F3 |
| friends | 2 | Going to another country if there is an opportunity | 1, F1 |
| parents | 7,F3 | Need treatment for her depression and reunion with her children | F1 |
| wife | 1 | parole success | F1 |
| | | Change attitudes towards money and relationships, be a strong minded person | F1 |
| | | Staying in NZ: start over in NZ; do more study in NZ; establish a small business | 2 |
| | | Not coming back to jail anymore/ earn money but not illegally | 1 |
| | | Have not thought about it | 1 |

* F with an Arabic number = the number of female responses;

An Arabic number=the number of male responses

□Some participants may have multiple responses

Seven responses of “going back to China” were given when the question of future expectations was presented. Two responses each fell into “going to another country” and “staying in New Zealand” indicated some respondents’ future plans. Female participants’ responses were more practical and included such expectations as psychological treatment for depression and parole success. However, two male participants seemed ambiguous about their future and responded “it is too early to think about it” and “... still need to earn money but not illegally and not coming back to jail”, respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Consistent with the hypotheses, the interviews revealed socio-cultural issues existed among this group of participants before their offending. It appears that social isolation or separation from the host society was the most common factor among this group of participants. Their problematic social integration into New Zealand society may be attributed to: collectivistic beliefs and related voluntary separation from the host society; avoiding help-seeking behaviour; and low language proficiency. These problems restricted the participants' social interaction with others and contributed to the development of acculturative stress and attitude of mistrust. Meanwhile, peer pressure and manipulation from antisocial associates was also commonly stated.

Most of the participants in this study reported that they felt stressed and experienced a lack of purpose and/ or a lack of sense of meaning in their lives prior to their offending. In association with this, many manifested psychological and behavioural problems such as suicidal behaviour, alcohol abuse, depression, and anxiety. With relatively trouble-free childhoods, most of these participants had clear criminal records before they travelled to New Zealand, and therefore, it could be suggested the above sociocultural factors may have contributed to their offending in this country.

Social isolation

As noted above, all participants of this investigation expressed having little social interaction with the host society or local individuals, except one who was actually raised in New Zealand. They either believed that New Zealanders have little

interest and/or understanding of their problems, or chose to restrict their friendships within their Chinese community. Some socio-psychological research suggested that social isolation for immigrants or international travellers can be a major source of acculturative stress which may adversely affect psychological well-being (Platt, 2009; Wong, Lam, Yan & Hung, 2004). For migrants from collectivistic cultures, social isolation, acculturative stress and low language proficiency usually occur interdependently and exacerbate each other (Kwan, 2009; Wang, 2006; Yeh & Huang, 1996; Yeh, Okubo, Ma, Shea, Ou & Pituc, 2008). It is hypothesised that in the present study, social isolation may have been the result of some or all of the following factors: language barrier related vicious circle of problematic communication with local people, avoiding help-seeking behaviour and the consequent poor social support; and voluntary separation from the host society in order to reduce the perceived feeling of embarrassment from language barrier and acculturative stress. Some overlapping references are inevitable in the following discussion due to: it is suggested that the collectivistic ideology is the essential cause of the aforementioned factors; and the inter-influential nature of these factors.

The language barrier

The issue of language problems for Chinese immigrants or students in English speaking countries is frequently discussed and is thought to affect many domains of employment, education, health care and social enjoyment (Chan & Quine, 1997; Lu, 2002; Mukherjee, 1999; Walker, Wu, Soothi & Parr, 1998; Wang, 2003). Language barrier-related interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal conflicts have been suggested as playing a role in acculturative stress, depression and poor

academic achievement for Chinese international students in Western societies (Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007; Yan, Berliner, 2011). To deal with the vicious circle of communication stress and frustration caused by language in English speaking countries, many Chinese nationals simply withdraw and return to their Chinese friends and terminate their interaction with local people (Frank, 2000; Huang, 1997; Yan & Berliner, 2011). Most participants in this study experienced language barriers in some stage of their residence in New Zealand with different severity. A majority of these participants utilised deliberate avoidance as a coping tactic in the very early stage of their settlement in New Zealand and disengaged from New Zealand society. Thus, the local language deficits may have minimised cultural interaction and hindered the cultural integration process of the participants in the current study, as a result, isolated them from New Zealand society.

