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# **Acculturation: A Social Identity Approach**

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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
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at  
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by  
Darren Chan

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Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Science.

## Acculturation: A Social Identity Approach

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Darren Chan

Under the influence of globalisation, people are, and are continuing to migrate around the globe on a large scale. Acculturation deals with the process of cultural and psychological change of immigrants as they live and interact with the host society. Berry's (1992) framework of acculturation strategies is the predominant framework in acculturation studies today. According to the framework, four strategies (integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation) emerge from the interplay between the maintenance of the ethnic culture and the adoption and integration of the host culture. It is argued that while this framework is useful in describing how groups of immigrants acculturate in a particular society, it is not sufficient to explain *why* people acculturate in different ways. Social identity theory is the proposed perspective in examining the nature of the acculturation process. The four acculturation strategies are argued to be the result of the activation of the in-group/ out-group mechanism, which is treated as a generic social cognitive mechanism by social psychologists. While the current study is not the first to discuss acculturation from a social cognitive perspective, it is the first to claim and empirically test a direct connection. Forty randomly selected participants were recruited in public areas in Christchurch, New Zealand, to take part in the study. Scales of ethnic identity and national identity were used to measure the acculturation style of the participants, and interviews were conducted afterwards to investigate the psychology related to the in-group/ out-group mechanism. Distinctions in stereotypic perceptions and beliefs were found across all acculturation styles, which suggests that acculturation and social identity are interrelated concepts. Additional themes (the role of language, personal identity, the change in environment and the integration of cultural norms) were also identified to influence the adaptation of immigrants. Their relevance and interaction with social identity were discussed.

**Keywords:** acculturation, social identity theory, in-group/ outgroup mechanism, New Zealand, acculturation framework, ethnic identity, national identity, stereotyping, immigrants

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Human migration and intercultural interaction in New Zealand.....	1
1.2 What is Acculturation?.....	4
1.3 The psychology of intercultural interaction and the relevance of the ingroup /outgroup mechanism in social psychology .....	6
1.4 Thesis organisation .....	10
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Current developments in acculturation studies .....	12
2.2 The concepts of Ethnic and National Identity in the acculturation literature and their connection to Social Identity .....	16
2.3 Empirical implications.....	19
2.4 Studies of the acculturation and social identity relationship .....	22
<b>Chapter 3 Research Questions and Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	26
3.2 Research Questions/ Objectives .....	27
3.3 Methodology.....	29
3.3.1 Human Ethics Application .....	30
3.3.2 Recruitment .....	30
3.3.3 Step One - Research Instruments and Data Collection.....	31
3.3.4 Step Two - Question Design and Data collection.....	33
<b>Chapter 4 Quantitative and Qualitative Results .....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 Quantitative analysis.....	36
4.2 Qualitative analysis – rationale.....	39
4.3 Qualitative analysis – overall themes .....	41
4.4 Perception.....	42
4.4.1 Separation .....	44
4.4.2 Integration.....	46
4.4.3 Marginalisation .....	49
4.4.4 Assimilation.....	50
4.5 The role of language .....	52
4.6 Intercultural differences .....	55

4.7	The role of social values – a paradox in social identity? .....	57
4.8	The role of personal identity and its association with ‘marginalisation’ .....	60
4.9	The role of the physical environment .....	65
4.10	Summary .....	67
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion and Limitations .....</b>		<b>70</b>
5.1	Summary and Discussion .....	70
5.2	Limitations .....	76
<b>Appendix 1 Research Information Sheet.....</b>		<b>80</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Questionnaire .....</b>		<b>81</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>		<b>83</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Scatterplot showing a positive correlation between collective identity and ethnic identity..	24
Figure 2 Pie chart showing distribution of acculturation strategies.....	38

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Human migration and intercultural interaction in New Zealand

According to the United Nations (2006), half of the world's population now live in cities. People commute together and work together in tightly constructed spaces. We live near others with whom, chances are, we have not had any previous relationship. For the most part, we will probably never meet these people again. Not only that, we interact daily with people from an increasing variety of ethnic backgrounds. This is unprecedented in the evolutionary history of our species. Although it was possible for humans to travel across continents hundreds of years ago, it was not until recently with cheaper long-distance transportation, liberalisation of immigration policies, greater affluence in developing countries and information becoming easily accessible, that modern humans are able to migrate on such a massive scale. We can easily familiarise ourselves with every street of a foreign city through Google Maps and Google Street View before we even start packing our belongings. At the time of writing, it is 3 a.m. in the morning, and I can book a flight to Dubai a few hours from now, seconds after I open up my internet browser. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2013), international tourist arrivals reached 1.035 billion in 2012 alone. People are no longer bounded by geography, and to some extent, sovereignty. While tourists generally stay in a foreign country for a short time, with the correct permits and resources, people can just as easily start a new life in a new country. These people are immigrants.

This study was conducted in New Zealand, a relatively distant island country located in the South East corner of the Pacific Ocean, and it has not escaped from the movement of globalisation. A brief look at her history reveals that the influx of immigrants is not a particularly new phenomenon in this country. New Zealand was first inhabited by Polynesians



in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century until it was colonised by the British Empire. As the living conditions were poor in England at the dawn of the industrial revolution, with people living in run-down, crowded dwellings, and the increasing conflicts between social classes, the New Zealand Company was responsible for the promotion and assistance of immigration from Britain and Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a total inflow of migrants peaking at over 40000 in 1875 (<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/immigration/home-away-from-home/summary>). An influx of Chinese immigrants was also seen with the 'Gold Rush' in Central Otago and the West Coast in the 1860s, which in a way resembles what happened in the United States. Today the population of New Zealand is predominantly White European. Maori, who are the indigenous people of New Zealand, contribute to a proportion of the population today (14.6 percent) (Census 2006, Statistics New Zealand). The debate about how they should be treated in New Zealand society is still very much current, especially in the political arena. The Treaty of Waitangi, in particular, which recognised Maori rights and ownership of land and properties when it was first signed by the British Crown and Maori chiefs in 1840, and which remains current, is still being continuously interpreted and debated in terms of its relevance to the present day. Following the Treaty, New Zealand is committed to biculturalism, and the New Zealand society in general is conscious about preserving and promoting the Maori culture.

