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REVIEW

ORDERING THE DISORDERED SUBJECT: A CRITIQUE OF CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISTS AS NEW ZEALAND SEEKS TO BECOME CHINA READY

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Currently, expanding Chinese outbound tourism attracts significant practical research effort utilizing various conceptual approaches in many countries. In this Review Article, J. Zhang and Shelton note that this form of tourism to New Zealand is notably increasing and the nature of the experience is accordingly changing from group coach travel to FIT. In their critique, J. Zhang and Shelton argue that despite the increased and careful scrutiny of both the tourism industry and the tourism studies academia on this development, most of the analytic effort (such as that on push/pull factors) is founded upon a dominant and unchallenged Western discourse around self and subject. They maintain that the term “subject position” might be a concept that is common across the broader social sciences but is uncommon in outbound tourism research itself. In this Review Article, the authors are interested in the extent to which, in a Chinese cultural setting, Western formulations of self and subjectivity are actually appropriate, and, they question whether “Chinese outbound tourism to New Zealand” indeed acts to produce the ordered subject. In this light, they critique the very demand that New Zealand becomes China Ready, and they contend that, before their arrival, the Chinese outbound tourist to New Zealand already will have been hailed by a set of subjectivities operating in China, which will act to significantly disorder their touristic performances. Thus, Zhang and Shelton suggest that New Zealand policymakers and tourism product providers must understand these multiple and discursive subjectivities, which are likely to be barriers for any prescriptive reading of the individual tourist. This review is thus intended to help both operational practitioners and field researchers realize that New Zealand—and, indeed, each and every large international destination—must produce compelling/relevant/satisfying supply-side subject positions that may profitably be mapped onto such individual tourists both before and during their visits. (Abstract by Reviews Editor)

Key words: Subjectivity; Ordering; Discourse; Subject position; Chineseness; China outbound tourism
The Western disaffected subject, an abstraction whose fluidity and rapidly changing performance has for decades been the bane of western marketers’ attempts at segmentation, has been noticed in China along with subversive microblogging and graffiti art (Hewitt, 2012). This subjectivity of disaffection has been interpreted as an emerging phenomenon due to, at least in part, the forms of China’s economic development since 1979. There is debate about whether, for Asian economies, the metaphor of a formation of “flying geese,” with coastal China in the third rank of the “V,” is still apposite (Ozawa, 2009) and concern also about whether China has achieved a sufficient degree of productivity to sustain its growth (but) given China’s importance in the global economy, undoubtedly China’s future is intertwined with the rest of the world, such that its prospects will affect the path of the global economy. (Yueh, 2010, pp. ix–x)

Alongside the emergence of the disaffected subject, one of these ways of China’s future being intertwined with the rest of the world is through outbound tourism. The China Tourism Academy (CTA, 2010) forecasted in 2010 that China is expected to export 100 to 110 million outbound tourists by 2020, yet already in 2012 there were 83.2 million outbound border crossings, making China the world’s largest producer of international tourists (Arlt, 2013). Although the number of border crossings does not equal the number of individual travelers, Arlt earlier suggested the “second wave of Chinese outbound tourism” (starting from 21st century) will have major impacts on the future of tourism destinations, in some cases transforming them.

Many destinations in Oceania will appear as if they have been effectively taken over by Chinese tourists openly demanding that their wishes and expectations are fulfilled and their country paid due respect by providing Chinese food, signage, guides, and forms of entertainment at rock-bottom prices. Until now, the sinization of destinations has not proceeded with a speed acceptable to the Chinese visitors. As a major and outspoken part of the growing number of non-Western international travelers, Chinese tourists will continue to change the appearance and offers of many tourism destinations. (Arlt, 2006, p. 228)

China’s outbound tourist market demonstrates the ripple effect described by H. Zhang, Jenkins, and Qu (2002), that “the growth of outbound travel over time becomes more geographically distant (and) (t)he addition of New Zealand and Australia marks the beginning of the fourth ripple, in which the high demand in China for travel beyond Asia will gradually expand to encompass the entire globe” (pp. 279–280). Meanwhile, Arlt (2013) sheds light on the connection between the direct support of the development of outbound travel by the State Council Document No. 41 (G. Zhang, Song, & Liu, 2011) with the “soft power” policies of China. Indeed, Chinese visitors will bring with them social and ideological formations established before they leave home and these may challenge those of the host country. Whether the Chinese tourists are the embodiment of the power exchange in a global political economy therefore becomes a curious question. For New Zealand, this question is particularly important, as the outbound travel ripple does not mark the beginning or extent of that country’s economic relationship with China.

