

CHINESE STUDENTS IN IRELAND

中国学生留学爱尔兰



community
profiles
series



NCCRI

Chinese Students in Ireland

By Ying Yun Wang

With Dr Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain

Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

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Photograph: Derek Speirs

Foreword

Ethnic and cultural diversity in Ireland continues to change, primarily as a result of increasing inward migration, this has added to the rich diversity that always existed in Ireland, but which perhaps is now only beginning to be fully acknowledged.

While there has been an increasing interest on research focusing on migration in recent years it has tended to be from the standpoint of the receiving country. It is perhaps surprising that there has been comparatively little research that has been undertaken by or indeed focussed on the views and perceptions of people from minority ethnic communities who already live in or have migrated to Ireland.

To help redress this imbalance the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) is publishing a series of 'community profiles' researched by and in partnership with researchers from minority ethnic communities in Ireland.

This publication, the second community profiles series, focuses on Chinese students Ireland. The first community profile focuses on migrant workers from Poland.

Chinese students have been coming to Ireland in significant numbers since 1998, mainly as language students but also as third level students. This inward migration was greatly facilitated by a decision in 2000 to allow all non-EEA students to work part time to help finance their studies. However, in 2005 restrictions were introduced which meant that only full time students on third level courses of at least one year duration were allowed to work. Further proposed restrictions, in the form of work permits for non-EEA students, may also impact on the number of Chinese students coming to Ireland, although the full extent of such changes are still unclear.

Qualitative research was undertaken for this study in the form of in depth interviews conducted in Mandarin and focusing exclusively on the Chinese student community in Ireland. The research was undertaken by Ying Yun Wang with Dr. Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain from the Sociology Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The NCCRI is greatly indebted to Ms. Yun Wang for this important research and to and Dr. King-O'Riain for her expertise in developing and guiding this research initiative. The NCCRI is further indebted to Fiona McGaughey, Research and Policy Officer, who managed this initiative on behalf of NCCRI.

An interesting picture of the experiences of Chinese students emerges from the research. The majority of those interviewed have part-time jobs often working long hours, even having two jobs in addition to studying. Most were also saving for further education courses and some were remitting money home to China. Most were in lower paid service jobs such as catering and cleaning. Many interviewees hoped to return to China but an increasing number, particularly those resident in Ireland for a number of years, are looking at opportunities to make Ireland their home. Employment visas, the high cost of living in Ireland and restricted access to long-term residency rights were perceived as barriers to the option of remaining in Ireland. Reports of racial discrimination in employment and in other areas of public life and a degree of acceptance of this, featured in a number of the responses of those interviewed.

The social isolation experienced by some Chinese students is more marked than for other communities. While many have developed contacts, friendships and support networks within the Chinese community others feel that their efforts to interact with the majority Irish community have been less successful. There are many perceived differences including the fact that Chinese students perceive themselves as more career orientated than their Irish counterparts. Many Chinese students do not socialise in pubs and some expressed a concern that they felt that this restricted their opportunities to interact with the Irish community at a social level. Some expressed concern at the amount of alcohol consumed by young Irish people. The research offers recommendations, including the need for greater intercultural dialogue between the Chinese and Irish communities.

The research findings provide a unique insight into Chinese students' experiences in modern Ireland and indicate that much remains to be done in tackling racial discrimination and promoting Interculturalism.

Philip Watt	Anastasia Crickley
Director	Chairperson
NCCRI	NCCRI

September 2006



Introduction by Dr. Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain

This research project came out of a conversation, which began in a third year undergraduate special topics seminar entitled “Multicultural Ireland?” at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in October 2005. As the seminar leader, I met Katarzyna and Ying (Katarzyna is a Polish student who is fluent in Polish, German and English visiting from the University of Frankfurt as an Erasmus student for the year and Ying is a final year student at NUIM fluent in Mandarin and English) in this seminar and we began talking about the experiences of Polish and Chinese people living ‘New Lives’ in Ireland. We noticed many similarities (both are big communities, both have strong social networks, both work hard and are recent arrivals), but we also noticed many differences which had to do with how they came to be in Ireland, what they were doing here and how they were perceived by others. With very few Polish and/or Chinese students in third level education in Ireland in social sciences, we felt that the opportunity of joining together to do research was just too good to pass up. We formed ourselves into a research team and set off to begin researching with the support of the NCCRI.

With rapid social, economic and political change in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, one of the demographic shifts most discussed has been increased in-migration to Ireland from all over the world. Unusual in its migration pattern, Ireland stands as an interesting example of migration but also of how societies grapple with increasing ethnic diversity in a fast flowing economy and increasingly global sphere. While there are excellent studies of how these changes are affecting Irish society, people and even Irishness itself, our focus was slightly different. We were curious how these changes have affected migrants themselves in their own words. We thus set out to talk to Polish and Chinese people in their own native languages and with co-ethnic researchers. We also tried explicitly to compare the two ethnic groups to each other to better understand how structural and cultural forces influenced the two groups differently. To our knowledge, we are the first research team to explicitly attempt to do this with these two ethnic groups.

We conducted 50 semi-structured, in depth, qualitative interviews with 22 Chinese and 23 Polish young people (ages 18-30) and with 5 ‘experts’ (directors of community based organizations, language teachers, etc.). Ying Ying conducted all of the Chinese interviews in Mandarin and all Polish interviews were conducted in Polish by Katarzyna and then later transcribed into English. Dr. King-O’Riain conducted the 5 expert interviews in English.

In our research, we all felt that by using a co-ethnic researcher to conduct the interviews in the native language of the interviewees (the language they said they felt most comfortable in) we would make people more at ease and would hence increase the validity of what they were telling us. In short, we felt that they could be more open and honest with someone who had a similar background and cultural frame as themselves and who could relate to and understand their comments. We feel that we have been successful in ‘revealing’ some aspects of the migration experience to Ireland that would not have come to light had the interviewers and researchers been mainstream and the interviews in English. If we had interviewed just in English, we would have self selected more educated, younger and more confident voices into the research – many of which we have, but we also wanted to tap into less educated, older and perhaps less confident voices as well.

Recognizing the strong social networks of migrants, we did not recruit interviewees through any particular agency or contact. Again, we did not want to self-select migrants who had particular views or issues, which might manifest themselves through a particular group or agency. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to sample interview subjects from the greater Dublin area (where the majority of both Polish and Chinese reside). We did select interview subjects to gain views from a wide range of people using criteria such as: gender, age, rural/urban origin, type of job currently, type of education/training, length of time in Ireland, and work status. Therefore, the results are not generalisable to the entire ethnic population, but they do provide a window into the experiences that Chinese and Polish people in our sample are having in Ireland.

Ethical Research

Ethical approval and consideration are always important when doing research of this nature in order to protect the rights of those who are interviewed. This is particularly salient in a case where the interviewees are vulnerable in some way (are children, are exploited, etc.). To that end, we used a standard protocol for ethics at every level of our research. We went through ethical approval at NUIM and all interviewees consented to the interviews. We translated portions or the entire consent form when necessary to insure that all interviewees were aware that they had the right to not answer or stop the interview at any time. Again, because we did this mostly through the medium of the native language and with co-ethnic researchers, we feel that interviewees were more comfortable stopping the interview, refusing or discussing difficult issues honestly with us. Ultimately, we hope that all the interviewees, who will remain anonymous and confidential, will be pleased to see their voices accurately represented here.

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We would like to thank the NCCRI for funding this research (particular thanks to Fiona McGaughey for keeping us on track). We also want to thank Kairos, most especially Anne O'Brian, for providing the recording equipment to do the interviews and her technical expertise in crisis. The National University of Ireland, Maynooth department of Sociology provided computing, space, intellectual and collegial support for the project. Dr. King-O'Riain would also like to thank Kasia and Ying for their incredible work and for allowing her a small glimpse into the Chinese and Polish communities in Dublin. She learned much from you both!

在以前,比如说三、四年前,种族主义从来都不会发生。我刚来的时候,我觉得爱尔兰人真的很好、很友善。即使是陌生人也会冲你微笑,有时他们还会拦住你,问你在这里生活的怎么样。

Executive Summary of 'Chinese Migrant Workers in Ireland'

爱尔兰华人社区背景

中国大使馆没有旅爱华人的确切统计数据。一些华人不到中国大使馆登记,但据大使馆估计在爱尔兰约有 30,000 华人,其中 3,000 人是在爱尔兰各地各类高等院校学习的学生。¹ 使用 PPS 号、工作许可、签证数据和居留数字进行的人口估算,显示有 60,000 华人。² 2004 年,国家移民局(Garda National Immigration Bureau)有 31,338 个学生签证记录,其中 15,933 个签发给来自中国的学生。³ 媒体的人口估算可能高估了人口数字,称它们预计 2006 年人口统计将显示爱尔兰有 12 至 13 万华人,其中大多居住在都柏林。⁴ 我们认为在爱华人的实际数字介于 6 至 10 万,并预测即将公布的人口统计显示华人社区是仅次于波兰人社区的爱尔兰第二大外来民族。

总体而言,按其签证状况区分,爱尔兰有两个华人群体。“定居”群体包括已取得爱尔兰长期居留权,或爱尔兰国籍的人士。另一个群体由学生签证或工作许可持有者组成。此第二个群体是爱尔兰华人社区最大的群体。

研究说明

本项研究由 22 个对旅爱华人进行的半结构化访谈组成。全部访谈均由同民族研究人员采用普通话进行(因此,没有对讲粤语人士进行的访谈)。为提高研究的有效性,所有访谈均以普通话进行,并在抄录过程中译成英文。事实证明,所开展的同民族研究非常有利于接近目标群体,也有益于获得更加坦诚和真实的回答。