In modern times, a points system was introduced as a means for selecting skilled immigrants in 1991. This was intended to fulfil the then National government's desire to "more effectively meet New Zealand's needs for economic development, and defuse damaging public and political debates on various negative aspects of contemporary immigration" (Butcher & Spoonley, 2011, p.98). As a result, the net migration rate of Asian peoples to New Zealand virtually doubled between 1991 and 1995. An article in a free Auckland community paper called 'Inv-Asian', published in 1993, marked the first stage of a moral panic about Asian

immigration, in which Asians became defined as a threat to societal values and interests (Butcher & Spoonley, 2011). This panic subsequently led to the politicisation of immigration in the 1996 General Election (and again in the 2002 General Election), predominately driven by the anti-immigration stance of Winston Peters and the New Zealand First political party. They “Asianised” the immigration debate as they blamed Asian migrants for problems in New Zealand society (Butcher & Spoonley, 2011). For skilled Asian immigrants, business migrants or entrepreneurs, a dominant issue has been the difficulty of finding employment when facing prejudice and discrimination (Henderson, 2003). McGrath et al. (2005) discussed what might be called an ‘accent ceiling’, or a reluctance to appoint to senior positions skilled immigrants who speak English with an accent, especially an Asian accent. McGrath et al. (2005) also refer to subtle racism in employment, such as: a perception that employers gave jobs and promotions to ‘white’ New Zealanders instead of Asians (all other things being equal, even if the Asian person was a better worker); workmates pretending not to understand; workmates patronising Asians; and management positions being reserved for ‘white’ New Zealanders. The most common form of discrimination experienced by the participants (McGrath et al, 2005) was verbal abuse and ‘the finger’ – often by teenagers or children. Overt racism experienced in their study included: damage to cars identifiable as ‘Asian’; having bottles or stones thrown at them; and being laughed at because of poor pronunciation. Discrimination was found to be complemented by barriers, such as the lack of fluent English, in making friends with New Zealanders (McGrath et al., 2005). There was also a cultural gap, which the participants in McGrath’s study felt they could not bridge or cross.

Across the Tasman in Australia, Maxwell et al. (2013) studied social inclusion of Muslim women in community sports initiatives in Australia. Paradoxically, it was found that some of the practices that encouraged the social inclusion of Muslim women resulted in social

exclusion on the part of non-Muslim women at the club. Therefore, intercultural interaction is an issue that goes 'both ways', and requires extra care in policy development. As New Zealand moves from a bi-cultural society towards a multi-cultural society (with non-Europeans now comprising 32.4 percent of the population (Census 2006, Statistics New Zealand)), the need to engage people of different ethnicities with New Zealand society and ensure the ongoing tolerance of the host society, confirms the relevance of the current research.

## **1.2 What is Acculturation?**

Intercultural interaction, like any interaction, consists of two-way actions. When members of the minority culture deal with living in the host society, the term employed is 'acculturation', and this will be the primary interest of this research. People migrate for many different reasons. Some migrate to more economically developed countries in search of a better quality of life; some were sent to a different country by their parents for a better education; some were given the opportunities by their employers; while some migrate because of their families and partners. No matter the reason, the change that these people deal with can often be significant. While it is becoming increasingly frequent for members of the host society, i.e., the society to which migrants are moving, to interact with people different from their own culture, the impact on their overall life is minor in comparison. For immigrants, both the physical and cultural environments constantly remind them of the fact that they are living in a different country. The music that gets played on the radio, the programmes on television, the way workers commute, the layout of the city, the types of plants and animals around, the language, the food, etc. may be very different, depending on where they are from originally. The way they deal with such changes, such as their ability to work effectively in the new environment, especially where communication and knowledge of the local social institutions

are required, is important because it can impact upon their physical and mental life significantly. Whether they choose to embrace such changes and the extent to which they choose to retain their ethnic way of thinking will have different implications psychologically and socially (see Section 2.1).

The primary concept in acculturation is change – the change from living in or being brought up in one’s society of origin (one’s heritage culture) to living in the new society (the host culture). Accompanying geographical change are changes in culture and psychology. Traditionally, acculturation was described as being governed by a linear, unidirectional model (Arends-Toth & Vijver, 2004). In other words, the acculturating individual was thought to lose his/her heritage over time, and total adoption of the new culture was thought to be the ultimate end point of the acculturation process. But this was soon refuted (e.g., it was recognised that Native Americans still retain traditional practices after many generations), and a bi-dimensional model, as proposed by Berry (1992), came to dominate acculturation studies in the present day, and is widely used. This model rests on the notion that maintenance of the culture of origin (the heritage culture) and adoption of the new culture (the host culture) are independent of each other. Four options result from the space created by these two dimensions. Berry et al(1989, 1997) refers to these four options as acculturation attitudes or strategies. According to Berry, *Assimilation* is characterised by a commitment to ‘fitting in’ with the larger society at the expense of one’s heritage culture. *Separation* occurs when the individual holds onto his/her own culture while dismissing interactions with the larger society. *Marginalisation* exists when involvement with neither culture is preferred. Finally, *Integration* refers to a high level of involvement in both maintaining the culture of origin and adopting the new culture. These four strategies are essential to understanding the main argument of this thesis, and they will be discussed and referred to extensively here.

### **1.3 The psychology of intercultural interaction and the relevance of the ingroup /outgroup mechanism in social psychology**

Although we have come to the point in human history where we are constantly interacting with people with whom we are not familiar, when those people come from a different ethnic background, there seems to be an extra layer of complexity added to that interaction. Suddenly, they seem to be more than just a 'generic stranger', and it seems common for people to have extra information about these people of a different ethnicity when compared to someone of the same race. And dependent on the information, we might sometimes have different feelings towards them and alter the way we interact with them. Generally speaking, we focus less on the personality and the background of the person and more on the person's ethnicity or culture. In the United States, where African-Americans live alongside White Americans, the relationship between these two races has very much been one of the central characteristics of the nation and played a key role in the founding of the nation. The United States is perceived to be one of the most Westernised nations, yet race remains a very sensitive issue today, over two centuries after its founding. Racially contextual words are often used with extra care, and depictions of races in the media still often spark controversies. Although deemed as socially unacceptable today, racially derogatory comments are still being made often and it can create aggressive retaliation from the targeted group. For example, when, in 2011, a UCLA female student posted a video on YouTube to express her frustration with Asian students' behaviour in the library, it was met with a death threat (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1366132/Alexandra-Wallace-YouTube-racist-Asian-rant-day-Japan-tsunami.html>). When President Obama was first elected in 2008 in the United States, one of the biggest talking points was that he was an African-American. Thirty eight percent of white voters supported Obama, while 89 percent of African-Americans supported him (The Pew Research Center, 2008). This large difference seems to suggest that

some people voted for or against Obama based on his ethnicity to some extent. If the ethnicity of a candidate can influence how a person decides how their country should be run for the next four years, we can conclude that something significant is happening. As an Asian myself in a predominantly Europeanised country, I cannot recall how many times someone struck up a conversation with me that was clearly based on assumptions about my country of origin, rather than asking me if I am enjoying my evening, or the weather, as I would imagine would be a much more common conversation topic among New Zealanders. Even for someone who appears European, but speaks with a French accent, for example, he/she would still receive similar 'treatment' from New Zealanders, I suspect. This is something that we seem to have taken for granted, but remains an interesting point to ponder upon nonetheless, especially when we consider on why it is that race and ethnicity make such a strong initial impression on us.