China and New Zealand

In 1994, then New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger declared the country (a South Pacific island nation with a human population of 4 million) to now be “part of Asia.”

Economically, Bolger’s claim has been vindicated by the fact that trade with China, Vietnam, and Indonesia now enjoys rapid growth. Tourism is a major industry in New Zealand, contributing NZ$5.8 billion to the economy in 2011 (Tourism New Zealand, 2012a). Since the 2008 global financial crisis, tourist numbers from Western Europe, the US, and Japan have fallen. Inbound tourism originating from China has grown, albeit from a small base, and exceeded 20,000 in the 2011–12 year, an increase of 17.6%. This strong growth is expected to continue and is occurring within a development from coach-based mass tourism to free and independent travelers (Tourism New Zealand, 2012a).
The Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ) has produced a *China Brief* (TIANZ, 2012), emphasizing the need to accommodate the specific expectations of Chinese visitors, for example, around the importance of food and the expectation of haggling over prices. The demographics of arrivals from China are presented in *The Chinese Holiday Tourist* (Tourism New Zealand, 2012b). Special workshops are organized (Tourism New Zealand, 2012c) to assist tourism operators to understand the Chinese tourist market.

These publications caution that China should not be treated as one market; for instance, different regions have different levels of economic development and different consumer behavior. Such attention reflects the international increase in research interest and effort since 2005 into outbound tourism from China (e.g., Jiang, Scott, Ding, & Zou, 2012; Tse, 2011; Tse, 2013; Tse & Hobson, 2008; Xiang, 2013; Xie & Li, 2009) when, as Arlt (2006) suggested, the beginning of such interest was sparked in part by “emerging questions of how to deal with the growing flood of outbound tourists and especially the hard-currency drain connected with it” (p. 6). Typically, the business communities, both within and outside China, present the country as becoming more and more like the West, a late capitalist economy within a neoliberal framework of economic governance. New Zealand led the world in such neoliberal economic reform when, in 1984, it floated its currency and began the process of removing tariffs on imports and subsidies for exports, a process culminating in the New Zealand–China Free Trade Agreement, due to be implemented fully in 2019. Recently established daily direct flights between New Zealand and China have facilitated these increasingly close economic ties.

New Zealand’s economy is heavily dependent on tourism, indicated by the sector having a dedicated *Tourism Satellite Account* (Statistics New Zealand, 2012). Although the visible commonality between China and New Zealand may be the “visitor economy,” where outbound tourists are treated as imports and inbound tourists are considered to be exports, it would be too reductionist to consider solely economic necessity as the driving force. With the increasing interest in China outbound tourism for its economic impacts on destinations, few studies engage with the “almost compulsory psychological urge to self-reinvent” (Arlt, 2006, p. 131). New Zealand may find useful studies on Chinese outbound tourists’ expectations (e.g., Li, Meng, Uysal, & Mihalik, 2013) and characteristics (Xiang, 2013), however our concern is such descriptive accounts do not advance our understanding either of tourism as an ordering (Franklin, 2007), whose functionality requires further contemplation, or the Chinese outbound tourist as the “disordered subject.” In short, our concern is about the lack of “study of cultural roots of Chinese outbound tourism and the adaptation to a globalized world as a part of the sociology of the Chinese, or ‘The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today’” (Arlt, 2006, p. 82).

**Push Factors and Pull Factors**

Hall’s (2005) tourism system model allows consideration of a generating region, transit region, and receiving region or destination. Such models are themselves further situated within Western notions of the tourist and the history of tourism. In particular, the *push factors* (Dann, 1977) that usually are assumed to be generating region motivators within the Western tourist cannot be assumed to motivate Chinese travelers’ performances of tourism. Chen, Mak, and McKercher (2011) provided a review and critique of the push–pull motivational framework, noting: “the push–pull framework assumes that push factors are inherent with individuals, and pull factors are destination specific” (p. 121). These authors concluded: “what tourists want may go beyond satisfying their needs upon which the push–pull framework rests. Addressing these issues requires a new theoretical perspective as well as different tourist motivation paradigms” (p. 131).