In comparing the aforementioned studies on Chinese international students, the participants in this study expressed less stress and frustration from communication disruptions and/or breakdowns with New Zealanders simply because of their deliberate action of having very few contacts with locals. They voluntarily separated themselves from mainstream society and viewed this avoidance as “escaping from unnecessary complexity” and “keeping face”. Indeed, many of these participants showed significant concern about perceived stigma from the locals and some indicated little interest in speaking English. Although the choice seemed to ease their language and emotional expression difficulties, it meant they were segregated from the host society and had limited opportunities to establish local networks. As they had few Kiwi friends and did not attempt to seek help, the

participants in this study received little assistance from their academic institutions and local colleagues or employers.

In this study, the language barriers also restricted the participants' opportunities to learn about New Zealand social norms and legislation in order to become good citizens. Research has shown that many Chinese immigrants and/or international students with poor English language skills have limited their social interaction to co-nationals and persisted with their collectivistic ways of living in individualistic societies (Yan, Berliner, 2011; Yeh, 2006). The very limited Chinese communities and the unsuitable collectivistic beliefs become the only supporting resource and problem solving means, respectively, when they encounter difficult life situations. This may bring these immigrants into troublesome circumstances and trap them into problematic peer groups and render them vulnerable to manipulation by others (Curtis, Elan, Hudson & Kollars, 2002; Lintner, 2010).

Some of the participants of this study claimed their offending was an accident or mistake rather than a crime. They apparently applied Chinese social norms and acted without any knowledge of New Zealand legislation. More than half of the participants in this study stated that their friends or boyfriends who encouraged them to participate in illegal activities were the only people they could talk to or receive assistance from. Perhaps, these local legislation illiteracy and anti-social networks contributed to their offending as the peer encouragement or manipulation became the only legal assistance and social resource for the individual participants.

Voluntary separation

Consistent with the previous discussion on the collectivistic or the Chinese way of understanding in-group and out-group relationships, participants in this study manifested almost identical interpersonal patterns. Many of them reported having no involvement with New Zealanders but only interacting with a limited number of Chinese associates on a superficial level in order to conceal illegal business, protect self-identity and/or prevent losing face. A majority of the participants in this study also displayed help-seeking avoidance which is consistent with the previously mentioned phenomenon among Chinese immigrants in which they see help seeking as a sign of weakness and personal failure (Sun, Horn & Merritt, 2004). As a result, most of the participants in the present study established and maintained few genuine friendships and received poor social support before offending.

As discussed earlier, people of collectivistic cultures tend to have strong in-group and out-group concepts and less cooperation with out-group is common. In many Western societies, Chinese immigrants and/or international students are prone to consider themselves as outsiders and consequently suffer social deprivation and its related acculturative stress, or develop social distance, even negative attitudes towards mainstream societies (Abbott, Wong, Williams, Au & Young, 1991; Pan, Wong, Joubert & Chan, 2007). Unfamiliarity with local customs and broken speech may lead to perceived contempt and loss of dignity for Chinese immigrants. This “losing face” is perhaps one of the greatest acculturative stressors to people from collectivistic cultures, especially Chinese immigrants (Hui & Bond 2009). As discussed before, mianzi (face) which “refers to one’s

self-respect and positive social and individual value” (Goffman, 1972, p.5) is perhaps the most important consideration in terms of family or collective honour. As a result, to reduce the acculturative stress and avoid losing face, many Chinese people voluntarily minimise their interaction with local people and only communicate with their co-national friends (Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007; Yan, Berliner, 2011; Ye, 2006). Thus, the Chinese participants in this investigation may have applied the avoidance strategy of voluntary separation thereby initiating a vicious circle of social isolation. This in turn may have hindered their cultural understanding and language improvement resulting in further exclusion from the host society.