Although no scientific evidence has been established that people from various races are naturally different behaviourally and psychologically, as distinct from their physical appearances, people seem to continuously go back to emphasise and amplify the distinction. Mere physical differences between races are simply not large enough to warrant such distinctions. When we perceive that these people are different from us and that the difference is negative in nature, such as perceiving them as a threat to our livelihood, discrimination will follow. On the other hand, when members of the host culture perceive their difference as positive, events such as the Christchurch (New Zealand) Chinese lantern festival that promote and celebrate a particular culture, are well received. So why might there be such an emphasis on simple distinctions give the significant consequences that follow? Perhaps one possible answer can be found in the field of social psychology, which concerns a universal psychological mechanism that determines how people make interpersonal distinctions, perceive others and,

consequently, interact. That is, despite current levels of intercultural contact at such an intimate scale being relatively recent in terms of human history, the way interactions with different groups of people are initiated may not have fundamentally changed. One possible explanation among evolutionary psychologists (such as Buss, 2006) is that this is due to how our mind is 'wired' through evolution. This helped shape certain psychological mechanisms to deal with specific problems that humans encountered in the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA). As a result, this mechanism elicits certain predetermined responses if the stimuli is appropriate, regardless of how much our social environment has changed or is going to change. Anthropologists would also argue that humans dealt with social situations long before they became civilized. It was important for us to respond correctly to groups that we identified as different from us, if only for the sole reason that a hostile group could quickly overwhelm us physically when we were alone.

In this thesis, my central argument is that the in-group/ out-group mechanism and social identity theory are the primary, or fundamental, means responsible for the process of acculturation. According to Fiske (2000), one of the prominent researchers in social psychology, people accentuate differences between categories and minimize differences within categories, and this process of so called auto-categorisation speeds people's ability to sort each other out. People detect each other's probable gender, race, and age within milliseconds of meeting, and they especially quickly identify in-group members (the in-group/out-group terminology, which essentially differentiates groups in which we belong psychologically and the ones that we do not, was first introduced by Sumner (1906[1992])). The minimal group paradigm, an experimental technique invented by Tajfel (1971, 1978, and Turner, 1986), states that people can be divided into groups on the basis of minimal information, i.e. people are assigned to relatively novel and mutually exclusive social

categories. These categories can be very diverse, for example, persons preferring action movies versus comedy movies (Ahmed, 2007). Zarate and Smith (1990) found that groups which depart from the norm are more often linguistically marked, i.e. women are assigned gender, and blacks, race, more than men and whites, respectively, are. In other words, these 'minority' groups are implied to be deviations from the norm due to how they are spoken of in everyday conversation. Moreover, these marked groups require more explanation than unmarked groups. For example, when explaining the gender gap, women's behaviours are described as deviant from the male norm, but not *vice versa*. Perdue et al (1990) state that this simple distinction between 'us and them' carries emotional significance. According to psychologists, the reason for such processes of automatic categorisation is that they save perceivers' mental resources, as stereotype-matched behaviour among out-group members allows rapid encoding, which in turn allows the perceivers to operate under cognitive load or degraded conditions (Fiske, 2000). Unsurprisingly, stereotypic-matching information is preferred by people, and when there is stereotypic-matching information available, perceptual details and ambiguous or neutral information are neglected. This is especially true of people who use strong stereotypes (Fiske, 2000).

Expanding from the concept of the in-group/ out-group categorisation in social psychology, social identity theory was primarily driven by Gordon Allport (1954) and, later, Tajfel (1971, 1978, 1986 (with Turner)). The theory "blossomed within the European context into a primary approach to intergroup relations at the group level of contextual analyses from the 1970s onward" (Fiske, 2000, p. 303). Sumner (1906), proposed that attachment to in-groups and preference for in-groups over out-groups may be a universal characteristic of human social life, and the reason why we naturally favour in-groups is that group membership is vital to our self-esteem. According to the theory, our identity is derived from the groups we belong to,



and we can only feel good about ourselves if we can maximize the status, prestige and success of the groups we identify with. In other words, we somehow infer the success of the group as part of our personal achievement, even though we do not necessarily directly contribute to the success of the group. The existence of this mechanism can influence the way we process information (this will be discussed further in Chapter 2, Section 2.3 of the literature review).

#### **1.4 Thesis organisation**

Ward (2008), a specialist in acculturation based in New Zealand, argued that the main problem with acculturation studies is that they have treated acculturation as a static outcome, such as dating preferences and physical health, that interacts with other things or predicts broader adaptations; and some fundamental questions remain. There has been little attention paid to the nature of acculturation itself as the psychological process that occurs within the individual. What is the nature of acculturation? Why do people acculturate in these four specific ways? This calls for a new perspective in examining the phenomenon. The beginning of the following chapter will introduce the relevance of social psychology to intercultural interaction, in which a universal mechanism could be responsible, when we think, feel, and interact with people who we perceive are similar to or different from us. It is proposed that adopting a social identity perspective in social psychology might help address the very nature of acculturation. Social identity theory explains how the implicit categorising of in-groups and out-groups is associated with differences in social cognition in the form of attribution, stereotyping and perception. Using scales and qualitative interviews, the proposed research attempts to investigate whether or not these types of mechanisms are the ones in operation when the individual negotiates identity between the heritage culture and the host culture during

acculturation in the New Zealand context. Are differences in acculturation style the result of cognitions that involve different categorisations of in-groups and out-groups?

Having introduced my thesis topic, my research questions, preferred psychological approach and a New Zealand context, I will now discuss the overall layout of this thesis. The next chapter will consist of the literature review. Section 2.1 will take a look at the current developments in the field of acculturation studies. Section 2.2 discusses the concepts of ethnic and national identity in the way they are referred to in the acculturation literature. These concepts are important because they are responsible for the formation of the matrix in Berry's typology, and the psychological, internal characteristics of these concepts allow them to act as 'anchors' that connect to the broader 'identity' that is defined in the social identity literature. Section 2.3 discusses the empirical implications of adopting a social identity perspective on acculturation through the concepts of attribution and stereotyping from the social psychology literature as examples. Section 2.4 looks at previous studies that have taken a similar approach. Chapter 3 will explain the objectives of this research and how they will be achieved, with specific information about the recruitment process, the scales, and the interview procedure. Chapter 4 will describe the findings in both quantitative and qualitative data, and provide a lengthy discussion of the connections between the traits of social identity and the four acculturation strategies. The concluding chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the implications of the study findings for the field of acculturation and evaluates the current study in retrospect, stating its limitations and making suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Current developments in acculturation studies