They are not alone in recommending that novel theoretical perspectives be adopted. Jiang et al. (2012) suggested that Means–End Chain Theory investigates tourism motivation at a personal value level that relates to long-term behavioral patterns, and therefore is able to provide insights for a better understanding of Chinese outbound tourism motivations, especially when, in surveys or interviews, Chinese tourists find themselves uncertain about how to describe their motivations. Possibly, Means–End Chain Theory can offer a necessary change from viewing tourism primarily as a performance of seeking and escaping (Iso-Ahola, 1982),
or as a quest for authenticity (Cohen, 1988). The point we are making here is that, for Chinese tourists, the validity of traditional motivations for traveling cannot be taken for granted.

For example, to what extent may China legitimately now be regarded as a nonindividual-oriented society and what are the implications of the answer to this question for traditional ways of segmenting outbound tourism? Viewing Paris from the top of the Eiffel tower, an ironic posttourism individual performance many Westerners situate within postmodernity, still is available to be enacted, without any sense of irony, by groups of Chinese tourists. Oakes (2006), within a wider discussion of mimesis and authenticity in Chinese tourism, describes the apparently unproblematic production for the domestic and inbound markets of the “village as a replica of itself” (p. 166). What the Chinese tourist may regard as authentic, either at home or in Paris, the Western tourist may situate within the simulacra of hyperreality.

Tse (2011) reiterates concerns about authenticity and shifts them to a question involving “the subject”: “Push factors refer to tourists as the subject and deal with those factors predisposing a person to travel” (p. 491). Here, “the subject” refers to the individual as the focus of research attention and not to the poststructuralist subject. Tse (2011) argues the theories involving the individual subject, in contrast with poststructural subjectivity, fail to consider the push factors in the source market, factors with their own cultural dynamics shaping the very form and discourse of certain social formations, in this case outbound tourism. This is one reason why market segmentation theories traditionally applied to Western societies may not adequately explain the patterns of Chinese outbound tourism.

The usual perceptions, that visitors from China comprise “comparatively large groups” and that “the sinization of destinations has not proceeded with a speed acceptable to the Chinese visitors” (Arlt, 2006, p. 28), implies that to be ready for the arrival of H. Zhang et al.'s (2002) ripple it is important for any destination, and the New Zealand industry in particular, to construct pull factors that resonate with subjectivities formed in China already. Industry, operating within the 100% Pure New Zealand brand (Tourism New Zealand, 2012d), must understand the push factors that are operating within Chinese society and how these are culturally mediated and subsequently performed by the outbound tourist.

The Subject

Inevitably, such societal factors involve the discursive production of the subject, the creation of subject positions, and performances of subjectivity. Lee and Choie-Lee (2012), in an industry address at Tourism Rendezvous New Zealand (TRENZ), warned that Chinese tourists must be perceived as people and not as statistics. This warning alludes to the issue of the relationship between the self-aware individual and the abstraction that is the subject. Gillett (2011) warns, “the self-as-embodied-subjectivity is often subject to misconception and illusory reification in ways that reflect the climate of values in which it is elaborated” (pp. 107–109).

When dealing with the subjectivity Chineseness, we are acutely aware of this issue and the need to avoid “illusory reification,” the production of touristic subject as object. To assist in avoiding this trap it is useful to imagine the act of mapping the subjectivity, Chineseness, onto the outbound tourist’s body; that is, the interpellation or hailing of the corporeal by the notional.

Subjectivity is not simply an individual, and certainly not an individualist, phenomenon. It is a collective one. (Performing the outbound tourist) is a way of registering the feeling of being surrounded by others, or more abstractly, by an otherness, something that is not the self. (Morton, 2007, p. 17, addition in parentheses ours)

Figuratively, tourism is “a stage for the performance of various modes of subjectivity, various calls or interpellations that transform the spectator into an actor” (Hartley, 2003, p. 182). The individual is interpellated into a particular, determined, subject position. A good example of such a subject position was the interactive traveler (Tourism New Zealand, 2012d). This abstraction was prominent in Tourism New Zealand’s marketing strategy and hailed individuals in the source markets, Europe, and North America, to construct personal narratives that aligned them with the subject position offered.