Psychological and behavioural problems

Positive life style with factors of healthy interests, supportive social networks, career aspirations and intimate relationships have been suggested as significant protective factors which can reduce psychological problems and social isolation and related negative emotion (King, Napa, 1998; Salmela-Aro & Schoon, 2005). Conversely, deprivation of social participation, family support and language proficiency among minority groups have been linked with various social disadvantages such as low socio-economic status, high unemployment rate and poor (mental) health condition, resulting in diminished life enjoyment and less occupational motivation (Platt, 2009; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca, 1988). Most probably, people from a collective society, such as mainland China, may perceive primary Western culture such as individual-value, self-reliance and personal goals as selfishness or a lack of concern for others. Chinese immigrant youth who come from a typical collectivistic culture tend to have

dependent relationships with their parents and a tendency for obedience in relation to their education providers and employers. This kind of relationship may have restricted their spontaneity and happiness and led to a variety of disorientations, depression and anxiety when they received little support and direction from any authoritative figures in an individualistic environment (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Consistent with these factors, most participants in this study expressed the view that their lives before offending were boring, purposeless and/or unhappy. Various reasons offered for this included a lack of motivation for study and working, lack of personal interests and hobbies, deprived friendships, broken intimate relationships and family disruptions.

Not surprisingly, many participants of this study claimed unsatisfactory social networks and negative attitudes towards mainstream society. New Zealand research indicates that an unfulfilled desire to make local friends and participate in activities with homestay families can lead to unhappiness and loneliness in Chinese youth (Campbell, 2004; Zhang & Brunton, 2011). Most of the participants in the current study reported negative experiences or unsuccessful communication with their previous homestay families. This first impression of New Zealanders may have prompted the participants' beliefs of being an outsider which partially contributed to undeveloped social networks. An unhappy experience and disappointing language learning practice may also lead to later decisions of moving in with other Chinese people and eventually living separately from the mainstream society.

Despite differences in experiences, the participants in this study reported psychological and behavioural problems such as suicide, depression, anger, frustration, distorted world views and extreme mental distress when they encountered life complications. Consistent with previous investigations, the participants in this study tended to have distorted beliefs and intense frustration when they frequently compared themselves with other individuals who seemed in a better financial position. Some stated that financial wealth was the only sign of success and to be proud of (*mianzi*) in their lives. Therefore, the desire to become extremely wealthy in a short time period by any means whatsoever could have prompted their risk-taking behaviour and/or offending.

In addition, some of the participants in this study expressed mistrust towards Chinese friends. They claimed that they had been financially and emotionally cheated by Chinese individuals whom they previously trusted. Curtis and colleagues (2002) suggest that collectivistic ideology on destroyed relationships/connections (*guanxi*) and damaged interpersonal respect (*mianzi*) may lead to serious relationship strains and psychological disturbance in Chinese nationals. In the current study, this psychological vulnerability may have precipitated some unpleasant but not unusual life events, such as dissolution of intimate relationship, unfaithful intimacies, and parents' broken marriage, becoming triggers to the participants' psychological and behavioural deterioration.

As a result, the current study shows that without New Zealand prosocial networks and trustworthy Chinese friends, these marginalized participants who were equipped with insufficient adaptabilities, distorted beliefs and ineffective problem

solving strategies were less likely to enjoy life and more likely to develop serious psychological problems or even turn to crime.

Adjustment disorder

It is possible that a few of the participants in this study had been suffering undiagnosed adjustment disorder (AD) before their offending as they were experiencing long-term socio-psychological deprivation and were encountering extremely stressful life events.