Acculturation is a broad, multidisciplinary subject and has been discussed in a wide variety of academic settings, such as from social issues, social psychology, health science, community psychology, leisure research, developmental science, marketing, ethnic studies and cross-cultural psychology. A review of the literature indicates that most acculturation studies are contextual and focus on a target population. That is, they describe how a group of people acculturate in a particular society and how this process is influenced by social, political and economic factors that are unique to that society at that time. Examples include: how social class influences the behaviour change in leisure experience among South American immigrants (Juniu, 2000); the influence of education and dating preference on ethnic identity among Latino young adults (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004); how Chinese Canadians use adventure education as a mean to acculturate (Lo, 2011); how parents and children selectively acculturate within the private (values) and public (behavioural) domain (Costigan & Dokis, 2006); how the quality of the parent-child relationship affects one's ethnic development (Kim et al., 2006); the relationship between acculturation, depression and cigarette smoking among U.S. Hispanic youth (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2011); the impact on oral health in acculturation (Gao & McGrath, 2011); and shopping orientations among Asian-American consumers in San Francisco (Ownbey & Horridge, 1997). The quantitative nature of most of these studies make studying such relationships easily achievable. They often involve measuring the type and level of acculturation, and how it is statistically related to the topic of interest by using a scale that is typically developed for that topic or a scale that is developed or modified by the researcher. Using Lorenzo-Blanco et al.'s (2011) study as an example, the 'Revised Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans' was used to measure acculturation level and 'The Center for

Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale' was used to assess adolescents' depressive symptoms. Findings are typically established using statistical analysis, for example, in Lorenzo-Blanco et al.'s (2001) case, multivariate linear regression models were used. Not all acculturation studies involve a second topic of interest; sometimes they are merely demographically oriented, and hence can be said to be more descriptive in nature. That means they describe the differences in acculturation levels and types among ethnicities, gender, or generations. For example, Cuella et al.'s (1997) study found that ethnic identity was highest among first generation Mexican college students in the U.S.

In New Zealand, to document how Pakeha and Maori identity are negotiated and developed within the bi-cultural nature of New Zealand society and how different minority groups acculturate, Ward, a cross-cultural psychologist, applied Berry's framework of acculturation strategies (Ward & Lin, 2005). Among Pacific Islanders, Chinese and Maori, 'integration' as an acculturation strategy is strongly preferred over 'separation', 'marginalisation' and 'assimilation'. Ho (1995) found that acculturation was influenced by length of residence, with the dominance of 'separation' replaced by a surge in 'integration' throughout the first four years of residence among Hong Kong Chinese adolescents in New Zealand. Moreover, Ward and Lin (2005) concluded that the more different the culture of origin is from New Zealand, with China being an example, the more difficult it is for the individual to assimilate; and that there are inconsistencies between the acculturation strategies that are preferred and the actual strategies used by immigrants in New Zealand. In a 2006 study, Ward challenged the traditional notion that racially mixed children are more susceptible than single-race children to experiencing psychological stress, trauma and conflicting parental values, and that one set of values should be shredded in favour of the other during the development period. Ward used an acculturation framework to study 104 dual heritage students (where one parent is

Pakeha and the other Maori). Her findings suggest that Maori and Pakeha identities are positively correlated among the dual heritage group, which supports Berry's position that the maintenance of the heritage culture is thought to be independent of the adoption of a second culture. Ward's dual-heritage groups were found to be not significantly different from single ancestry groups in terms of psychological symptoms, life satisfaction, behavioural problems or school adjustment. By looking at social and political issues that occur in the broader society - for example, the anti-Asian movement sparked by the 'Inv-Asian' article published in a local newspaper in 1993, and the 'Asianisation' of the immigration debate by *New Zealand First* and its leader Winston Peters - Ward is able to put her quantitative findings regarding acculturation in political perspective. Ward also studied interactions at the inter-group level. For example, borrowing the notion of 'threat' from psychology, Chan and Ward (2010) found that Maori have more negative attitudes towards Chinese than towards Pakeha because they feel that the Chinese are competing with them in terms of employment. However, these types of studies, whether in New Zealand or elsewhere, go beyond the topic of acculturation and are generalised to cross-cultural research.

In order to paint a more complete picture of acculturation in a systematic and unified way, Ward and Kennedy (1994) incorporated the notion of psychological and sociocultural adaptations, which would be adopted by subsequent researchers (such as Kopic, 2002). Psychological adaptation highlights the affective aspects of acculturation which is interpreted within the stress and coping framework in psychology. By contrast, sociocultural adaptation highlights the behavioural component which concerns social skills and interaction (Sam et al., 2006). In brief, Ward and other international scholars of acculturation such as Berry (1992) and Phinney (2006), studied how the variation in the dimensions of acculturation (identification with own culture and with host culture) and the four strategies would interact

with these two types of adaptations. Berry et al, (2006) found that identification with the ethnic culture contributes positively to psychological adaptation, while identification with the host culture predicts more positively to sociocultural adaptation. For acculturation strategies specifically, 'integration' was found to be linked to greater self-esteem (psychological) and self-efficacy in English language skills among New Zealand migrants from Hong Kong, and also to greater life satisfaction (sociocultural) (Ward & Lin, 2005). 'Assimilation', on the other hand, was linked more to symptoms of psychological distress, lower self-esteem (psychological), greater instances of behavioural problems, and poorer school adjustment (sociocultural) (Berry et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 2001). 'Separation' and 'marginalisation' were found to carry similar negative effects in the *International Comparative Study of Ethno-Cultural Youth* (ICSEY), a large acculturation study that involved 7977 participants from 26 cultural backgrounds (Ward & Lin, 2005). Some of Ward and colleagues' studies also examined the predictors of psychological and sociocultural adaptation. For example, personality, social support and life change events were found to predict psychological adaptations, while cultural knowledge, degree of contact and intergroup attitudes were found to predict sociocultural adjustments (Sam et al., 2006). Such frameworks of psychological and sociocultural adaptation allow researchers to determine how well immigrants adapt to their new culture, and whether this 'performance' in adaptation is associated with variables such as demographics, level of education, income, length of time spent in the new culture, and so forth. This, along with the Berry's four strategies, set the parameters for most contemporary acculturation studies today. In other words, if we were to look at how a group of people acculturate within a particular society, then according to current knowledge, examining these dimensions would give an understanding of the process.

## **2.2 The concepts of Ethnic and National Identity in the acculturation literature and their connection to Social Identity**

Although contemporary acculturation studies provide an understanding of how immigrants acculturate, how that affects their adaptation in the society and how such adaptation affects other aspects in the immigrants' life (such as oral health), these studies fail to explain *why* they acculturate in the way they do. The main proposition that is the basis of the present study is that acculturation is a specific example of how generic aspects of human psychology work. More specifically, it is indicative of underlying, general processes of social cognition (how human beings process information about other members of the species). Padilla and Perez (2003) argue that using a social cognitive perspective might help explain how it is that individuals from the same educational, socioeconomic, generational and familial backgrounds, adopt different strategies when acculturating. It is argued here that acculturation, in nature, is not only a phenomenon that occurs when people come into contact with a new culture as it is currently viewed, but rather it is part of a universal function that governs human social life. In this case, this universal function is the categorisation of in-groups and out-groups as described in social identity theory. In order to make the connection between these two disciplines, the fundamental concept of ethnic and national identity as defined in acculturation studies, and social identity as defined in social psychology, will be examined.