The interactive traveler, once it had served its purpose as an economically determined subjectivity,
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inducing a specific touristic performance, was then retired. In contrast, The Chinese Holiday Tourist (Tourism New Zealand, 2012b) provides a set of descriptors of likely Chinese visitors. Intended only to inform the tourism industry, these descriptors do not comprise a subject position. Nonetheless, the advice common to all the “China ready” publications above, to provide Chinese language information and signage, gestures to the notion that providing such material at a destination may align with one of the discursive elements of an emerging subjectivity, Chineseness, at the source.

The Discursive Production of the Chinese Touring Subject

Providing Chinese language information and signage is recognized as “not only helpful to the individual Chinese traveller, but shows respect to all Chinese and to China in general by acknowledging its importance in the world” (Arlt, 2006, p. 202, italics in the original). Through such gestures, we may situate outbound tourism in one of the “appeal arenas” where the “capacity of a country to influence specific external or internal others through attraction and persuasion can be achieved” (Hollinshead & Hou, 2012, p. 230). China’s outbound tourism, as Tse (2013) suggests, is a form of diplomacy encompassing cultures, values, and foreign policies, through which China may perform its soft power. Although to some extent agreeing with such a proposition, we argue that the enactment of soft power dynamics exceeds the realm of diplomacy, and is carried out by the Chinese outbound touring subject, within the notion of Chineseness. The performing of subjectivity through the Chinese outbound touring subject position then, leads us to a “disordered subject,” one that challenges the current normative ordering the West holds on the self and subject.

The Chinese outbound touring subject position is variously determined.

A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines, and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. (Davies & Harre, 1999, p. 46)

This opportunity for notional choice is especially true within the rapidly changing structure of Chinese society. Rather than searching for alternative theories to fill the gap in knowledge of Chinese tourists’ motivations for outbound tourism (Tse & Arlt, 2011), we ask the question, what if the tourist merely is one of Mels’s (2008) discursive forms; a mapping of subjectivity onto a body, in this case a body moving out of China? McCabe (2009) argued that:

the idea of a tourist has taken on cross-cultural and cross-contextual ideological significance as a pejorative term with implicit political and moral implications in its use. Tourist as a categorization device can be subjected to analysis. (p. 40, italics in the original)

The status of outbound tourists from China and New Zealand is not equivalent; those from New Zealand are unfettered in their travel, while Tse (2013) proposes

China’s outbound tourism as a way of ordering both human and nonhuman objects can be illustrated by (a) the government’s control of population mobility, (b) the approved destination status scheme (ADS), and (c) the administrative measures for Chinese citizen outbound travel. (p. 497)

Such ordering, inasmuch as it affects China’s relationships with approved or notapproved destinations may be viewed as an exercise in soft diplomacy (Tse, 2011) or soft power, where “(i) international tourism is now used as a means to promote the appeal and national image of China” (Airey & Chong, 2011, p. 30). This appeal and national image are situated within “the Century of Humiliation” (Gries, 2007), a complicated set of national narratives; “the Mao-era victor narrative, and (emerging during the past decade) a victim narrative, directing Chinese attention at past sufferings at the hands of Western and especially Japanese imperialists” (Gries, 2007, p. 123). Governmental manipulation of these narratives and control of
their public performance is another way of ordering society. Such official narratives, ordering subject positions within China according to their moral and ethical worthiness, disseminate also a set of “normative narratives” (Rappaport, 1993) mapped onto the individual body, both for domestic and international consumption. Again, such acts of ordering are displays of soft power. The mode of representation need not be artistic although, as Hollinshead and Hou (2012) argue, with respect to China and tourism, soft power almost always involves “seduction” in one form or another. For example, Oakes (2012) describes how, within China, the creation of tourism attractions may be designed to function as a way of ordering otherwise disorderly activities; for example:

Quanzhou’s rich tradition of religious festivals was viewed as a liability by local officials seeking to promote a modern, secular, and orderly image of the city. Their solution was to brand the city as a living “museum of world religions,” and transform traditional festivals into commercial touristic arts fairs. (p. 117)

