

The Social Impact of Religion on New Immigrants: A Case Study of Christianity Among Chinese Immigrants in New Zealand

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Abstract : There are close links between religion and migration. As newcomers to a foreign nation, new immigrants endured many pressures and challenges. Religion can be an important part of a migrant's personal identity, and religious communities can offer valued connections and relationships. During the migration process, religion can undergo significant changes as migrants travel across geographical and cultural gaps and as they face new opportunities or new constraints. For those migrants who are not religious, during this unsettling time, people might become sensitive to the "sacredness", accepting its guidance, and occasionally contemplating religious conversion. This research examines the role of faith and the church in supporting new Chinese immigrants from the perspective of the social function of Christianity, utilizing Chinese immigrants in New Zealand as a case study. Through participant observation in four Chinese churches and over seventy semi-structured interviews, this research illustrates how religion has provided them with a haven and how the church provides indispensable material, spiritual, and informational resources essential for their adaptation to life in New Zealand.

Keywords : migration and religion, overseas chinese, religious capital, christianity

Conference Title : ICCS 2024 : International Conference on Chinese Studies

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : July 04-05, 2024