Ethnic identity (or heritage identity as it is called in some studies) is a concept used frequently in acculturation studies (e.g., Cuella et al., 1997; Ontai-Grezbik & Raffaelli, 2004). Schwartz et al. (2006) described ethnic identity in the literature as "the subjective meaning of one's ethnicity and the feelings that one maintains toward one's ethnic group" (p.7). It is seen as a dynamic construct that can be changed and developed in response to social and psychological

contexts (Phinney et al., 2001). Ethnic identity and national identity (or host identity) seem to share some conceptual similarities, as Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2010) also described the dynamic nature of national identity, which is being built and reworked through the perception of the community. Connor (1994) and de Cillia et al. (1999) agree that national identity does not exist objectively as a single entity, but rather its meaning will differ between individuals.

In New Zealand in particular, there is a debate about the lack of a clear national identity due to its relatively young history compared to other countries, which have had a long time for their culture to develop. Nevertheless, using interviews with 20 middle aged New Zealand women, Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2010) identified key themes of the New Zealand national identity through a study of the experience of brands. They are: importance of beach; sense of humour; 'hard case'; irreverent; awareness of Maori people and culture; awareness of clean beautiful green; 100 percent pure paradise; active; sports oriented; holidays; ritual escape to the wild; Overseas Experience travel; interest in the world; informality; friendliness; helpful;; decent; ingenious; DIY; and creative. It is interesting to note that nearly all the themes identified by these New Zealand participants are positive in nature, which suggests the effects of 'in-group positivism' in social identity theory, where people tend to hold higher regard for the group they belong to as it is closely tied to their personal self-esteem (see Section 2.3 for further discussion of this effect). In the current research, participants of each acculturation style were also asked to identify the characteristics of the New Zealand culture, but the results were very different (see Chapter 4).

In acculturation research, ethnic and national (or host/heritage) identity are a dimension of, or are conceptually compatible with, the four modes of acculturation because, as mentioned earlier, these four different types of acculturation strategies emerge from the spaces created



by the dynamic interplay between identifying with one's heritage and identifying with the host nation. Sometimes the term ethnic/host identity and acculturation are even used interchangeably (see Phinney et al. (2001) and Cuella et al. (1997)), although national identity has been paid far less attention in the acculturation literature (Phinney et al., 2001). Similarly, Schwartz et al. (2006) noted the unclear relationships between these concepts, but according to Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999), they at least predict the same phenomenon. In a sense, ethnic and national identity can also be viewed as the psychological baseline in acculturation that is associated with the actual behavioural adaptation. For example, high identification with the national culture would predict more frequent contact with national peers, whereas identification with the ethnic culture predicts contacts with ethnic peers. In the ICSEY study (Ward & Lin, 2005), national and ethnic identity were measured along with proficiency in language use, participation in cultural activities, family values, peer contacts and some other dimensions to determine the acculturation profile of an immigrant (such as integration, etc.) (Berry et al., 2006). "Ethnic identity" and "national identity" are treated in this research as the psychological dimensions that indicate the state/style in which one acculturates. In other words, by scoring people using scales for ethnic and national identity, we can determine how an immigrant acculturates, and whether his/her particular style is associated with the psychological processes within the social identity theory framework.

According to social scientists and social psychologists, identity, consistent with the definition of ethnic and national identity, is negotiated through the understanding of the self and that understanding is dynamically shaped by the context and the environment (e.g. Erikson, 1986; Schwartz et al., 2006). Social identity, alongside personal identity, is seen as part of overall self-identity. Social identity theory incorporates the auto-categorisation mechanism mentioned in Section 1.2, in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups. As

mentioned before, this mechanism is triggered rapidly through minimal information, and once this distinction is made, emotional significance follows. The following section (2.3) will detail the implications of this mechanism for our cognition. Consistent with the central argument of this research, Tropp and Wright (2001) believed that while elaborate models have been proposed to describe how people identify as members of specific racial and ethnic groups, the interconnectedness between self and in-group represents a basic psychological process common to all in-groups. The variability in the degree to which individuals include the in-group in the self, according to Tropp and Wright (2001), contributes to differences in how individuals interpret their experiences in the social world. My argument is that this variability, and more importantly, the variability in which the individual perceives one culture as the in-group and another as the out-group (or neither) also dictates acculturation styles during intercultural contact. The current research is intended as a bridge that conceptually connects contemporary studies of acculturation to contemporary social psychology. This can be operationalized by examining the relationship between ethnic/national identity and social identity, as documented in social identity theory in the contemporary social psychological literature.

### **2.3 Empirical implications**

The distinction between in-group/out-group categorisation is marked by differences in perception and attribution. 'Attribution', in the psychological field, is a process whereby people explain and associate a behaviour or event with a cause or meaning. This process was famously demonstrated by Duncan (1976), when the act of ambiguous shoving was labelled by the participants as more violent when performed by a black person rather than a white person. In the social psychology literature, it is commonly known that people respond more

positively - and thus make more positive attributions - to in-group members than to out-group members, and they do so more rapidly as well. This is because promoting a positive in-group image is vital to our self-esteem. Identification with the in-group contributes to the overall identity of the individual. According to Fiske (2000, p. 310), "while people normally view categorised out-groups as homogeneous, such as their members experiencing only the primitive primary emotions of animals, in-group members are perceived as having an array of complex human emotions". This notion of in-group favouritism is thus matched by out-group derogation, which also serves the purpose of self-esteem enhancement through the development of social identity. Members of the out-group are perceived to possess undesirable traits solely based on their membership of the group, rather than their individual characteristic. In a paper which adopted a social identity perspective to explain football fandom in the UK, Jones (2000) explained the derogation of the Watford football team by Luton Town supporters as an example of this out-group derogation process. One participant was quoted as saying, "the day will come when they (Watford) realise that they are not as successful as they think they are and that they are going to get utterly stuffed next season." (p.291)

People describe positive in-group and negative out-group behaviour more abstractly. In other words, the positive aspects of the in-group and negative aspects of the out-group are attributed in terms of predisposition and stable characteristics of the group, rather than as being dependent on circumstances. However, if the same positive aspects are demonstrated by the out-group, they are attributed to situational and temporary factors, whether it being viewed as an exception, luck, extra effort or a manipulable context. This is known as the ultimate attribution error, a phenomena demonstrated by Pettigrew (1979). A working example comes from Finchilescu (1994), who divided 56 Oxford school children into two

groups using a group allocation task. When asked to explain their performance on an easy word-search task, stronger attributions to external causes (such as task difficulty) was found for attributions about members of the out-group when compared to children in the in-group, who attributed the success to intelligence. Therefore, a social identity theory approach would suggest that, as the individual assimilates, he/she will start to make positive attributions concerning behaviour of the members of the host society, and the positive traits of members of the host society would be viewed as enduring dispositions, providing that the host culture becomes part of the individual's in-group.