22 个华人访谈样本包括 14 位女性受访者和 8 位男性受访者。相比其他移民群体而言,华人社区相当年轻,因为许多人持学生签证来爱。大部分受访者在二十几岁,受访者年龄跨度为 19 至 40 岁。

来自中国大陆的华人自 1998 年起来到爱尔兰。大部分受访者已在爱尔兰居住了三至四年。最长的已居住八年,而最短的居住了大约六个月。受访者背景各异,来自于中国不同城市,但大多来自中国北方,以及北京和上海等主要城市。

部分拥有高等学历,但多数人没有(仅中等学历),所有人都靠工作来维持其在爱尔兰的生活。虽然大多为求学而来,他们往往会发现自己在学习英语或其它科目的同时,努力工作偿还或支付学费。

移民决定

大部分受访者在二十出头来到爱尔兰。几乎所有人都是在中学毕业后才决定来爱尔兰的。初抵爱尔兰时,大部分人先去上语言学校以提高英语,而后假如其本人或家里能负担学费,并且假如其英语水平达标的话,就会转入高等教育。有些受访者在语言学校的学习比预计的要长,并继续半工半读来支付费用。

1. 联系中国大使馆,06 年 6 月 14 日。

2. Gilmartin, M.(2006)“The Same but Different(相同而又不同)”,登载于Irish Times(爱尔兰时报),(06 年 5 月 23 日),pp. 3。

3. GNIB 官员访谈,2005 年 10 月 7 日,Burgh Quay。

4. Oliver, E.(2005)“Tiao Wang Magazine Taps into Chinese community”,登载于Irish Times(爱尔兰时报)(05 年 1 月 12 日)。如要进一步了解此问题,请参见 Egan, O.(1996)“Minority Ethnic Groups in Higher Education(高等院校中的少数民族)”,1996 年 9 月 27 日在圣帕特里克大学举行的会议议题, Maynooth。

在年龄较大的群体中(30多岁),有些人已经在中国接受过高等教育或某些职业培训,并且/或者在来爱之前已工作过一段时间。在这个群体中,部分人仍想继续学习。许多人负担不起爱尔兰国立大学高昂的海外学生学费,因此他们在职业学院学习,以取得某些等级较低的资格。一些人来此是想提高英语,“开阔视野”和丰富经验。另外,一些人只是想工作,然后积攒足够的钱,回中国开设自己的生意,或使他们在中国的家人改善生活。

关于受访者为何要来爱尔兰,给出的原因多种多样。首先,在爱尔兰比在其它英语国家容易取得学生签证。实际上,爱尔兰并不是一些人的首选目的地,他们的首选国家是英国或美国等。然而,申请程序比较长,而且这些国家的规定比较严。总体而言,爱尔兰学生签证的申请要求比英国和美国的要求宽松。

其次,一些受访者原以为爱尔兰的生活和学习费用低于英国或美国。他们的这种印象来自于中国的中介,这些中介帮他们前来爱尔兰,并告诉他们在爱尔兰好找兼职工作。工资能够支付生活费,以及学校或大学的部分学费。当他们来到这里之后,发现实际开销并不像他们受误导所想像的那么低。

第三,爱尔兰的官方语言是英语,大部分学生已在中国学过几年英语。多少对英语有几分熟悉,使部分人的过渡轻松一些。

第四,受访者在国外的亲戚或朋友对他们产生了影响。一些人选择爱尔兰是由于他们认识已经在爱尔兰的人。

来到爱尔兰:进入方式

除了一名博士生之外,所有受访者都是通过在中国的中介来到爱尔兰的。这些在中国的中介帮助受访者联系学校或大学,然后帮他们获得爱尔兰学生签证。所有受访者初到爱尔兰时都持学生签证。一名目前持有工作许可的女士,是作为学生来到爱尔兰的。一年之后,她作为会计取得了工作许可。中介收取高额服务费。所有受访者的家庭都支付了中介的服务费、学校或大学学费(如果你不在中国付清全部费用,爱尔兰大使馆将不会颁发签证),并帮助负担在爱尔兰的生活费。因此,家庭对学生爱尔兰之行的投入很高 - 往往是对(中国计划生育政策造就的)独生子女的投入,寄托着家人的厚望。

刚来爱时,大多数受访者的英语并不好。他们掌握一些基础词汇,但他们听不懂爱尔兰人在说些什么,而且也害怕与某些爱尔兰人讲话。另外,在中国,他们教的是美式英语。刚过来时,他们不习惯爱尔兰口音。在这里生活、学习了一段时间之后,大多数人觉得自己英语有所提高。已在爱尔兰居住一段时间的人士,日常的对话没有问题。

受访者来到爱尔兰之前,大多数人不太了解爱尔兰。他们当时知道爱尔兰是一个中介形容的漂亮的地方。

通常的情况是,他们当时知道爱尔兰是个英语国家,位于欧洲,离英国很近,雨水充沛,自然景色优美。

一些人并没有确切的计划。他们想先过来,然后再决定做什么。他们都知道他们的爱尔兰之行会从英语语言学校开始。他们来爱尔兰,目的不“为挣钱”而是“为学习”,并获得国际经验。

爱尔兰印象

总体而言,受访者认为爱尔兰的生活比较悠闲。他们认为爱尔兰人随和、善良、友好。但是,有些人认为爱尔兰人歧视华人。有些人认为年长的爱尔兰人有时对华人或其他外国人非常粗鲁。其他人则认为年长的爱尔兰人非常好。另外,一些未成年的爱尔兰孩子对华人很不尊重,往往给华人带来麻烦。对于已在此超过四、五年的受访者,他们认为爱尔兰人已改变了对华人和其他移民的态度。他们不像原来那么友好了。他们认为爱尔兰确实存在种族主义,许多人还列举了种族主义和直接种族歧视的事例。

许多人认为由于他们在爱尔兰持的是学生签证,因此他们不能“投诉”教育机构内的不公待遇,否则其签证就无法续签,其(续签签证所需的)考勤记录就会被更改。还有人讲述受到了为帮助他们而设立的学生服务部的“非人”待遇。他们说没人问他们的姓名(因为这些姓名难以发音),当他们来问问题时没有请他们坐下,甚至在给他们表格时不对内容加以解释,对于产生的英语或其它辅助问题(健康)帮助就更少了。他们的来爱的方式(例如学生签)使他们在看待自己与爱尔兰的关系时戴上了有色眼镜。

定位

所有受访者都表示他们不打算永久留在爱尔兰。正在读大学的人表示希望在取得学位之后做一两年专业工作。但是,由于爱尔兰的工作许可和工作签证制度,找到此类工作对于他们来说并非易事。一位有爱尔兰男友的受访者说如果他们不结婚的话,她就回中国。另一位受访者想尽快回家,但由于中国的经济压力,她将再待一阵子。另一个并未将爱尔兰视作她的最终归宿。甚至一个已经取得永居权的受访者也认为他最终将与妻子一起回中国,或许会是在他女儿大学毕业,在爱尔兰安家落户之后。

其他人认为人口结构的变化,以及其它群体的移民影响了他们对爱尔兰的定位。他们觉得其签证状况在就业方面将他们置于不利的地位。确立记录对于许多人来说也很重要,顾虑主要源于永久居留的签证要求。还有些人,虽然他们希望回国,但却将自己陷于这样一种经济状况,即一些中国亲友靠他们在爱尔兰的收入为生。

许多人喜欢爱尔兰,将它视作方便的跳板,以便去往世界其它地方(并不一定回中国)。纵然在制度上受到爱尔兰签证制度的约束,即使这个问题能够解决,许多人仍然认为在文化上他们永远无法将爱尔兰当成“家”。

因此,受访者对于不会永久居住在爱尔兰有各自特定的原因。无论他们已到爱尔兰多久,许多受访者仍然觉得在这里像个“老外”。提出的一个原因是他们的外表。

“外来感”也在制度上被加以种族化和强制执行。比如说,受访者觉得他们在申请工作时的自由度不及那样能力相当的人,原因是这些人来自欧盟国家。他们表示东欧移民能够更好地“融入”,因为他们是白人,而且不需要签证就能工作。

一些受访者对于融入爱尔兰社会并不那么感兴趣。因此,他们未见障碍。但是,希望进一步参与爱尔兰社会的人们感到是有一些障碍存在并需要得到克服以便更好地融入爱尔兰社会。与语言学校学生相比,就读高等院校的中国学生有更多机会与爱尔兰学生和其他国际学生结交朋友。尽管近来有所上升,但就读高等院校的中国学生相对较少;此外,新立法也鼓励中国学生在上过一年语言学校后,继续接受高等教育。但是,对于一些想继续接受高等教育的中国学生而言,高额的学费是一个主要问题。

在语言学校的中国学生通常比较忙。他们根据课表在明天或晚间上课,并且还工作。目前,中国学生是语言学校收入的主要形式,各大院校也因经济压力,而将中国学生视作“源源收入”而不是作为求学的学生。他们没有很多机会见到爱尔兰学生或其它国际学生。打工的地方可能是他们见到爱尔兰人和别国人的唯一场所。多数受访者与包括爱尔兰人在内的其它民族相处融洽,但并不与他们有过多工作外的社交。他们感到双方没有多少共同点。

障碍与问题

首先,英语语言是最大、最基本的障碍。所有受访者都谈到了英语不够好是多么影响他们的实力。⁵即使是那些已在爱尔兰待过一段时间、英语不太好的人,他们要想出人头地似乎希望渺茫。许多人都谈到了这样的工作经历,由于语言障碍,他们感到被边缘化了。