As discussed earlier, sudden environmental changes may be one of the contributors to the development of AD. First of all, most of the participants in the current study arrived in New Zealand in their teens from a one child family environment. They recalled their arrival to New Zealand as “life changing overnight”, from receiving parental assistance in all aspects of their lives to independently managing their financial, occupational and emotional matters. For example, some of this group of participants stated that too much/little money to spend, too much freedom, poor English skills, academic failure, difficulty in making new friends, and independent decision making were all stressful to deal with and resolve during the period before their offending . It was a huge adjustment, and for most of these participants the time when things went awry. It was during that time that many negative attitudes, antisocial behaviour, poor decision making methods and even rebellious beliefs were engendered.

Secondly, in the current study, participants’ self-reported psychological states were consistent with the symptoms of AD. Previous psychiatric history was not prominent in these cases. Approximately 70% of these participants experienced

extreme psychological pressure and showed symptoms of depression, suicidal behaviour, alcohol dependence, anxiety and anti-social beliefs before their offending. They also reported some stressful incidents which were self-explained as precipitants to their offending such as being cheated by intimate partners or divorce, loss of child custody, intergeneration conflicts and financial hardships. Moreover, as a result of a lack of support from family and social networks, these participants' resilience against developing AD may have been weakened. This is consistent with earlier research by Shek (2002), who found that deprivation of parental support in association with economic disadvantage had a strong correlation with youths' problematic adjustment and delinquent and/or substance abuse behaviour.

In the present study, the researcher found that less communication with prosocial friends may have also hindered the participants' motivation to receive counselling or psychiatric treatment allowing AD or other psychological problems to remain undiagnosed and worsen their already difficult situations. This phenomenon is also suggested to be the case for many Chinese immigrants in the UK. Some researchers proposed that poor mental health is more likely to be present among Chinese immigrants whose emotions are heavily dependent on restricted intimate relationships and who are totally isolated from the host society (Huang & Spurgeon, 2006). Therefore, the researcher suggests that in the context of this study, an undiagnosed AD may have had some contributing effects on some of the participants' offending. The suggestion could be supported by: the participants' self-described psychological and behavioural symptoms which are consistent with AD diagnostic criteria in both DSM-IV-TR(APA, 2000) and ICD-10 (WHO,

1992); some exceptional mental stressors that the participants experienced also meet the AD aetiology descriptions in DSM-IV-TR(APA, 2000) and ICD-10 (WHO,1992).

Anti-social peer pressure

Some participants in this study who established friendships within their Chinese friends or business associates reported negative interpersonal experiences such as being neglected or even cheated, and/or offering illegal business opportunities. Rice and colleagues (2008) found that anti-social peers predicted more anti-social behaviour for marginalised adolescents. Similarly, Duangpatra and associates (2008) suggested that anti-social peer influence not only affects adolescents' problematic behaviour but also demonstrates significant influences on adults' risk-taking and reckless behaviour. Consistent with the aforementioned suggestion that antisocial associates have been shown to be one of the major risk factors predicting crime (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), a considerable proportion of the participants in the current study reported being lied to, offered opportunities, persuaded to participate in, or even manipulated to commit a crime by their Chinese associates in conjunction with own existing difficult situations before their offending. Meanwhile, as discussed earlier, people from collectivistic cultures usually find it difficult to reject seemingly lucrative opportunities as saying "no" is believed as jeopardizing *mianzi* (face) and destroying *guanxi* (relationship) (Brody & Luo, 2009; Chin, Zhang & Kelly, 2001; Curtis, Elan, Hudson & Kollars, 2002; Huisman, 2008). Consistently, participants in the current study reported feelings of embarrassment and creating disappointment to their (drug dealer) friends if they rejected those seemingly profitable offers (e.g.,

importing illegal drugs together and sharing profit or distributing illegal drugs after the overseas parcel arrived).