Social identity theory also implies that, during assimilation, the host culture becomes part of the in-group through increasing contact and interdependence. In an extensive review of literature on intra-individual, contextual analyses, motivational and cognitive studies of stereotyping and prejudice over the century, Fiske (2000) argued that people are naturally motivated to maintain affiliations and bonds with others because social survival determines physical survival. This motivation to maintain trust with interdependent in-group others, according to Fiske (2000, p. 311), "describes how people learn to trust out-group members when they must depend on them, as successful interpersonal contact and successful intergroup contact both build trust through cooperation". She stated "this sense of interdependence encourages individuating processes of impression formation, i.e. seeking more accurate information about others rather than stereotypic information, hence undercuts prejudice and stereotypes toward out-group members" (p. 305). A person who starts as an out-group member may become a "familiar" or an in-group member. In the case of assimilation, this would imply that as the immigrant adapts to the new culture, there occurs a decrease in implicit stereotypic perception of the new culture. An individuating process of impression formation leads him/her to seek more accurate information about the new

culture. An individual who does not identify with the host culture, on the other hand, would be expected to perceive the host culture in much more stereotypic terms.

Furthermore, Fiske (2000) argued that the motive to belong sometimes even drives people to echo another person's stereotypic beliefs or to suppress the expression of their own stereotype of 'the other'. They will comply with perceived group norms regarding expressing or not expressing stereotypes in order to belong. In theory, the assimilating individual may then also mimic and echo stereotypic beliefs of the new culture, providing the new culture *does* become part of the self-concept during assimilation. In terms of my interest here, an example would be a Chinese immigrant who strongly identifies with the Pakeha culture and so may start to echo Pakeha stereotypic beliefs concerning Maori, by such things as drawing attention to the latter's use of informal speech, musical skills and poor educational attainment. Mimicking the behaviour even of stereotyped targets (unless negative and hostile) may also facilitate belonging, according to Fiske (2000). Therefore, and employing the same example, a Chinese immigrant might also start drinking beer, hosting barbeques on weekends, and so on, thereby echoing the fundamental definition of assimilation (to gradually adapt to the customs and attitudes of the prevailing – Pakeha – culture).

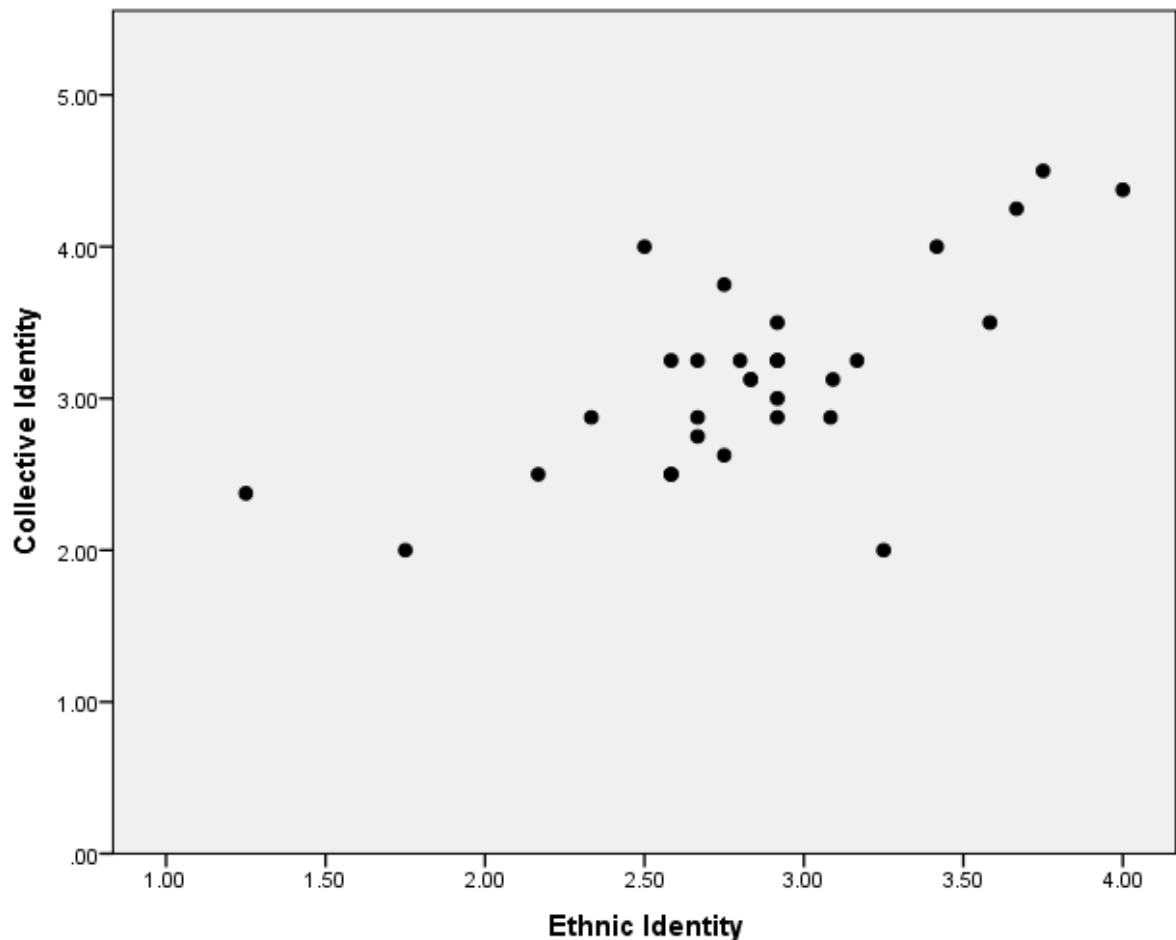
## **2.4 Studies of the acculturation and social identity relationship**

The current study is not the first to attempt to link these topics. Schwartz et al. (2006) claim that acculturation leads to changes in identity. These authors adopted a sociological perspective at the macro level to explore how acculturation changes one's negotiation and understanding of the self in the context of the environment. In other words, their focus was on the content of identity, such as what changes in institutions mean to the development of

identities during acculturation, rather than the underlying psychological mechanisms that shape identity. Schwartz et al. (2006) hypothesised that immigrants faced unique sets of barriers that hinder identity development of a cohesive sense of identity. Those barriers might include the lack of institutions available due to immigrants occupying the lower socioeconomic spectrum, or their lack of familiarity with an 'individualistic' culture where personal attainment is applauded. In contrast to Schwartz et al. (2006), Padilla and Perez's (2003) approach is more social-psychological. They used the notion of social stigma in social cognition to explore how minorities deal with being different, such as having a different skin colour and speaking a different language. But none of these studies go as far as claiming that partition of individuals into categories of Berry's acculturation typology is the direct result of the underlying mechanisms in social identity, nor have they provided any empirical evidence to support their claims.

Perhaps the closest that anyone has come to establishing this connection, empirically, is an unpublished study I recently conducted using quantitative methods. I examined the relationship between the tendency to include collective in-groups as part of the self-concept and the development and maintenance of ethnic identity. Thirty participants (11 males and 19 females, mean age = 25) were recruited at Lincoln University to take part in a self-administered questionnaire that measured ethnic identity and identity orientation. Ethnic identity was measured using the multigroup ethnic identity measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992), which is the most popular measure in the literature for measuring ethnic identity among different groups (Gong, 2007). Identity orientation was measured using the Aspect of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-III) (Cheek et al., 1985). Both scales consisted of Likert-type responses and are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.2.3. The results of a correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive relationship ( $r = .673, p < .01$ ) between ethnic identity and identity

with collective groups (such as race, religion, country, and political groups) (see Figure 1), whereas no significant effects were found between ethnic identity and personal identity (such as goals and values) or identity that concerns other individuals (such as mannerism and body image).