其次,移民身份严重制约了华人在爱尔兰的自由。由于工作许可制度,他们不能自由申请工作。一位目前持工作许可的受访者发现,如果她想续签签证,工作许可会将她局限在一份工作上。还有人发现,持有学生签证,他难以从银行获得抵押贷款来开办自己的生意。最后,文化差异确实是一个巨大挑战。即使是英语不错的人,文化差异使他们难以进一步融入爱尔兰社会。

就读高等院校

绝大多数中国学生正在就读英语语言课程或学校。只有 10% 的学生进入了爱尔兰高等院校。在高等院校,中国学生有更多机会见到爱尔兰人和其他国际学生。受访者认为爱尔兰学生在大学阶段压力较小,他们有比中国学生更多的社会活动。而相比之下,中国学生认为自己更重视学习。他们为教育付出高额的费用,而且加班加点学习,原因是他们花不起钱来重读。

中国学生的大部分时间都在工作和学习。许多受访者未与爱尔兰同学结交朋友。许多人与爱尔兰学生或国际学生交谈,但他们之间的对话仍然比较简单,而他们的密友仍是华人。许多人通常不与爱尔兰学生或其他国际学生一起外出。他们加入大学的社团,但却不定期参加活动,因此也没有在那里交朋友。

在语言学校学习

中国学生是语言学校的主要生源。在某些语言学校,半数学生是华人,而且某些班级中,所有学生都是华人。中国学生根据学费及声誉选择语言学校。语言学校学生需要定期续签他们的签证,并且取决于其所选的课程,续签可能是每三至六个月一次。他们在语言学校的出勤率决定学生是否能够续签。一旦无法续签,他们就必须返回中国,否则会成为非法移民。受访者报告,如果语言学校的声誉不佳(比如,在学生不出勤的情况下,依旧为学生办理注册),那么移民局不会为来自这些学校的学生续签签证。中国学生拥有了了解哪些语言学校利于学习,以及哪些语言学校易于注册的良好渠道。

与那些接受高等教育的学生相似,语言学校的中国学生不与其它国际学生深入交谈,因为大多数人都很忙,必须同时学习和工作。他们感到与中国学生交谈更加轻松。

5. 如要进一步了解此问题,请参见 Egan, O.(1996),“Minority Ethnic Groups in Higher Education(高等院校中的少数民族)”, 1996 年 9 月 27 日在圣帕特里克大学举行的会议议题, Maynooth.

工作

所有受访者都兼职工作。某些人甚至有两份工作。对于那些英语较好的学生来说,他们能够自己找到工作。对于那些英语较差的学生来说,他们往往通过自己的中国朋友的介绍而获得工作。例如,他们的朋友将他们介绍给自己的经理。通常,工作场所是中国学生第一个,也是唯一一个接触爱尔兰人的地方。

我曾在两年时间内每周都要工作七天。每天我必须早晨 5 时起床,然后于 6 时开始工作。从早晨 6 时到 7 时,我清洁赌场。然后,我打扫一家大酒吧。该酒吧还包括一家饭店。我在中午 12 时完成此份工作。然后,从 12 时 30 分到 2 时 30 分,我清洁一个办公室。此后,我回家休息一会。接着,从下午 4 时到 6 时,我在一家办公室工作。通常,我可以在晚上 6 时之前完成工作。从晚上 6 时到 10 时,我在语言学校学习。(女,语言学校学生,26 岁)

对于其中大部分人而言,他们工作主要是为了挣日常生活费。他们发现生活费比预期的要高,同时有些人也攒一些学费。只有一位受访者是“乐趣”而工作。显然,中国学生十分努力地工作 - 大部分人从事低报酬的服务工作,如饮食招待和清洁。除一位持有工作许可的会计外,其他人均在服务行业工作,如酒吧、餐馆或商店。所有受访者都认为爱尔兰雇主有可能剥削努力工作的华人。

虽然几乎所有受访者都与爱尔兰员工或其它移民工人相处得很好,但是他们在下班之后没有太多联系。

大多数受访者认为所获薪酬与其它员工一样,仅一位抱怨她的工资与其工作量不相称。如果中国员工与同事产生不同意见,某些人将报告其经理;但许多人都称自己不会说什么。

工作仍然是华人在爱生活的重要部分。工作还为华人提供了与爱尔兰人交流的场所,练习英语和赚取教育所需资金的机会。以学生签证入境使很多人处于劣势地位,因为他们感到如无法符合雇主的要求,将无法获得续签。这可能使某些华人受到孤立。

社会关系和社会孤立

大多数受访者认为,绝大部分爱尔兰人仍不了解中国,即便有一些爱尔兰人正在逐渐地认识中国。华人社群十分庞大,拥有密集的社会关系网。在爱的绝大部分华人生活在都柏林地区,因为这里有现成的学习和工作机会。正因如此,现有社会关系网集中在都柏林及其周围,并通过吸引在住房、教育和工作方面需要支持的新移民加入,自行发展。许多华人未与爱尔兰人打成一片,喜欢结交中国朋友,但也有一些人希望融入爱尔兰社会,但感到难以着手。

在几乎每所中国学生学习的学校和大学中,都有一个中国学生的社团。爱尔兰已有数家正式的华人社团(参见下文列表),而且长期华人社群(在爱超过 10 年)约有 15,000 人。旅爱华人的主体是近几年抵爱的,寻求教育和工作经验的年轻人。他们依靠现有中国社团的帮助。

虽然互联网技术能够帮助许多人了解爱尔兰,但是语言学校的学生还往往通过会面来告诉别人签证信息和学习信息。通过口口相传,他们选择符合自身需要的语言学校。

自 2002 年以来,华人经营的餐厅数量不断增加。Parnell 街已成为中国城。汇集有中国杂货店、餐馆、理发店、酒吧和书店。对于现在的华人而言,特别是新抵达者而言,生活已经相当容易了。大多数受访者都不适应西方食品,喜欢中国食品。他们只有“中国胃”。

长期华人社群很久以前就来到爱尔兰(许多来自香港)。他们开设中国餐馆和外卖。但是,仅在 2002 年之后,随着来自华人移民的增加,来自中国大陆的华人才开始经营中国餐馆。

一项很大的文化差异在于,此研究所涉的华人喜欢去餐馆与中国朋友会面。有些人并不习惯在酒吧中喝酒。有些华人嗜好赌博,将大量金钱用来下注。其中一位受访者因赌博输掉了近几年的所有积蓄。

大多数受访者不经常使用爱尔兰媒体。他们发现当地节目与中国的节目很不一样。此外,他们有时无法理解一些节目背后的意思。例如,一位受访者描述了他如何感到难以理解“辛普森一家(The Simpsons)”中的幽默。华人社群拥有自己的媒体。主要报纸是《华人报》和《新岛周报》。还有一家名为 Chinatown Radio 的广播电台。此外,互联网上设有旅爱华人的中文 BBS,以供分享经历、结交朋友和买卖个人物品。

所有受访者都与他们在中国的家庭保持密切联系。他们每周都要通过电话和互联网与家人联系至少一次。许多人并不寄钱回家;另一方面,他们也不向家里要钱。对于那些已在中国建立家庭的受访者来说,他们经常给家里寄钱。

一般说来,大多数受访者都感到第一年是最艰苦的。他们刚刚离家远行,并且有些人是第一次在国外独立生活。一些受访者在最初几年里超时工作,以攒钱或偿还他们初到爱尔兰时所欠的债务,原因是他们曾从中国的亲戚和朋友处大笔借钱。在爱生活几年之后,他们逐渐安顿下来。他们减少工作时间,一些人考虑在爱尔兰学习。

总体而言,在爱的华人仍然孤立于爱尔兰主流社会之外。他们拥有与主流社会并行的社群。他们感到在爱尔兰的生活十分轻松,不如中国那么竞争激烈,只要他们能够找到商机,爱尔兰拥有很大的商业潜力。许多受访者都是企业家,希望或已经开始创业,但却感到很难获得商业开发贷款,或者难以以学生签证完全“拥有”一家企业。

源自此项研究的建议

签证

签证被认为是华人在爱尔兰发展的最大问题。对于那些语言学校学生而言,他们必须根据课程的长短(可能是三个月、六个月或一年),定期续签他们的签证。接受高等教育者则希望能够无需工作许可,即能有机会从事专业工作,因为最终他们仍打算最终回国。学生签证持有者,如想在爱企业或购置房产,很难申请抵押贷款或贷款。我们的建议是,允许在爱学习满三年以上且已完成高等教育者,持专业工作签证在爱停留两年,以获取工作经验并为爱尔兰经济做贡献。

那些签证已到期者(这意味着他们已成为爱尔兰的非法居民),希望爱尔兰政府能让他们有机会成为合法居民。他们并不希望非法滞留;但是有时因学习和加班工作,他们被迫成为地下工作者。

处理种族歧视问题

有证据表明,爱尔兰存在针对华人的种族歧视。平等法和禁止犯罪法应有效地处理此问题,但雇主、工会和教育机构都应履行各自的义务。关于如何矫正种族主义和种族歧视的信息亦应被翻译,并广泛散发给华人。

较难处理的领域是某些爱尔兰机构对华人的种族化印象,例如他们认为华人是学校、大学和爱尔兰政府的‘经济收入’和廉价劳动力,应该纠正他们以上的错误印象,在爱华人其实是为爱尔兰社会做出有益贡献(常常是非经济贡献)贡献的人。

沟通与交流机会

2008 已被命名为欧洲文化对话年(European Year of Intercultural Dialogue)。显然,如要加强华人社群与爱尔兰社群的融合,就需要更广泛的跨文化对话,以及对彼此语言和文化的更深入理解。英语语言技能被受访者视为关键。社区环境中免费或便宜的英语夜校,有助于华人快速学习英语。还可以设置与爱尔兰人的英语交谈课程,或者针对学生的家庭寄宿延长计划。