Additionally, Gibbs and colleagues (2008) suggest that without positive peer influences, community empathy and prosocial directions from schools and parents, young people, especially those who were culturally or emotionally marginalized, would have great difficulties in countering negative peer influence and thus anti-social behaviour may be more likely. Consistently, the participants in this study, particularly those who committed illegal drug smuggling, reported restricted prosocial friends and undeveloped local networks that they could turn to consult with before their offending. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the majority of these participants avoided seeking help also because of their embedded collectivistic ideology on protecting face and/or in an effort to cover up their illegal drug involvement. Once again, due to the embedded collectivistic ideology, restricted prosocial friends, undeveloped local social networks and avoidant help-seeking behaviour pattern, the participants in the current research were more vulnerable to being influenced and/or manipulated by their anti-social associates, and thus committing crimes.

Limitations of the research

The present study has several limitations. First of all, only 13 Chinese prisoners were interviewed from two prisons in North Island, New Zealand and the sample size was relatively small. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Chinese prisoners in this country. However, it should be noted that the results of

small qualitative studies are not typically generalised but rather, are used to gain a deeper understanding of a particular sample.

Secondly, possible bias may exist as the researcher independently conducted interviews, translations and analysis. It is suggested that bias may be found in any qualitative research when human subjects, conversations, observations and interpretations are involved (Beck, 2009). Due to the possible appearance of Chinese philosophy related implicit communication style (Fang & Faure, 2010) and a Chinese traditional proverb of “family shames must not be spread abroad”/ “wash your dirty linen at home” (Foreignercn, 2010), some of the participants in the current study displayed an inactive manner with some ambiguous descriptions when talking about their childhoods or parental relationships. For example, some participants recalled their childhood with brief phrases such as “ok” or “normal” which implied their hesitance of disclosing more information. Although the researcher applied the prompting questions in order to discover more underlying information, the personality differences among these participants may still function as resistance to further discussion. As a result, it is possible that some participants’ detailed childhood experiences had not been revealed. However, the researcher believes that her cultural background and language advantage facilitated her to collect the most accurate and detailed information in each interview and assisted in the accurate interpretation thereof.

Because of individual differences in both personality and language expression, the interviews collected unevenly detailed information. Some participants were willing to share their experiences and feelings in full detail with the researcher, while others were reserved and only responded to the questions without extra

explanation. For example, some participants gave rich information on their feelings, psychological struggles, interpersonal relationship strain, physical symptoms, and coping strategies before their offending. However, other participants especially a few male participants who committed serious crimes, expressed inactively towards certain questions including social support, consultation with others and/or help-seeking behaviour pattern and future expectations. This, probably, reflected the participants' negative traits and implied their pessimistic thoughts on their future.

Suggestions for further study

Studies on Chinese prisoners in New Zealand are rarely conducted because they are a minority population in the prisons, and because of language barriers and other complexities. However, with the trend of increasing numbers of Chinese international students and Chinese immigrants to this country, there is a growing requirement for a better understanding of the nature and process of their social adjustment and acculturative difficulties. More similar studies on a larger scale and with a larger sample size are needed in order to gain richer information. This valuable information may help prevent the acculturative stress related psychological and behavioural dysfunction or foreigner offending through bridging Chinese newcomers into a positive communication environment and developing supportive social networks.

Moreover, based on the present study, further studies could focus on previously victimized Chinese females. Understanding the effects of environmental influence and emotional pressure on Chinese female offenders in New Zealand society may

assist in preventing female victimization and offending. Finally, longitudinal research is needed to investigate Chinese brutal crimes such as premeditated murder and kidnapping. This might enhance professional understanding of serious crime in the absence of criminal history and childhood maltreatment.