The disorder, though, seems never fully to go away, but exists unacknowledged alongside the ordered behavioral repertoires. Oakes (2012) recalls

where some new houses and shops had recently been built to cater to the developing tourist trade, they’d run into an older woman who cackled at one of them “Come back tonight! Then you can have some real fun! We have other entertainments you might want.” (p. 103)

Also, the disorder may be acknowledged and more or less tolerated, for example “the resonance of Jinghong in the popular Chinese imagination—a place where fantasies of sex, travel, and minority ethnicity come together” (Hyde, 2007, p. 216) and “(l)ocal policemen warn their favorite brothel owners when a nationwide yanda (antivice, strike hard) campaign begins” (p. 228).

The disordered subjectivity, born of the same economic transformation as the disaffected subject mentioned above, maps its subversion onto the tourist in a different way. Here, we are interested only in the subjectivities comprising ordered and disordered outbound tourists, for whom performing the disordered subject would involve failing to “demand respect to all Chinese and to China in general” (Arlt, 2006, p. 202).

The Chinese Are Coming!

Convinced that “the Chinese are coming!,” New Zealand has constructed a specifically antipodean subjectivity of Chinese tourist disorder, the insensitive subject, and anticipates the Chinese tourist to have been performing this subject position in China and that they will continue to perform while visiting, there being no compelling alternative subject position effectively hailing them, either when booking or upon arrival. A New Zealander operating a lodge in China anticipates:

While the Chinese visitors now coming to NZ are not particularly demanding, those we see on the coaches in Xinjiang definitely are. And they are the NZ tourist visitors of the future. Expect them to want to be understood—they will have little or no English. Expect them to be more demanding, and less respectful, of hotel facilities. Expect them to want “proper” Chinese food (especially breakfasts). Expect them NOT to queue for anything. (Cooper, 2012)

This warning that “they are the New Zealand tourists of the future” contributes to the discourse of being China ready. In this negative sense, being China ready involves mapping the subjectivity Cooper observes being performed in Xinjiang onto Chinese arrivals in New Zealand, accepting the inevitability of this mapping, and planning how to meet these performance requirements. It is useful to situate these interactions within an historical context.

Sheng (2007) claimed so-called Chineseness is a manifestation of the hallucination of essentialist authenticity, accompanied by sequenced binary oppositions such as first world/third world and that the construction of Chineseness aims to absolutize being Chinese as something that never changes and thus is in a binary opposition with the concept of modernity. Accepting this critique, we argue that the Chineseness manifest through Chinese outbound tourists is the primary tension between neoliberal individual subjectivity and traditional collective subjectivity.

It is important for the international tourism industry to understand the nature of the Chinese neoliberal subject, the way this abstract phenomenon has
appeared within China, and the relationship of this subject position to 
Chineseness. Also, it is important for the industry to understand the collective 
subject position as it persists, and to grasp how the Chinese outbound tourist performs either or both of 
these subject positions, sometimes simultaneously. As above, these subjectivities exist in discourse as 
no more than discursive forms “in a world suffused in discursive forms” (Mels, 2008, p. 385). To adopt 
and adapt Mels’s point:

(collective and neoliberal) discourses draw attention to how the production, circulation, and justification of meaning within particular constellations of power permeate all social practices and thereby always enter into the constitution of the (cultural) environment. (p. 387, parenthetic material ours)

Given the neoliberal subject, and the collective subject, are examples of Mels’s (2008) discursive forms, then their meanings are produced, circulated, and justified within particular constellations of power; constellations that include, for example, the governments of China and New Zealand and their tourism agencies. Such discursive formulations prove disruptive of any unified notion of the outbound Chinese tourist. Even before leaving China, individuals have been interpellated into “(t)he ideological battle between Maoists and modernizers (which) has burst into the open at a time of threatening social, economic, and environmental conflict” (Righter, 2012, p. 3). Again, disordered subjects already are embedded.

When the New Zealand government’s tourism marketing agency, Tourism New Zealand, produced the subject position the interactive traveler (Tourism New Zealand, 2012d) this subjectivity was similarly ideological, allegedly hailing visitors to perform stable and therefore predictable long-haul consumer characteristics with respect to acceptable product choice and likely satisfaction with experiences. In New Zealand’s tourism campaign, such ideology entails a particular ecological context and content.