教育支持

对于那些接受高等教育者来说,教育机构内有必要设置跨文化政策和措施。中国学生需要更多的英语支持。学生服务还应符合中国学生特有的学习方式,以及他们因在爱居住而可能产生的文化问题。例如,一些受访者在意外怀孕之前,并不知道爱尔兰禁止流产。

结论

本报告发现,虽然大多数移民以学习为目标来爱学习,但是他们也都在课外工作。他们对爱尔兰经济所做的贡献往往超出劳力或学费。大多数移民都很年轻,接受过中学教育,拥有不同的职业目标。在爱尔兰以及爱尔兰和中国之间存在着紧密的社会关系网。由于群居效应(他们都同一时间来爱并居住在一起)和语言限制,在爱尔兰的华人在一定程度上孤立于主流社会。源自此项研究的建议包括,更改签证规定、处理种族歧视、促进文化交流、提供免费英语夜校以及为中国学生提供支持。

Background to the Chinese Community in Ireland

The Chinese Embassy does not have exact statistics on the number of Chinese people living in Ireland. Some Chinese people do not register with the Chinese Embassy, but the Embassy estimates that there are approximately 30,000 Chinese people in Ireland, of which 3,000 are students studying in many different types of third level institutions all over Ireland.¹ Population estimates using, work permits, visa data and residency figures puts the Chinese population at about 60,000 members.² The Garda National Immigration Bureau recorded 31,338 student visas in 2004, of which 15,933 were issued to students coming from China.³ Media estimates of the population perhaps inflate the population and cite that they expect the 2006 census to show that there are between 120,000 and 130,000 Chinese people in Ireland, with the majority based in Dublin.⁴ We suggest that the real number probably lies somewhere between 60,000 and 100,000 Chinese in Ireland and predict that the forthcoming census will indicate that the Chinese community is the second largest ethnic group in Ireland after the Polish.

In general, there are two groups of Chinese people in Ireland according to their visa status. The “settled” group comprises those with long term residency in Ireland or those with Irish citizenship. The other group is made up of those who have student visas or work permits. This second group is the largest group of the Chinese community in Ireland.

Description of the Research

This research consisted of 22 semi-structured interviews conducted with Chinese people living in Ireland. All were conducted in Mandarin (therefore, no interviews were done with Cantonese speakers) by a co-ethnic researcher. To increase the validity of the research, all interviews were carried out in Mandarin and translated into English during the transcription. The co-ethnic research proved a great advantage in gaining access to the target group, and also in getting more open and genuine responses.

Knowing that the members of the Chinese community in Ireland are densely connected, the interviewees were contacted by using snowball-sampling methods; therefore, the results are not indicative of the entire Chinese community in Ireland, but only represent a process of adjustment of the people interviewed here. For the semi-structured interviews, a catalogue of questions was used, regarding the history of interviewees' migration, push and pull factors influencing their decisions about migration, the circumstances of getting into the current position and plans for the future in professional as well as the personal life. The catalogue of the questions served as a framework and stimulated the interviewees to talk freely about their experiences in Ireland. To maintain the anonymity, all the names have been changed.

1. Communication with the Chinese Embassy, 14.06.06.

2. Gilmartin, M. (2006), 'The Same but Different' in the Irish Times, (23.05.06), pp. 3.

3. Interview with GNIB official, 7 October 2005, Burgh Quay.

4. Oliver, E. (2005), 'Tiao Wang Magazine Taps into Chinese community' in the Irish Times (01.12.05).

We suggest that the real number probably lies somewhere between 60,000 and 100,000 Chinese in Ireland and predict that the forthcoming census will indicate that the Chinese community is the second largest ethnic group in Ireland after the Polish.

Several expert interviews were also conducted with people working in Chinese organisations or teaching Chinese students. In addition to the interviews, participant-observation was carried out at Chinese cultural events.

The sample of 22 interviews with Chinese people contained 14 female and 8 male interviewees. Compared with some other migrants groups, the Chinese community is quite young as many come on student visas. Most of the interviewees are in their twenties with the age span of the interviewees ranging from 19 to 40 years old.

Chinese people from mainland China started to come to Ireland around 1998. Most of the interviewees have been in Ireland for three or four years. The longest has been here eight years, while the shortest has only been here approximately six months. The interviewees are from different backgrounds and different cities in China, but mainly from the north of China and major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai.

Some had third-level degrees, but most did not before they come to Ireland and all of them work to support their life here in Ireland. While most come for educational purposes, they often find themselves working hard to pay back or earn money for their fees, in addition to studying English or other subjects.

Migration Theory

Neo-classical migration theories have focused traditionally on macro (push and pull) factors, which shape how people come to decide to move from one place to another for economic gain. Dual Labour market theories move away from micro rational choice theories to explain not individual decisions to migrate, but instead the structural conditions under which decisions are taken to analyse the labour demands of modern industrial societies. World Systems Theory extends this not just to singular modern economies, but instead the global world as an outcome of the structure of the world market including the demand for labour (and hence movement of people to fill that demand).⁵ Perpetuating and facilitating international movement are social networks of migrants throughout the world, which can develop into institutions, which facilitate (and control) migration flows from poorer to richer countries.⁶

5. Wallerstein, E. (1974), *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Academic Press.

6. Massey, D.S. et al (1993), 'Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal' in *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 431-466.

This research does not conduct a detailed analysis of the macro context of economic migration in Ireland as others have done.⁷ Nor does it study the impact that this is having on understandings of Irishness⁸ or racialisation of Irishness.⁹ Instead, the research takes an interactionist perspective on migration. It uses the background of the economic situation to understand the processes that this small group of Chinese students went through in their recent migration to Ireland and uses this to contextualise their “modes of entry” (largely as “students”) into Ireland, their “modes of orientation” to Ireland, China or elsewhere and the strategies they employ to activate their transnational social networks to cope with these factors. To do this, the research use the rubric of “transborder nationalism”¹⁰ which describes migrants as long distance nationalists (in this case to China) and “dual nationalists” as becoming a part of the host society while still identifying strongly and participating economically and politically in not only homeland, but also hometown issues.

7. Hughes, G. and Quinn, E. (2004), ‘The Impact of Immigration on Europe’s Societies: Ireland’, Dublin: ESRI; NESC Report (2005); ‘Managing Migration in Ireland: A Social and Economic Analysis’ reported by Holmquist, K. (2006), ‘Immigration Policies Bad for Irish Workers, Report Warns’ in the Irish Times (11.3.06); Barrett, A., Bergin, A. and Duffy, D. (2006), ‘The Labour Market Characteristics and Labour Market Impacts of Immigrants in Ireland’ in *The Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 1-26.
8. Lentin, R. and Mc Veigh, R. (eds) (2002), *Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland*, Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications; Loyal, S. (2003), ‘Welcome to the Celtic Tiger: Racism, Immigration and the State’ in Coulter, C. and Coleman, S. (eds), *The End of Irish History: Critical Reflections on the Celtic Tiger*, Manchester: University of Manchester Press, pp. 74-94; Maguire, M. (2004), *Differently Irish: A Cultural History Exploring 25 Years of Vietnamese-Irish Identity*, Dublin: The Woodfield Press.
9. Mac An Ghaill, M. (2002), ‘Beyond a black-white dualism: Racialisation and Racism in the Republic of Ireland and the Irish Diaspora Experience’ in *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 99-122; Moriarty, E. (2005), ‘Telling Identity Stories: The Routinisation of Racialisation of Irishness’ in *Sociological Research Online*, Vol.10, No.3, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/3/moriarty.html>.
10. Fitzgerald, D. (2004), ‘Beyond Transnationalism: Mexican hometown politics at an American Labour Union’ in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol, 27, No. 2, pp. 228-247.
11. For more on this see Egan, O. (1996), ‘Minority Ethnic Groups in Higher Education’, Proceedings of Conference held on 27 September 1996 in St Patrick’s College, Maynooth.



Migration Decisions

Most of the interviewees came to Ireland in their early twenties. Almost all had finished secondary school before they made the decision to come to Ireland. Upon arriving in Ireland, most went to language schools first to improve their English and then moved to third-level education, if they or their family could afford the tuition fee and if their English was good enough. Some interviewees have stayed in the language schools longer than they should and continue their part-time work to pay for the fees. One interviewee explains:

“I definitely wanted to study in college in Ireland and get a degree. I stopped my college study in China to come to Ireland. At first, I did not have enough money and also my English was not very good. So I could not go to the third-level education anyhow. The first three years in Ireland, I did not think about applying to any college; all I knew was that I had to work to earn money. I regret now that I did not study English properly during that three-year period. I only started to study seriously just one year ago. I am thinking of applying to a private college now. I have the money for the first year fee. When I go to college, I will still work part-time to earn my living expenses and save up the fees for the following years. I know it is hard to study and work at the same time, but I want to try it”.

(Male, 25, language school student.)

In the older age group (post-20s), some already had third-level education or some occupational training in China and/or have been working for a while before they came over. In this group, some still want to further their studies. Many cannot afford the high overseas student fees in the national universities in Ireland so they study in training institutions to get some lower level qualifications. Some come here wanting to improve their English and “broaden their horizons” and expand their experience. Also, some just want to work and then save adequate money to go back to China to set up their own business or give their family in China a better life.