**Figure 1 Scatterplot showing a positive correlation between collective identity and ethnic identity (n = 30).**

Individuals vary in the extent to which they identify with their ethnic culture, which gives rise to variation in behavioural adaptations, such as participation in ethnic activities, the use of language, the number of ethnic friends, and so on. The above results imply that this variance in identity is not specific to the acculturation context; it operates within a broader concept of identity. People tend to thrive as a result of being psychologically and behaviourally involved

in collective groups such as religious groups and political groups; some more so than others. This is because human beings are social beings and operating effectively in coherent groups is beneficial to our survival. Therefore, the sense of belonging, increased esteem and other psychological benefits that are associated with involvement in collective groups, as described by Fiske (2000), encourage us to maintain our involvement.

While the above study suggests that involvement with one's own ethnic group even after cultural transition is not an exception to this universal psychological process, there are some conceptual problems that are associated with this study. First of all, scales which measure various forms of identity tend to overlap conceptually. The AIQ-III contains one item that measures ethnic background, which is essentially what the MEIM measures. In addition, susceptibility to a 'global' social identity is a somewhat "slippery" concept. While it has been established that individuals vary in the degree to which they include the in-group in the self, it is unclear whether there is a consistent variance in the tendency to which they include *all* in-groups in the self. The AIQ-III was not designed to measure this. There are other measures, such as Tropp and Wright's (2001) the *Inclusion of Ingroup in the Self scale*, that deal specifically with this susceptibility but, again, it deals with a specific in-group. Using it to measure ethnic identity would be redundant considering that the MEIM more or less measures the same thing. Another further difficulty is the claim (Kim et al., 2006) that the psychological changes resulting from intercultural contact occur without one's awareness, and that self-reporting questionnaires might not be adequate in tapping into these psychological concepts. Finally, the sample in the study detailed above consisted solely of students from Lincoln University, New Zealand thus raising a question about the representativeness of the sample and hence the extent to which the results can be generalised to wider populations.



## Chapter 3 Research Questions and Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, it was demonstrated that there are some limitations and unexplored areas in the acculturation literature. The current acculturation framework does not explicitly explain the nature of the acculturation process. It explains how individuals can acculturate differently, but it does not explain the reasons and motivations behind the four particular acculturation styles and how they operationalise cognitively and socially. Further, deductive, quantitative methods are used in most acculturation studies to measure the relationship between acculturation and other variables in question. Such methods might not be sufficient to study the complex and processual aspects of acculturation. The current research seeks to overcome these limitations by using a different approach. While in Chapter 2 it was established, conceptually, that acculturation and social identity are intimately related, the main objective of the current research is to demonstrate, empirically, in what ways these two concepts are related, if at all. In order to do so, the participants' acculturation styles will be first measured using standard scales. Second, qualitative interviews will be used in order to detect and identify any psychological attributes that are commonly associated with social identity theory. These psychological attributes will mainly involve the presence of stereotypic perception, derogation and promotion of cultural groups, the integration of cultural beliefs and demonstration of cultural specific behaviour, as detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. Any patterns that emerged will be identified and their implications discussed. In this chapter, the theoretical assumptions derived from the literature will first be outlined (Section 3.2). The majority of the chapter will describe the methodology of this research (Section 3.3), including the Human Ethics application process, the recruitment process, the instruments and how the data was collected.

### **3.2 Research Questions/ Objectives**

There are multiple theoretical assumptions that can be derived from the proposition that the four acculturation styles proposed by Berry (1992) are associated with a difference in cognition in terms of social identity. It should be noted that these assumptions are merely guidelines, rather than 'clear cut' and static hypotheses because acculturation is, in a sense, an on-going process that can change through time and crosses over to other aspects of the individual's identity that is unique to them. Nonetheless, using qualitative methods (interviews) as a strong component of this study should help mitigate this research problem because it allows me to have insights into motivation and the thought process that leads to the participants' acculturation preferences. This research can be seen as having an exploratory and inductive element, rather than being strictly deductive.

I speculate that the differences in acculturation style are matched by a difference in perception due to the in-group/ out-group mechanism. The heritage culture and the host culture are perceived differently as a result of whether the heritage and the host culture are perceived as part of the in-group or of the out-group by the participants. It is speculated that 'integration' is equivalent to having both heritage and the host culture perceived as part of the in-group psychologically. According to social identity theory literature, this style is marked by the promotion of these groups. Perceptions towards both cultures are non-stereotypic and accurate. The immigrant of this style might demonstrate behaviour that characterises both cultures in order to belong. Although in some cases the host culture and the ethnic culture will be vastly different or may even be in conflict with each other in terms of social norms and social values, an integrated individual would be better at harmonising and morphing these beliefs (when compared to other styles), as practising both would be important to the

individual's identity. However, he/she might still echo stereotypic beliefs in either group regarding a third or fourth culture.

'Assimilation' can be seen as the process by which the host society becomes part of the in-group (as opposed to the out-group). Socialisation with the host culture makes a significant contribution to whether the individual becomes assimilated, as it was found in the literature that through cooperation and understanding, the out-group becomes part of the in-group. In this case, an assimilated individual (high host identity and low ethnic identity) is characterised by a positive attributional style towards members of the host society. He/she would explain positive traits of members of the host society as an enduring and stable disposition, which would mean that New Zealanders, and the New Zealand culture, would be seen as inherently 'good'. The heritage group however, might become part of the out-group, which would suggest a negative, and stereotypic perception of the group, in opposition to the more accurate and individualised perception of the host culture. Old beliefs that are associated with the heritage culture are expected to be discarded and replaced by new ones from the host society, especially if they are in conflict with one another.

For 'separation', the situation is reversed. It is marked by the promotion of the heritage culture and the derogation of the host culture as the host culture is seen as part of the out-group. The host culture is perceived in stereotypic terms, and any behaviour of the host society that does not fit in with the stereotype is attributed as situational or temporal. New Zealanders are perceived to be more similar to one another than they actually are. Cultural ideas and behaviour that are generally associated with the host culture, such as individualism, are speculated to be actively rejected because they are seen as being negative, while those that

are generally associated with the heritage culture are ingrained in the identity of the 'separated' immigrant, safeguarding them from external cultural influences.