In reflection on the process and outcome of the current study, consideration for future research improvement may be achieved by the following aspects. First of all, extended sample size is preferred in order to obtain detailed information with better generalizability. Secondly, more in-depth questions should be asked regarding participants' family history of violence or neglect, immigration related cultural conflicts and difficulty on interpersonal relationships. Questions should give more opportunities to the participants focusing on the crisis periods before offending in order to discover possible prevention strategies. Thirdly, the interview duration should be prolonged to give participants more space to recall, respond and supplement their responses. Finally, it is recommended to have independent interviewer(s) and/or analyst(s) in order to prevent bias and gain more reliable data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: information sheet for participants

Information sheet for participants

I am Qiu Yue Feng, a Masters student of Social Science at the University of Waikato. I am a Chinese living in New Zealand and the research is for my Master's thesis.

Reasons to invite you into this research

There are very few studies focusing on the social experiences of Chinese inmates. The purpose of this research is to discuss some life experiences and social/cultural adjusting processes with some Chinese people in New Zealand prisons. The research is not a Police investigation and will not probe any actual crime activities of the participants or related organizations. I am inviting you to join a 60-90 minutes personal interview to talk about your significant life experiences with me.

Questions will be asked in the interview

The interview will try to find out:

- Some of your life experiences
- Any difficulties that you encountered when you came into New Zealand
- Factors that contributed to your offence
- Effects on you and your family after your conviction
- Your expectation of your future

Your involvement in the research

The interview will be about 1.5 hours. If you require an interview schedule, it will be sent to you prior to the interview. Your interview will take place at times convenient for both of us within a 12 week period where privacy can be guaranteed according to ethically recognized policies. Your permission to tape

record our conversation will be acquired for the only reason of information accuracy.

The information gathered from the interview

A report will be prepared for my Master's thesis that includes information from you and other participants. Your name or any other identifying characteristics of you will not be disclosed in any of the written reports. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research. If you are interested, a summary of the report may be posted to you when the research is complete.

Your rights

If you decide to take part you will have the right to:

- Decline to participate;
- Decline to answer any particular questions;
- Withdraw from the study
- Decline to the interview being audio-taped;
- Ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- Ask for the erasure of any materials you do not wish to be used in any reports of the study; and
- Ask questions about the study at any time during the participation.

I appreciate your participation in this research. This study has received ethics approval from the School of Psychology Ethics Committee of Waikato University. It also has been approved by the Department of Corrections, New Zealand. The supervisors of this study are Dr Jo Thakker and Associate Professor Douglas Boer from the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

对在新西兰服刑的中国违法者的心理调查

给参与者的资料

我是新西兰的中国人，冯秋月，目前是怀卡托大学的社会科学硕士研究生。”对在新西兰服刑的中国违法者的心理调查”是我目前的硕士研究课题。

邀请你参加这个研究的原因

在新西兰，关于中国狱友在犯罪之前的社会经历的研究很少。我的这个课题是为了打开一个契机，让人们关注文化冲击和社会问题（例如社会孤立和语言障碍等）对尚未适应新西兰环境的中国人的违法行为的负面影响。这个研究的结果可以提示人们不健康，不友好的社会环境对中国人犯罪的推动作用。这个研究不是任何形式的犯罪调查也不就任何参与者以前的犯罪行为做提问更不会探讨与参与者犯罪相关的集团或个人。这个调查只集中研究参与者是否在犯罪之前经历了社会和文化以及相关的心理上的一些矛盾和困难和他们采用的应对方式。我诚恳地邀请你参加这个 60-90 分钟的个人访问来帮助我完成这个研究项目。

个人访问中的问题

这个访问是为了调查

- 在你到达新西兰后碰到的社会和文化难题
- 碰到这些困难时你的感受
- 这些困难对你的犯罪行为的作用因素
- 在你犯罪之前的紧急周期，你有没有寻求帮助或者想过其他的办法
- 你的定罪给你的家庭带来了什么样的影响
- 你对你未来的期望

关于个人访问

你会参加一个 60-90 分钟的个人访问。如果你需要提前知道访问内容，我可以将一份访问提要寄给你。这个访问会在 12 周内的一个对你和我都方便的时间里进行并且按照道德规范的规定保护你的个人隐私。在你的允许的情况下，为了研究信息的准确性，我会请求在个人访问中录音。