“I had a diploma in applied electronics in China before I came to Ireland. At first, I wanted to go to a university here. I found the tuition fee was too expensive. I could not afford it. I only studied one year in a private college. At that time, I found I could not afford the fee for the next two years. The part-time job I got paid minimum wage. I was in a dilemma: if I worked a lot, I could save the money for the fee; however, my study would definitely be disturbed. I probably would fail my study. But if I concentrated on study, I could not afford the fee. So I decided to register in a language school and worked a lot to save money for my future study. Now I am studying in an institute – a Commercial Management diploma in a private college. All the western countries recognise this diploma. This course is quite cheap and I can still do my part-time job and meanwhile save some money. Most importantly, I will learn a lot of management knowledge from this course”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

“I came to Ireland to work. And I also wanted to learn English. I have a five-year old son in China. My husband told me if I could not make a lot of money in Ireland, it was OK. It would be nice if my English can be improved”.

(Female, 37, language school student.)

“I borrowed money from friends to come to Ireland. I had to pay back this money and also I needed to earn a lot of money for my daughter’s operation. I

came to Ireland to earn money. I did not want to study. I have already got a degree in China, and also have set up my own family there. All I want is to give my family a better life”.

(Male, 40, salesperson.)

There were many reasons given as to why the interviewees came to Ireland. Firstly, it was easier to get a student visa in Ireland than in other English-speaking countries. Actually, Ireland was not the preferred destination for some; they would have preferred countries such as the UK or USA. However, the process of application is quite long and the regulations of these countries are quite strict. Overall, the requirements for applying for a student visa in Ireland were easier compared with those in the UK and USA.

“At the beginning, I wanted to go to the States. However, since 9/11 in 2001 it was harder to get a visa there. The tuition fees in the States are really high, compared to Ireland. If I could not get a scholarship, it would be impossible for me to study there”.

It usually took the interviewees between three and seven months to get a visa to come to Ireland. The shortest waiting time was three weeks, while one interviewee waited for two years to get her visa.

“At the beginning, I wanted to go to the States. However, since 9/11 in 2001 it was harder to get a visa there. The tuition fees in the States are really high, compared to Ireland. If I could not get a scholarship, it would be impossible for me to study there”.

(Male, 24, university student.)

“At the beginning, I wanted to go to the States. Lots of my friends are studying there. When I researched about doing a PhD in the States, I found out accidentally that Ireland is an English-speaking country. Before that I had absolutely no idea about Ireland. It was not easy to get a student visa for the States. At that time, I took Ireland as my back-up choice, in case I would not get the visa for the States. Also, my university in Ireland was able to take me in August, which was earlier than anywhere else”.

(Female, 26, PhD student.)

Secondly, some interviewees thought the cost of living and studying in Ireland was cheaper than that in the UK or USA. They got this impression from the agencies in China who helped them come to Ireland and they were told that it was easy to get a part-time job in Ireland. The pay from work can cover their living expenses and part of the school or college fee. When they came here, they found the actual expense was not as low as they were led to believe.

“My dad knew an agent who helped people to go abroad. He charged me a much cheaper fee than other agencies. Compared with the cost of going abroad to other countries, Ireland’s cost is low enough so my family could definitely afford it. Even if I am not happy in Ireland and get really homesick, I will go home for good in a short time. There is not much financial loss”.

(Female, 37, language school student.)

“I found the guaranteed cost to go to Ireland was cheaper than other countries. In 1999, if you can show the Irish embassy that you have €10,000 in your bank account, the Embassy can consider issuing you a visa ... While if you wanted to go to Australia or Canada then, you had to have at least €50,000 or €60,000 in your bank account”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

Thirdly, the official language in Ireland is English, which most students have learned in China for a few years already. Being somewhat familiar with the English language made the transition easier for some.

“I couldn’t really learn English in China, because there was no English-speaking environment. I wanted to come to Ireland to improve my English”.

(Male, 17, secondary school student.)

Fourthly, their relatives or friends who were abroad influenced the interviewees. Some chose Ireland because they knew someone who had already been in Ireland.

“I did not plan to go abroad at all. One of my directors in the hospital always encouraged young people to go abroad to widen their horizons. He told us that, although the life can be tough when you are abroad and maybe you will not get a good job, the experience can help you grow up and be mature, which benefits you in the future ... Also my parents think the international experience will be helpful for me in the long run”.

(Female, 26, student and care assistant.)

“My neighbour went to Ireland a few years ago. She told me that it was easy to make money in Ireland. I was not really happy then because my canteen business in China was stressful, so I considered coming to Ireland to work. If I am satisfied with the life in Ireland, I could give up the business in China”.

(Female, 37, language school student.)

There were also other reasons that people came: personal, political, social. One interviewee explained:

“It was not easy to get a good job in China, even if you have a degree from a university. The Chinese labour market was really competitive. It was easy to get a job in Ireland. So, I decided to come here to have a look. Maybe I can get a degree in Ireland to increase my human capital”.

(Male, 25, language school student.)

As 9.5 million students vie for 2.6 million university places, the competition, which is controlled by entrance examination scores, means that many cannot gain entry to the university of their first choice, and international education came as a second choice.

月下酌 李白

花间一壶酒 独酌无相亲。

举杯邀明月 对影成三人。

月既不解饮 影徒随我身。

暂伴月将影 行乐须及春。

我欲月徘徊 兴舞影零乱。

醉时同交欢 醒后各分散。

永结无情话 期邈灵汉。

Coming to Ireland: The Mode of Entry

All the interviewees, apart from one PhD student, came to Ireland through the agencies in China who helped interviewees contact the school or colleges and then helped them to get a student visa. All interviewees held student visas when they first came to Ireland. One woman, who now has a work permit, initially came to Ireland as a student. After one year she got a work permit as an accountant. The agencies in China charge high service fees. All interviewees' families paid for the service fee for charge of the agency, the school or college fee (if you do not pay the fee in full in China, the Irish embassy will not issue a visa), and contributed towards living expenses in Ireland. Hence, there was a high level of family investment in the student's journey to Ireland – often the only child (from the one-child policy in China) was invested with many of the hopes and aspirations of the family.

“When I first came to Ireland, I could not talk to people not even one complete sentence. For example, on my way to Dublin, I stopped over at Paris. I had a bottle of tablets with me. When I passed through customs, the staff discovered the bottle. They asked me what it was. I could not even simply say that it was medicine”.

Most of the interviewees did not have good English when they came over. They had some basic vocabulary, but they could not understand what Irish people were saying and they were afraid to talk to some Irish people. Also, in China, they were taught American English. When they came over, they were not used to Irish accents. After living and studying here for a while, most of them feel their English has improved. There is no problem for those who have been living in Ireland for a while with conversational English.

“When I first came to Ireland, I could not talk to people – not even one complete sentence. For example, on my way to Dublin, I stopped over at Paris. I had a bottle of tablets with me. When I passed through customs, the staff discovered the bottle. They asked me what it was. I could not even simply say that it was medicine”.

(Male, 30, university student.)

“Even though I had learned English for nine years before I came here, when people spoke too fast, I did not understand. If they slowed down, I could understand. Now my English is much better”.

(Female, 27, accountant.)

“My secondary school was a specialised English Learning school. When I finished school in China, my English level had been the same as the average first- or second-year Chinese university student. English was never my barrier here. The only problem I had was that I had to get used to Irish English. I learned American English in China. I found people here speak really fast. It took a week to adjust. Misunderstanding still happens. Irish people like to ask ‘what’s the story?’, while there is no such phase in American English, hence I thought Irish people really wanted to know my experiences. Actually, it is the same phase as ‘how are you?’.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

Before the interviewees came to Ireland, most of them did not have a good knowledge of Ireland. They knew Ireland was a pretty place as described by the agency. Most commonly, they knew that Ireland was an English-speaking country, was located in Europe close to the UK, that it rained a lot and that it had beautiful natural scenery.

Some of them did not have an exact plan. They wanted to come here first and then decide what to do. They all knew they would begin this Irish journey in the English language schools. They were coming to Ireland, not to “target earn” but to “target learn” and get international experience.

“I had no idea about Ireland. I only knew that in Ireland it rains a lot and Irish people speak English. One of the counsellors in the agency had been in Ireland and the UK for over ten years. He knew a lot about Ireland and the UK. All I knew about Ireland was from him”.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

“I had no idea. I knew it was easy to find a job in Ireland. The economic development was fast”.

(Male, 25, language school student.)

“Now, when I look back I think I was not really rational then. I did not plan too much for my overseas life. All I knew was that I was going to come to Ireland to have a look. Once I got to Ireland, I would see what I could do. But one thing that was for sure, I would go to a language school for a while”.

(Female, 27, accountant.)

"The only problem I had was that I had to get used to Irish English. I learned American English in China. I found people here speak really fast. It took a week to adjust. Misunderstanding still happens. Irish people like to ask 'what's the story?', while there is no such phase in American English, hence I thought Irish people really wanted to know my experiences. Actually, it is the same phase as 'how are you?'"

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Impressions of Ireland

In general, the interviewees think the Irish life is quite relaxing. They think Irish people are easy-going, nice and friendly. However, some felt that Irish people discriminated against Chinese people. Many of those interviewed pointed out that some teenagers here are troublemakers, and some thought that older Irish people are sometimes very rude to Chinese people or other foreigners. Others thought that older Irish people were really nice. For those interviewees who had been here more than four or five years, they felt that Irish people had changed their attitudes towards Chinese people and other migrants. They were not as friendly as they used to be. They felt that racism does exist in Ireland and cited examples of racism and direct racial discrimination.

“There is discrimination towards Chinese people. A few months ago, the girls I lived with and I decided to live separately. I saw the ads in the newspaper and rang the landlord or landlady. First they asked where I was from. Once I said I was Chinese, they told me the place was gone. Or sometimes I went to see the place, the landlord or landlady would take my contact number and said they would think about me, but in the end I never got the place. It is really hard for Chinese people to get inner-city accommodation. This experience makes me believe that there is racism in Ireland. Before that, I thought there was no racism in Ireland”.