The term “Clean and Green” that has since entered the tourism and conservation discourse has never enjoyed any form of official status although it has wide currency as an unofficial, although inaccurate, descriptor of the New Zealand environment. Campbell (2010) pointed out that “(a)fter the Seville Expo in 1992, ‘Clean and Green New Zealand’ entered mainstream economic discourse as a serious strategy for branding products” (p. 14). Originally, the interactive traveler was envisaged as emanating from northern Europe or the US but now, with those markets softening, and the number of travelers out of China expanding, it is important to rethink producing a subject position of this sort; one designed to hail specifically the Chinese FIT. Again, the aesthetic and therefore ultimately the ideological discourse will need to be powerful enough to induce the desired touristic performance in the Chinese visitor, and acceptance of this discourse cannot be taken for granted. It has been observed that:

New Zealanders want to convey a deep relation to nature. Chinese tourists often react to all this with curiosity rather than awe, as they compare it to their own heritage and their own modernity and have no time or interest in close, active involvement with nature. (Arlt, 2006, p. 202)

Although “(a)mong the first “conservationists” in China were the early Taoist and Buddhist religious orders, many of whom sought isolated, mountainous areas to practice principles of harmony with the environment” (Lindberg, Tisdell, & Xue, 2003, p. 105) and these areas continued to be conserved while surrounding areas were developed now, as nature reserves, they experience “very high levels of visitation and the emphasis on generation of financial and economic benefits through infrastructure development” (p. 104). This is in contrast to Shelton & Tucker’s (2008) comment on New Zealand’s deep relation to nature:

New Zealand is an island nation of 268,680km² with a human population of just over 4 million. Approximately one third of this land has been incorporated into the conservation estate (which) is central to the country’s perceived attractiveness and its nature-based tourism products. Thus, in this country, conservation and tourism are inextricably linked. (p. 198)

This linkage between conservation and tourism already does not apply to the Chinese coach tour segment and may or may not apply to the emerging Chinese FIT market. Certainly, in anticipating Chinese tourists’ subjective performances the picture is more complex than Arlt’s (2006) claim that they will “have no time or interest in close, active involvement with nature” (p. 202).
Morton (2007) identified an environmental aesthetics that can be used to describe how tourists who share the New Zealand tourism industry’s Romantic or sublime view of nature have been interpellated into performing the ecological subject and to act as Romantic consumers. Consequently, these tourists become part of the global environmental problems induced by consumerism rather than, as they intend, playing a role in the solution of these problems. This interpellation is an issue for Chinese outbound tourism to the extent that such Romantic consumerism, which is strongly individualistic, requires a sense of self which, in China, currently is contested. It is possible to formulate selfhood while avoiding the illusory reification of treating “self-as-embodied-subjectivity” (Gillet, 2011, p. 109) above.

Part of this formulation involves negotiating the status of the individual and the relationship between the individual and the state. Mühlhahn (2010) suggests:

Conventional wisdom has it that traditional Chinese thinking is group-oriented and essentially hostile to individualism, and the individual was always conceptually placed in relation to a larger group. A number of scholars, however, have held a different opinion (and) argued that one can find at least in Ming neo-Confucianism a well-articulated defense of the role of self in society and the importance of the individual. (p. 229)

This analysis may be incomplete, as J. Zhang (2011) points out:

What the scholars collectively have overlooked about the original “Chinese model” of individualism is the interplay between “self” and “subject” that has long existed in the heritage of Chinese philosophy. Although the Confucian type of individual is mentioned, more comprehensive earlier theoretical works on the relations of individualism, Confucianism, and Taoism should have been a focus. (E)mpirical work can address how the “individualism” in Chinese ancient philosophy relates to modern “individualization.” (J. Zhang, 2011, p. ii)

One aspect of the changing meaning of being Chinese today is the increasing lay adoption of a contemporary Western notion of self, divorced from the teachings of well-recognized ancient Chinese philosophers. However, neither the Western notion of self nor the Chinese traditional philosophies can be pinned down to one fixed and stable model. As it is described by Seigel (2005): “(O)ften personal integration remains problematic or incomplete . . . it can be a lifetime project for some . . . testimony to the troubles and vicissitudes that balancing the diverse constituents of self-existence entails” (p. 8). The problematic nature of achieving personal integration can be ameliorated by the adoption of personal narratives that typically involve stories that explain an individual’s life history and current ways of experiencing the world (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006). For instance, the Century of Humiliation victor and victim narratives are examples of normative narratives in China. It is reasonable then to suggest that Chinese outbound tourists carry within themselves Western-style individual narratives of self as well as collective narratives of their society.