个人访问信息的使用

你的个人访问信息是这个研究的主要组成部分。你的名字和其他任何可以识别你的个人特征的信息和描写都不会在这个研究结果的报告中出现。所有的数据和内容都会依据新西兰‘改造局’的规定在结束这个研究5年之后销毁。如果你对这个研究的结果感兴趣，在研究结束之后我可以邮寄一个研究结果的总结到你提供的地址。

你的权利

如果你决定参加这个研究和个人访问，你有权

- 拒绝回答个人访问中的任何你不愿意回答的问题
- 终止个人访问和参与这个研究
- 拒绝个人访问被录音
- 要求在个人访问中停止或恢复录音
- 要求不采用或删除你所提供的资料的任何部分
- 在个人访问中对这个研究课题提出问题

我非常感谢你的参与和对这个研究的支持。这个研究已经得到了怀卡托大学心理学院道德伦理考察委员会的考核与批准。新西兰监狱改造局也批准了这个研究项目和它的程序。这个研究项目的研究生导师是怀卡托大学心理学院的 Jo Thakker 博士和副教授 Douglas Boer.

Appendix B: Interview questions

Do socio-cultural issues matter? A qualitative psychological study of Chinese criminals in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Interview questions

This is an anonymous interview only used for research purposes without any judicature power and utility. Please try to discuss as many questions and detail as possible. Thank you for your participation.

Demographics (during the rapport establishment phase)

1. How old are you?
2. Which part of China do you come from?
3. How old were you when you were convicted?
4. How do you identify your ethnicity?

Situation before the offence

5. How would you describe your childhood?
6. How would you describe your family, parents, and siblings?
7. Why did you originally come to New Zealand?
8. What was your living circumstance when you come to New Zealand?
9. How many close friends did you have before your offending?
10. What did they do?
11. Were you employed (studying) before the offending?
12. What were you employed (studying) before the offending?
13. How would you describe the social support around you before the crime was committed?
14. What kind of emotional state did you experience before the offending?

Situation leading to the offence

15. Did you have financial difficulties before your offending?
16. What sort of difficulties were you experiencing?
17. Who did you approach to seek help?

18. If you were studying, did you talk to any counsellors in your academic institute?
19. If you were employed, did you talk to any people in your work place?
20. Anybody else did you talk to about your condition?
21. Did you talk to your family about your difficulties? What were they responses?
22. What kind of responses did you receive when you asked for help?
23. Did you experience any kind of racial discrimination?
24. Did you experience a language barrier when you tried to tell New Zealand people your problems or difficulties?
25. If you were hesitated to talk to other people, what do you think the reasons were?

The description/exploration of the offence

26. What do you think were the main causes of your offending?
27. How often do you contact your family and friends now?
28. How do you feel about your future?

社会文化问题重要么？对在新西兰的中国违法者的心理调查

个人访问提纲

这是一个不具名个人访问，它不具备任何司法权利和用途。请尽可能具体和详尽的和我讨论这些问题。真诚感谢你的参与。

个人背景资料

1. 你多大岁数了？
2. 你的老家在中国什么地方？
3. 你多大岁数被定罪的？
4. 你怎么定义你的民族，国籍身份？

家庭和成长

5. 请你讲讲你的儿童时代
6. 请你讲讲你的家庭，父母，兄弟姐妹

到达新西兰

7. 你最初到新西兰的目的是什么？
8. 你在新西兰的居住情况是怎么样的？
9. 你在新西兰有多少个好朋友？
10. 你的朋友们大都做什么？
11. 你在犯罪之前是工作还是学习？
12. 什么样的工作（学习）？
13. 请你说说在犯罪期间或之前你周围的社会（支持/不支持）情况
14. 你那时的感情或心理状况是怎么样的