(Female, 25, student and nurse.)

“One day about one and a half years ago, I was with my friend who brought her baby to the supermarket. She had the buggy with her. One old Irish lady walked toward us and stared at my friend and said to her, ‘go back China, give birth to your baby in China’. We both were shocked with this stranger’s attitude. We did not even know how to react. I think it is not fair for Chinese people. Usually, for young Chinese people who first came to Ireland in their early 20s, after staying here for four or five years, that is the time they consider setting up family if they have boyfriend or girlfriend. If by then they do not want go back China. Having a baby here is quite a natural thing for them. But Irish people just think those who have baby here all just want to get permanent residence. Racism would never happen before, say, three or four years ago. When I first came, I thought the Irish people were really nice and friendly. Even strangers would smile at you and sometimes they would stop you and ask how you are getting on in your life here”.

(Female, 27, accountant.)

“Sometimes, I did the deliveries for the company. I am always considerate. I think before I do. I never make mistakes at work, but if there was a mistake, they always assumed it was my fault. Then in the end, it was actually their mistake. I think they thought my English was not good and that is why the mistake happened”.

(Male, 40, salesperson.)

“One or two of my lecturers are really mean to us. For example, when I was in my first year of study, there were six Chinese students in total in my class. Our marks were all D, which was 35 per cent, which meant we all failed in that module. The lecturer is Irish. We negotiated with him to see was there any possibility we could pass eventually. I did not believe we all failed and also we all got the exact same marks. It sounded a little bit strange. He discriminated against Chinese students and other international students. There was a South African student who was really good at all the subjects. He felt the same as us. He found the same lecturer lowered his marks for some reason. He asked the lecturer why. The lecturer told him that his references were not correct. This student was not happy with the answer so he asked the professor to help him. When the lecturer remarked his essay in front of the professor, he said that the essay was really good so he re-marked the essay first class”.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

Many felt that because they were in Ireland on a student visa that they could not “complain” about poor treatment within educational institutions or their visa would not be renewed, or their attendance record (needed for visa renewal) would be altered. Others talked about being treated as “non-humans” by student services set up to help them. They told of not being asked their names (because they were too hard to pronounce), not being asked to sit down when they came to ask questions, or even being given forms with no explanation as to the content, much less help with English or other ancillary issues (health) that arose. Their mode of entry coloured how they saw themselves in relation to Ireland.

“Racism would never happen before, say, three or four years ago. When I first came, I thought the Irish people were really nice and friendly. Even strangers would smile at you and sometimes they would stop you and ask how you are getting on in your life here”.

Orientation

All those interviewed stated that they do not intend to stay in Ireland forever. For those in third-level education, they would like to work in a professional job for one or two years after they get their degree. However, it was not easy for them to get this kind of job because of the work-permit and work-visa system in Ireland. One interviewee who had an Irish boyfriend said that she would go back to China if they did not get married. Another interviewee would like to go home soon, but because of the financial pressure in China, she will stay a little longer. Another does not see Ireland as her final destination. Even one interviewee who already has long-term residency thinks he will go back China with his wife eventually, perhaps after his daughter completes her third-level education and she settles down in Ireland.

“I will finish my study soon. I am applying for jobs in RTÉ and the Irish Times now. I want to get a few years of relevant work experience in Ireland and then go back to China. I never really thought about living in Ireland permanently. Maybe I will like to do some business between Ireland and China, if there is the opportunity. I do not really like Ireland because of the weather, environment and the living standard and high living cost. Without the prospect of gaining some working experience, I will go back to China straight after I finish my degree”.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

Others felt that the changing demographics and migration of other groups impacted their orientation towards Ireland. They felt that their visa status placed them in a disadvantaged position in terms of employment.

“I will go back China in one or two years. Let my girlfriend finish her music study first. Then we will think about going back to China. Now, there are more and more eastern Europeans coming to Ireland who do not need to worry about getting a visa now. This puts a lot of pressure on the Chinese community. There are not as many job opportunities for Chinese migrants. There are not really very many good job opportunities coming up. I will probably work for a while, but I will still go back to China. Since day one in Ireland, I never thought of living here forever”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

Establishing a record was also important to many and the concerns were mainly driven by visa requirements for permanent residence.

“I probably will stay in Ireland for another three or four years. My boyfriend is studying second year accounting in the UK now. We plan to get married in Ireland. I will not go to UK to study with him. I have been on a work permit for nearly five years. I will get permanent residence here soon. If I go to the UK to study with my boyfriend, my five-year record will be eliminated”.

(Female, 27, accountant.)

Others, even though they wanted to return, had now got themselves into a financial situation where there were others in China who depended on their Irish income.

“I am always thinking of going back. Recently, my husband just bought an apartment in China; this was a lot of money, so I probably will stay here for a while to earn some money for the mortgage. When I first came, I found that everything was difficult, but I can manage things better now. I do not know when exactly I will go back, but if nothing changes, I will go back within two years”.
(Female, 37, language school student.)

Many liked Ireland and saw it as a convenient stop-over point on their way to some other global location (not necessarily back to China).

“After I become a registered nurse in Ireland, I will stay in Ireland for a couple of years, but in the end I want to go to Australia because it is an immigrant country. I can apply for permanent residency after I live there for a few years. In contrast, the immigrant policy in Ireland is quite strict. Most western countries have a lack of registered nurses, so once I become a registered nurse, I have a lot of opportunities”.
(Female, 25, student and care assistant.)

While structurally limited by the visa system in Ireland, even if that could be solved, many felt that culturally they could never see Ireland as ‘home’.

“I cannot integrate into the Irish society. Nowhere is better than my Chinese home. I am always the worker who works for the Irish. Now I have long-term residence status but I still have the same idea. The only difference is that I am more flexible. I do not need to worry about renewing visas. I will eventually go back to China with my wife once my daughter finishes her education”.
(Male, 40, salesperson.)

Therefore, interviewees had their own reasons for not living in Ireland permanently. Many interviewees felt like “a foreigner” here regardless of how long they have been in Ireland. Their physical appearance was one reason given. One interviewee explained:

“I think I am foreigner here especially when I am out without my Irish boyfriend. The longer you stay in Ireland, the less you think about that. But something specific happens and you know you are still a foreigner. For example, you walk on the street and the Irish people know you are Chinese straight away from your physical appearance. Even if your English is really good, when you talk to local people, they know you are Chinese from your accent”.
(Female, 25, private school student.)

“Feeling foreign” is also institutionally radicalised and enforced. For example, those interviewed felt they do not have the same freedom in applying for jobs as members who have the same ability because they are from other European Union countries, and they spoke openly about how Eastern Europeans could “blend in” better because they were white and didn’t need the visa to work.

Some of the interviewees were not that interested in integrating with Irish society. Hence, they see no barriers. However, for those who want to further participate in

Irish society, they felt that there were some barriers that could be overcome in order to integrate into Irish society. Chinese students in third-level education have more opportunities to make friends with Irish students and other international students than those in the language schools. There are relatively few Chinese students in third-level education, although there has been an increase recently; also, new legislation encourages the Chinese students to go on to third-level education after staying in language school for one year. However, the high tuition fee is a big problem for some Chinese students who want to move to the third-level.

“I cannot integrate into the Irish society. Nowhere is better than my Chinese home. I am always the worker who works for the Irish. Now I have long-term residence status but I still have the same idea. The only difference is that I am more flexible. I do not need to worry about renewing visas. I will eventually go back to China with my wife once my daughter finishes her education”.

Those Chinese students who are in the language schools are usually quite busy. They study during the day or night, depending on their schedule, and also work. Currently, Chinese students are the main form of revenue for the language schools and there is pressure on the universities to see them as “revenue streams” and not as human beings. They do not have many chances to meet Irish students or other international students. The workplace is probably the only place for them to meet Irish people and people of other nationalities. Most of the interviewees get on well with colleagues from other ethnic groups, including Irish; however, they do not socialise with them. They feel there is not much to talk about.

For those who have an Irish partner, they find that integration with Irish society becomes easier since they met their partner; before, some of them socialised with their Chinese friends most of time.

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Barriers and Issues

Firstly, the English language is the largest and most basic barrier. All the interviewees spoke about how debilitating it can be not to speak adequate English. Even for those who have been here a while, who do not have good English, the situation seems hopeless to them in terms of moving up in the world. Many spoke of work experiences where they felt marginalised because of their language capabilities.

“At the fast food restaurant where I work, I do work better than other staff. Everyone admires my work, but my English is quite weak. English is still a barrier to my future progress in Ireland. If my English were better, I would get some easier job with higher pay ... sometimes I still do not fully understand what people say. I have to guess from their body language. Actually, I am quite good at observing people’s body language. If my English is good, maybe I will think about going to college”.

(Female, 37, language school student.)

Secondly, the immigration status severely limits Chinese people’s freedom. They cannot apply for jobs freely because of the work permit system. One interviewee, currently on a work permit, found that the work permit limits her to one job if she wants to renew her visa. Someone else found that, with a student visa, it is difficult for him to get a mortgage from the bank to set up his own business. Finally, cultural differences are a really big challenge. Even for those with good English, cultural differences make it difficult for further integration with Irish society.