We must be aware that the insufficiency of cross-cultural studies and collaboration between Chinese and Western scholars results in a limitation of our understanding of the complexity of the rapidly changing sense of self, subjectivity, and subject in contemporary Chinese society. Although the fast changes have been discussed mostly in relation to economic growth, we argue that the changes in notions of “self” importantly open up a space for the meeting, colliding, and negotiating of different ideas of self. Chinese outbound tourists as disordered subjects resemble the subjects who are generated from, as well as shaping, this space and thus challenging and redefining the realm of Chineseness.

Showing Respect Through Product Offering

Tourism cannot be a purely social activity; rather, it has become a heterogeneous assemblage “at large” in the world, remaking it as a touristic world, a world to be seen, felt, interpellated, and traveled. In doing so it underlines the significance of nationalism as itself a form of ordering with clear implications for the emergence of tourism ordering. (Tse, 2011, pp. 496–497)

The growth of China outbound tourism has made Chinese outbound tourists the target of tourism ordering, as Tse (2011) mentions above. We claim, that both for the Chinese and New Zealand governments and their tourism agencies, it is critical to advance
subjective and intersubjective relations between the notion of self/subject and tourism as ordering. The increasing flow of tourists emanating from China draws attention to not only the dramatic changes going on within China, but illuminates also changes happening beyond China. Without a sufficiently broad analytical context, Chinese outbound research may be empty and inadequate for developing tourism strategies for “getting ready.” In a recent address Tourism New Zealand acknowledges that “The nature of the Chinese tourists is changing rapidly, with a 27.9% increase in holiday stay days in 2013 and 68.5% increase on independent tourists’ numbers; the quality of growth is very good. We are certainly targeting higher value tourists” (Bowler, 2014).

Whether the currently emerging “cultural sensitivity training” (Tourism New Zealand, 2012c) is enough for understanding this broader context is moot. Although for those working in the New Zealand tourism industry it may be helpful to know how Chinese tourists prefer to be treated, for achieving a state of national readiness such training itself must be viewed as a process that needs to be contributed to actively through collaboration between New Zealand and China both. We claim such collaboration demands attention be paid not only to expanding and deepening cultural knowledge in the hospitality sector, but also to seek in wider cultural and social spheres opportunities for communication and cooperation between New Zealand and China.

Much research deploying critical and innovative methodologies is needed in order to understand the “disordered subject” of the Chinese tourist. Here, we have considered the Chinese tourist as subject and self and presented the discursive nature of the production of subjectivity and selfhood. These subjectivities and narratives of self allow for and encourage the adoption and performance of tourist roles that are defined by and desired by the host nation. For Chinese visitors to demand that Chinese customs and culture be replicated in New Zealand would be an act of cultural imperialism similar to that traditionally imposed on host nations by Western tourists.

Future Research on Chinese Outbound Tourists

Future research and investigation into Chinese outbound tourists requires critical scholarship consistent with the rise of critical scholarship in tourism studies more generally. Although having its clear marketing and economic characteristics and implications, Chinese outbound tourism highlights also the
for such an understanding of readiness will become increasingly apparent. There is perhaps no status that truly can be called “ready” in terms of preparing for the gamut of human interaction, the fluidity of intermingling groups must be encountered and exchanged while it is happening, although beforehand expectations and afterwards reflections may be informative. We are acutely aware of the tensions generated by any automatic, unthinking imposition of a Western version of “self” onto Chinese outbound tourists, and of the contested discourses within China regarding “self.” Such tensions may provide a fruitful field for future research and study, for they can be seen as disconnections to be clarified and improved, as well as being a meeting point for generating new and energetic notions.

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