在新西兰的情况

15. 在犯罪前，你遭遇了经济上的困难了么？

16. 你经历了什么其他的困难？
17. 你向谁求助了？
18. 如果你当时在上学，你向学校的(国际)学生顾问咨询了么？
19. 如果你当时在工作，你与你工作单位的任何人倾诉了么？
20. 你和其他的任何人倾诉了你的困难了么？
21. 当你和其他人讲起你的情况时，你得到了什么样的回应？
22. 你和你的家人讲了你的困难了么？他们怎么回应你的？
23. 你经历过任何形式的种族歧视么？
24. 当你和新西兰本地人交流时，你经历过语言隔阂么？
25. 你认为你不情愿和别人倾诉你的想法的原因是什么？
26. 你感觉什么是真正的原因造成你的犯罪？
27. 你现在经常和你的家人和朋友联系么？
28. 你对未来有什么打算么？

Appendix C: Consent forms

University of Waikato
Psychology Department
CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: **Do socio-cultural issues matter? A qualitative psychological study of Chinese criminals in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

Name of Researcher: **Qiu Yue Feng**

Name of Supervisors: **Dr. Jo Thakker**

Associate Professor Douglas P. Boer

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I will be interviewed for about 1.5 hours. I have been explained that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 838 4466 ext. 8401 e-mail r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's

name:

_____ **Signature:** _____

Date: _____

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded. Yes/No

Signature: _____

I do not want a summary of the report.

I want a summary of the report after the completion of the study, please post it to:

怀卡托大学
心理学院
同意书
参与者页

研究课题：社会和文化问题重要么？对在新西兰的中国违法者的心理调查
研究员姓名：冯秋月
研究生导师：Jo Thakker 博士
 副教授 Douglas P. Boer

我接到了这个研究课题的说明书，研究员已经向我解释了这个研究项目。我有机会提问和与其他人讨论我的参与决定。我的提问都给予了满意的回答。

我同意参加这个研究也明白我会参加一个 1.5 小时的个人访问。有关人员已经向我解释了关于我可以退出或提前终止参加这个研究的权利。如果我有任何不明白或担心的事宜，我可以和研究与工作道德委员会的主管联系。（Rober Isler 博士，电话：8384466-8404， email: r.isler@waikato.ac.nz）

参与者的姓名：_____ 签名：_____

日期：_____

我同意我的个人访问被录音。签名：_____

我想要收到这个研究的总结报告，请邮寄到以下地址：

Psychology Department
CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: **Do socio-cultural issues matter? A qualitative psychological study of Chinese criminals in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

Name of Researcher: **Qiu Yue Feng**

Name of Supervisors: **Dr Jo Thakker**

Associate Professor Douglas P. Boer

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Participant's

name:

_____ **Signature:** _____

Date: _____

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded. Yes/No

Signature: _____

I do not want a summary of the report.

I want a summary of the report after the completion of the study, please post it to:

怀卡托大学

心理学院

同意书

研究员页

研究课题：社会文化问题重要么？对在新西兰的中国违法者的心理调查

研究员姓名：冯秋月

研究生导师：Jo Thakker 博士

副教授 Douglas P. Boer

我接到了这个研究课题的说明书，研究员已经向我解释了这个研究项目。我有机会提问和与其他人讨论我的参与决定。我的提问都给予了满意的回答。

我同意参加这个研究也明白我会参加一个 1.5 小时的个人访问。有关人员已经向我解释了关于我可以退出或提前终止参加这个研究的权利。如果我有任何不明白或担心的事宜，我可以和研究与工作道德委员会的主管联系。（Rober Isler 博士，电话：8384466-8404， email: r.isler@waikato.ac.nz）

参与者的姓名：_____ 签名：_____

日期：_____

我同意我的个人访问被录音。签名：_____

我想要收到这个研究的总结报告，请邮寄到以下地址：