“Drinking is part of the life style and their culture; I do not like drinking at all. I think drinking has already brought a lot of social problems to this country. When I worked in a pub, the same customers came to the pub every afternoon; drinking to them is like drinking water for me. In the evening, everyone drinks - it does not matter, guys or girls. This actually makes me terrified”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

“I get on really well with my Irish friends, but closeness between my Irish friends and me is not exactly the same as the closeness between my Irish friends and their Irish friends or the closeness between myself and my Chinese friends. There is always a gap because of the cultural difference. They are from different backgrounds and different educational principles. For example, Western people are more extrovert, while Chinese people are more introvert because of our history and culture. So, sometimes what people here think is unimportant, while Chinese people care a lot. For example, Irish people’s attitude towards sex is freer than Chinese people”.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

Studying in Third-Level Education

The vast majority of Chinese students are in English language programmes or schools. Only 10 per cent of students have gone on to Irish third-level education.¹¹ Chinese students have more chances to meet Irish people and other international students at third-level. Those interviewed feel that Irish students have less pressure on them in college and have more of a social life than Chinese students and that Chinese students in contrast, are serious about their study. They pay high fees for their education and study long hours because they cannot afford to pay to repeat the course of study.

Chinese students work and study for much of the time. Many of the interviewees did not make friends with Irish classmates. Many of them spoke with Irish students or international students, but the conversation between them was still quite basic and their close friends were still Chinese. Some of them did not usually go out with Irish students or other international students. They joined societies in the university, but they did not go regularly, so they did not make friends from there. The interviewees describe why they didn't mix more with Irish students:

“I tried to make friends with Irish students and other international students when I was in first year. I was curious about their life. Then I found there was nothing to talk about with them. They really like sports activities such as GAA. I had no interest”.

“The Irish students have more social activities than Chinese students. I think Chinese students are more ambitious, more career-oriented, while the Irish students do not usually make long-term plans. They want to make life easier. They do not have as much pressure as us. Also, maybe I am older than the average Irish student. I do think more about my future. I know what am I looking for. I think it is not easy to say which way is better”.

(Male, 30, university student.)

“Apart from my Chinese friends, I not only have Irish friends but also international student friends. I find it is easier to make friends with international students. We have more in common. These international students are away from their families as well. I can know something about their countries. I will talk about China; they are really interested in China. The common background is the base to being friends. Hence, there are more things we can talk about”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

“I tried to make friends with Irish students and other international students when I was in first year. I was curious about their life. Then I found there was nothing to talk about with them. They really like sports activities such as GAA. I had no interest”.

(Female, 21, university student.)

Other Chinese students tried to mix. One of the interviewees describes how she made many Irish and non-Irish friends:

“I get on really well with my Irish classmates. I had no problem talking to them and going out with them. I have an outgoing personality. I like going out with friends. I go out with my Irish friends to the pubs and nightclubs a lot after class ... Actually, some Irish people are really interested in Chinese culture. If you tell them things about China, they are amazed. I think if you want to be friends with Irish friends, you have to know their culture, such as their drinking culture. Maybe you do not like drinking, but you can still go out with them to have a chat. You do not necessarily need to drink. After a while you get to know each other; naturally, you know how to make conversation with them. I believe if you do not try, you never know”.

(Female, 22, private college student.)

As well as socialising, the classroom figured largely in the comments made by students. The small number of interviewees in third-level education thought the lecturers were supportive and friendly, with some exceptions. Most said lecturers were willing to help them out if they had any questions and they felt they were treated the same as the Irish students. However, they find the lecturers here do not approach students unless students approach them. The opportunities to interact with Irish students and staff at third-level were different though than those in language schools.

“If you tell them things about China, they are amazed. I think if you want to be friends with Irish friends, you have to know their culture, such as their drinking culture.”....

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Studying in Language Schools

Chinese students are the largest student group in the language schools. In some language schools, half of the students are Chinese, or in some classes they were all Chinese. Chinese students choose language schools based on the price of the fees and their reputations. Language school students need to renew their visas regularly and, depending on the course they pick, the renewal may be every three to six months. Their attendance in the language school determines whether or not the Chinese students can renew their visa. If they cannot renew it, they have to go back to China; otherwise they become illegal immigrants. Interviewees reported that if a language school does not have a good reputation, for example if they enrolled students even if the students did not attend, the immigration office will not renew visas for the students from these schools. Chinese students have a good network of knowing which language schools are good for study and which language schools are easy to enrol in.

Similar to those in the third-level education, Chinese students in the language schools do not have deep conversations with other international students, because most of them are quite busy and they have to study and work. They felt it was easier to talk to Chinese students.

“We are in the different classes. After class, I have to go to my part-time job. Sometimes, the college holds parties; then we have the chance to talk to each for a longer time. In general, our conversation is really basic such as study and how everything is going”.

(Female, 26, language school student.)

There are mixed reports on teachers in the language schools. The good teachers not only give students good classes but also encourage students to become familiar with Irish society. The big problem is the high turnover of the teachers. Sometimes the students meet a good teacher, but then the teacher leaves and their study is affected.

“There were a small number of irresponsible teachers; they just came in, did what they wanted to do, without caring about the students’ reactions. For example, one teacher always let us do the exercise in the class, and then just gave us the answer”.

(Male, 25, language school student)

“One of my teachers always tells us about Irish culture and history and stories about Ireland. She informs about different events or parties. Sometimes she brought us to the museums. She also encourages us to get part-time jobs to improve our English and to learn more about Ireland from work and also get some extra money”.

(Female, 25, student and care assistant.)

Working

All the interviewees have part-time jobs. Some even have two jobs. For those who have good English, they can find a job themselves. For those who do not have good English, they usually get jobs through their Chinese friends. For example, their friends introduce them to their manager. Often the workplace is the first and only place where Chinese students have contact with Irish people.

“When I started working in that pub, I had class in the private college from 1pm to 4:30pm. I worked in the pub from 10am to 1pm and from 5pm to 1am after my class. When I switched to the second language school, I still worked the same amount of hours, except I did not need to go to school every day because they didn’t check if I attended. This working routine lasted for one year and a half”.

(Female, 25, private college student.)

“I worked seven days a week for two years. During the week, I had to wake up at 5am and started work at 6am. From 6am to 7am I cleaned the casino. Then I cleaned a big pub, which included a restaurant as well. I finished that work at 12am. Then from 12:30pm to 2:30pm I cleaned an office. After that, I went home to have a break. Then from 4pm to 6pm I worked in an office. Usually I could finish before 6pm. From 6pm to 10pm I studied in the language school”.

(Female, 26, language school student.)

Sometimes we know something is not fair, but we cannot speak for ourselves if we want to stay here.

For most of them, they work primarily for money to cover their daily expenses, which they have found to be higher than expected, while some save up for school or college fees. Only one of the interviewees works for “fun”. What is clear is that Chinese students work hard – most of them in low paying service jobs such as catering and cleaning. Apart from one accountant who is on a work permit, everyone is working in the service sector employment, such as bars, restaurants or shops. All of those interviewed think Irish employers may be taking advantage of hard-working Chinese people. They explain:

“I have worked a lot of places with staff from different countries. I found people in Ireland expect Chinese workers to work more and better. For example, suppose you were working in the accommodation department: the manager expects Chinese workers to clean 12 to 13 rooms in certain time period, but they only expect other foreign workers to clean 10 to 11 in the same period of time”.

(Male, 33, private college student.)

Almost all interviewees get on well with Irish staff or other migrant workers, but there was not much contact between them after work.

“I work for the agency; I do not have a fixed work place. I work in different departments of the hospital or different hospitals. I do not have the choice to make friends with my work mates. I am with my Chinese friends most of the time. Most of my Chinese work mates in the hospital are in the same college as me”.

(Female, 25, student and care assistant.)

Most of the interviewees thought they were paid the same as other staff; only one complained that her pay does not match her workload. If Chinese staff have rows with their colleagues, some will report to their managers: however, many said that would not say anything.

“Sometimes we know something is not fair, but we cannot speak for ourselves if we want to stay here”.

(Male, 25, language school student.)

Work remains an important part of Chinese people’s lives in Ireland. It also provides them with a forum for interaction with Irish people, opportunities to practise English and earn much needed money to support their education. Their entry, on a student visa, places many in vulnerable positions as they feel that they will not get it renewed if they do not comply with employer demands. This can leave some Chinese socially isolated.



Social Networks and Social Isolation

Most of the interviewees thought that the majority of Irish people do not know much about China, even though some Irish people are getting to know China a little bit more. Chinese communities are large and have dense social networks. The majority of Chinese people in Ireland live in the Dublin area because there are study and work opportunities readily available. Because of this, existing social networks are in and around Dublin and recreate themselves by drawing new migrants into them who need support in housing, education and work. A lot of Chinese people do not mix much with Irish people and prefer having Chinese friends, while others want to integrate with Irish society but find it hard to start.

In almost every college and university where Chinese students are studying, there is a Chinese students' society. There are a few formal Chinese institutions in Ireland (see contact list below), and the long term Chinese community (here more than 10 years) is estimated to be about 15,000. The majority of Chinese in Ireland are young, recent arrivals seeking education and work experience and they depend upon existing Chinese institutions to help them.

Even with Internet technology, which many used to learn about Ireland, those in the language schools always keep in touch to inform others about visa information and school information. Through word of mouth they choose the language school which meets their needs.

Most Chinese students live with Chinese friends, while those who are willing to know more about Irish society choose to live with Irish people or other migrants.

Most of the interviewees get financial support from their family, with families paying the agency service fee, living costs for a few months or one or two years depending on the family financial situation, and also their school or college fees. Some interviewees do not ask their family for living costs since they have part-time jobs and some can save up to pay for the school fees.

“Since 2002 there has been an increase in restaurants run by Chinese people. Parnell Street has become the Chinese Corner. There are Chinese grocery shops, restaurants, hairdressing, pubs and bookshops. Life is much easier for Chinese people now, especially for new arrivals. Most of the interviewees are not used to western food and prefer Chinese food. They have the “Chinese stomach”.

The long term Chinese community came to Ireland a long time ago (many from Hong Kong). They opened Chinese restaurants and takeaways. However, it is only since 2002 that people from mainland China have started to open Chinese restaurants, when migration from China increased.

One big cultural difference was that Chinese people in this research preferred going to restaurants to keep in touch with their Chinese friends. Some of them are not used to drinking in pubs. Some Chinese people like gambling and spend lots of money on betting. One of the interviewees lost all the money he had saved up in the last few years through gambling.

Most of the interviewees do not use the Irish media often. They find the programmes are quite different from those in China. Also, sometimes they cannot understand the meaning behind some of programmes. For example, one interviewee described how he

found it difficult to understand the humour in “The Simpsons”. In the Chinese community, they have their own media. The major newspapers are CNewsxpress and the Shining Emerald Newspaper. There is a Chinese radio station called Chinatown Radio. Also, on the Internet, there is Chinese BBS for Chinese people in Ireland to share their experiences, make friends and buy and sell their belongings.

All those interviewed keep close contact with their family in China. At least once a week they talk to them through phones and the Internet. A lot of them do not send money home; instead they do not ask their family for money. For those who have set up their own family in China they will send money home often.

Usually for most of the interviewees, the first year is the hardest. They have just moved away from home and for some it is the first time they have gone abroad to live independently. Some of the interviewees work long hours in the first few years to save up money or to pay back debts they incurred when they came to Ireland, as they borrowed heavily from their friends or relatives in China. Then after living in Ireland for a few years, they are more settled here. They reduce their working hours and some consider studying in Ireland.

In general, Chinese people in Ireland are still isolated from mainstream Irish society. They have parallel communities to the mainstream. They feel that life in Ireland is quite easy and not as competitive as in China and that there is a lot of business potential in Ireland, if they can find it. Many are entrepreneurial and want to, or have started businesses, but again find it difficult to get business development loans, or to “own” a business outright on a student visa.

Life is much easier for Chinese people now, especially for new arrivals. Most of the interviewees are not used to western food and prefer Chinese food. They have the “Chinese stomach”.

Suggestions Emerging from the Research

Visas

Visas are considered to be the biggest problem for Chinese people's development in Ireland. For those in language schools, they have to renew their visa regularly depending on the duration of the course, which can be three months, six months, or one year. Those in third-level education want to have the opportunity to work in professional jobs without a work permit. They still want to go back to China eventually. As a student visa holder, it is hard for them to apply for a mortgage or loan if they want to set up a business here or want to buy property. One suggestion would be to allow those who have studied here for over three years and have completed a third-level degree to remain on a professional work visa to gain work experience and contribute to the Irish economy.

Those whose visas have expired, which means they are illegal residents here, hope the Irish government will give them a chance to become legal residents. They do not want to be illegal; however, sometimes because of study and over-time work, they are forced to be underground workers.

Tackle Racial Discrimination

There is evidence of racial discrimination against Chinese people in Ireland. Equality legislation and criminal prohibitions should be sufficiently robust to tackle this issue, and employers, trade unions and educational institutions should be aware of their obligations. Information on how to seek redress against racism and racial discrimination should also be translated and made widely available to Chinese people.

A more difficult area to tackle is the racialisation of Chinese: to deracialise the Chinese as just of 'form of revenue' for schools, colleges and the Irish state or low-wage workers and to see them as human beings making valid (often non-financial) contributions to Irish society. Communication and opportunities for interaction need to increase. 2008 has been named European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and it is clear that to enhance integration between the Chinese and Irish communities, there is a need for greater intercultural dialogue and a better understanding of each other's language and culture. English language skills are seen as key by those interviewed and free or low cost English courses in community settings and at night would accommodate rapid learning of English for Chinese people. There could also be courses for conversational English with Irish people or extended home stay programmes for students.

Support in Education

For those at third-level, there is a need for intercultural policies and practices within education institutions. More English language support is required for Chinese students. Student services should also cater to the different learning styles that Chinese students bring with them and the cultural issues that may arise from their stay in Ireland. For example, some interviewees were unaware that terminations were not performed in Ireland until they had an unplanned pregnancy.

Conclusion

The report finds that while most migrants come for educational reasons as 'target learners', they are also 'target earners', often contributing more than just labour or tuition money to the Irish economy. Most are young, with secondary education and varying professional goals. There are dense social networks both in Ireland and between Ireland and China.

There is some social isolation of the Chinese in Ireland both because of a cohort effect (they arrived all at the same time and live together) and due to language limitations. Suggestions emerging from the research include changes in visa regulations, tackling racial discrimination, enabling intercultural dialogue, providing free English evening classes, and providing support for Chinese students.

Further Resources

Association of Chinese Professionals
15 Bellgree Square
Tyrrelstown
Dublin 15
Tel: (+353) 1 8331823
Web: www.chineseinireland.org

Irish Chinese Cultural Academy
179 Parnell Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (+353) 87 2580839
Email: info@cicaireland.com
Web: www.cicaireland.com

Embassy of the People's
Republic of China in Ireland
40 Ailesbury Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4
Tel: (+353) 1 2196788
Web: www.chinaembassy.ie

CN Newsexpress LTD.
57 Smithfield
Dublin 7
Tel: (+353) 1 8782958
Web: www.newsexpress.net

Irish Chinese Information Centre
57 Smithfield
Dublin 7
Tel: (+353) 1 8727312

Irish Council of Chinese Social Services
58 Smithfield
Dublin 7
Tel: (+353) 1 8727312

National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)
Floor 3, Jervis House
Jervis Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (+353) 1 8588000
Web: www.nccri.ie

Chinese Student Organisation

National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Yong Jin: jynuim@gmail.com

Dublin Institute of Technology
Qian Wang: qian.wang@dit.ie

Trinity College, Dublin
Si Xiang Zhou: szhou@tcd.ie

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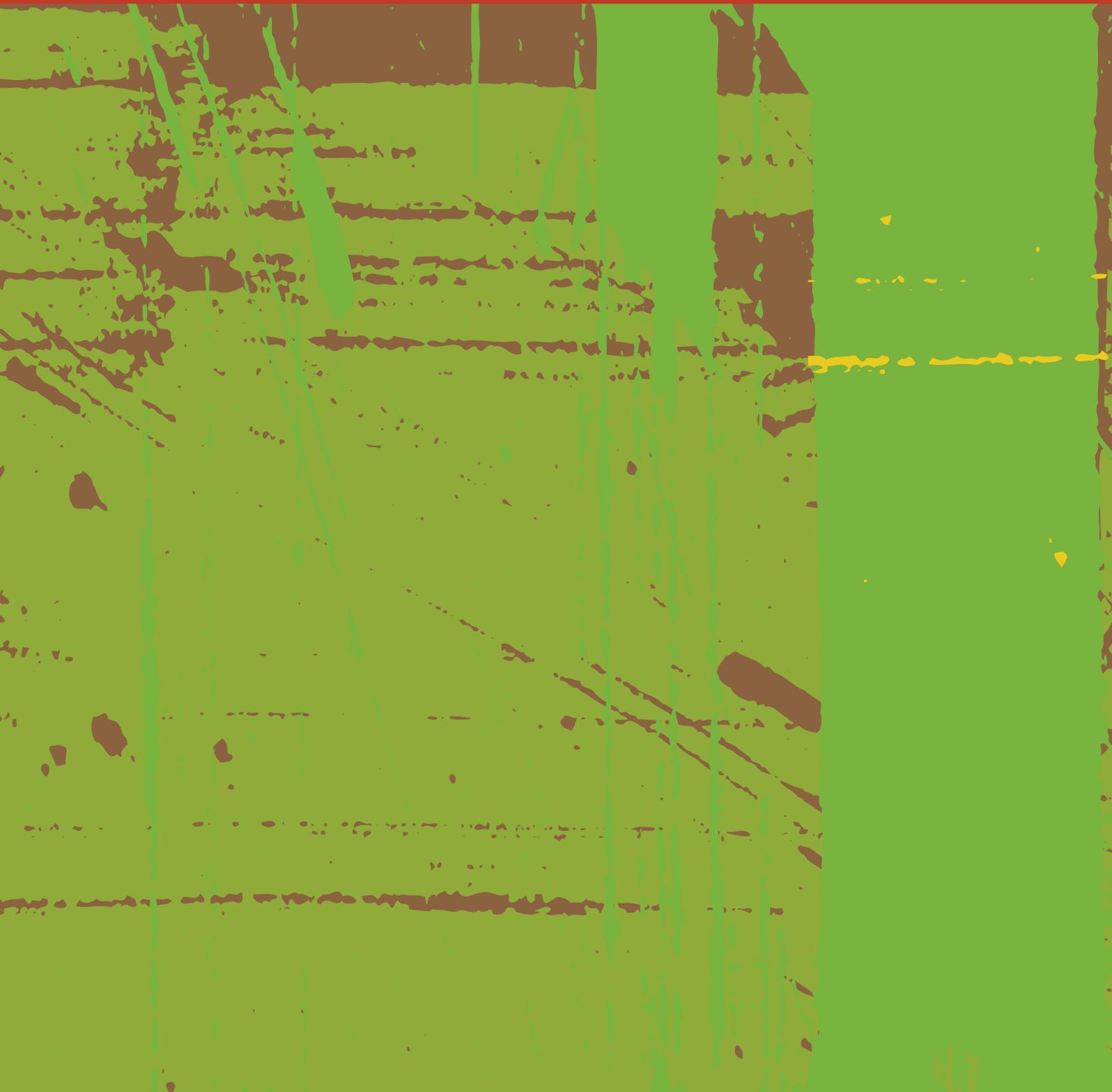
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