'Marginalisation' (low in both identities) is when neither the heritage culture nor the host culture is seen as part of the in-group, therefore resulting in negative, stereotypic perceptions of both groups, complemented by a lack of in-group promotion as well. It is possible that the need for a social identity is fulfilled instead by belonging to non-cultural related groups, such as that of a religious or a hobby group. The individual would be marked by a low tendency to include collective groups as part of the self-concept. His/her lack of desire to belong to either group would be characterised by a lack of 'normal' behaviour in either culture. As mentioned in Section 2.2, there is a variability in the extent to which an individual incorporates collective groups as part of the self-concept; therefore, it is also possible that the individual makes up for the lack of a social identity by focusing on a more personal aspect of their identity, such as individual achievement and physical well-being. However, it is important to note that individualisation is also commonly thought of as a characteristic of western cultures.

### **3.3 Methodology**

Having introduced my 'hypotheses', I will now detail the methodology designed to 'test' them. This study used a two-step design, with a prior recruitment stage. The data collection process occurred between October 2012 and February 2013 after approval was given by the Human Ethics Committee of Lincoln University

### **3.3.1 Human Ethics Application**

The submission of the Human Ethics Application was required by Lincoln University to ensure that all research involving human participants meets established ethical standards. The application elaborated on the steps that was taken in order to ensure the confidentiality, anonymity and well-being of the participants. For example, the consent forms, questionnaires and handwritten notes are to be kept in secure storage in the ESD faculty with instructions that they are to be destroyed in 6 years' time. The Research Information Sheet and Questionnaire were conceived at this stage as part of the requirement of the application (See Appendix 1 and 2). The completed application was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee in September 2012, and was approved on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, after having responded to the comments made by members of the Committee.

### **3.3.2 Recruitment**

Forty participants were recruited for the data collection. The number of participants was determined by the need to have an adequate number that would represent each acculturation style. Between October, 2012 and February, 2013, I situated myself in various public locations in Christchurch where there was a steady flow of pedestrians: in the Cashel Restart Mall; near Riccarton Westfield Mall; the Bush Inn Centre; the Christchurch Polytechnic; and Lincoln University. Every 5<sup>th</sup> person who came into proximity was approached. This resembles a 'systematic random sampling' procedure. The reason for using a random sample at the population level, rather than using a snowball sample or a purposive sample, is to avoid preconception about the cognition of the participant if their acculturation style was known before the qualitative procedure takes place. Once approach was initiated, I briefly explained my role as a postgraduate student at Lincoln University and the nature of and procedures for

the research. If the potential respondent expressed an interest in participating, he/she was asked three questions to determine whether they qualified for the research. These were:

1. Are you over the age of 18?
2. Were you born in New Zealand?
3. How long have you lived in New Zealand?

The purpose of the second and third questions was to ensure the participants were neither tourists nor 'native' New Zealanders. Those who qualified: (i) would be invited to meet at a mutually agreed place and time for data collection; (ii) would be given further information about the research, including the Research Information Sheet (see Appendix 1); and (iii) were asked to swap contact details with the researcher so that both parties could notify each other if the arrangement was changed/ cancelled.

### **3.3.3 Step One - Research Instruments and Data Collection**

Having given consent in the form of a written consent form, participants were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire that contained basic demographic questions, two scales of ethnic identity and national identity with Likert-type responses that determined their acculturation style (as outlined below). The Aspect of Identity Scale was also implemented halfway through the data collection process after a discussion with my supervisors, in which it was concluded that the inclusion of this scale may be helpful to determine the extent to which the personal aspect of identity and aspects of social identity outside the acculturation context (such as belonging to the community and religion) contribute to the overall identity of the participant, and whether this was related to the extent to which the participant included their ethnic and host identity as part of their overall identity. This scale is also outlined below. The average completion time of this step was approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaire

that contains the answers was put aside immediately for safe keeping upon completion without being scrutinised. Since the acculturation style would not become apparent until later data analysis, this prevented me from having preconceptions during the follow-up interview.

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity measure (MEIM) by Phinney (1992) is designed to be used with participants from varied backgrounds. The reliability, validity, and the factor structure of the scale have also been documented in the literature (e.g. Dandy et al., 2007). The two-factor structure of this scale was confirmed in multiple studies. They are: 'affirmation/sense of belonging' (derived from the social identity perspective); and 'ethnic achievement/exploration' (derived from a developmental perspective) (Dandy et al., 2007). The MEIM is an 8-item scale with a Likert-type response format ('4': 'Strongly agree'; '1': 'Strongly disagree').

There does not seem to be a common scale to measure national identity. Since most acculturation studies are conducted in America, the American culture is used as the comparison group to ethnic group/identity. A 6-item scale was used in Gong's (2007) study. It includes items like 'How much do you feel you have in common with White Americans?' and 'How much do you identify with the White American culture?' Phinney et al (1997), by contrast, included only a one item measure - 'How strongly do you think of yourself as American?' – using a 7 point scale. The scale used to measure national identity in the current study was a modification of Phinney's (1997) scale, with one statement: 'I think of myself as a Kiwi'. The Likert-type responses consisted of four options ('4': 'Strongly agree'; '1': 'Strongly disagree') so as to make the scale response options consistent with the MEIM, which also consisted of four options.

The Aspects of Identity Scale/Questionnaire was primarily developed by Cheek (Cheek & Briggs, 1982). It was developed to determine the relative importance that individuals place on various identity attributes or characteristics when constructing their self-definitions. The Scale has gone through several iterations. A modification of the current version (2002) was used in this research. The original version contains 45 items with Likert-type responses that measure personal identity, social identity, collective identity, relational identity and some generic items for control purposes. The current version was cut down to 25 items that only measure personal identity, social identity and collective identity in order to save time for participants. It should be noted that social identity in the AIQ is not interchangeable with social identity as defined in social identity theory, because it concerns general social aspects that are exclusive to the in-group/ out-group mechanism (one example is the item, “my attractiveness to other people”). Instead, the items that are concerned with inclusive groups is defined as collective identity in the AIQ. A full replication of the questionnaire that includes all 3 of these scales can be found in Appendix 2. SPSS was used for inputting demographic information and quantitative analysis. A detailed description of how this data was analysed can be found in Chapter 4.

#### **3.3.4 Step Two - Question Design and Data collection**

The interview followed immediately after Step One and the average completion time was about 40 minutes. It consisted of semi-structured questions that were designed to elicit information about attribution, perception, identity, stereotyping and behaviour in relation to intercultural contact. In particular, it was aimed to address the objectives and theoretical assumptions outlined in Section 3.1. There are a number of reasons why interviews were used at this step of the research. First, as Kim et al. (2006) pointed out, psychological changes from intercultural contact occur without one’s awareness; therefore answering explicit statements



(i.e., using scales) regarding those changes would not be appropriate. Second, stereotyping and negative attribution are not socially desirable traits, therefore participants might find it offensive when asked questions that explicitly measure these traits. Qualitative interviews mitigate these problems by getting the participants talking about an open-ended topic (e.g., 'What do you think about...?') and thus enabling the researcher to 'read between the lines'. Third, many contemporary studies that measure these 'cognitive fingerprints', such as attribution, are conducted in a controlled laboratory-like setting that consists of artificial tasks. Such quantitative methods would not be appropriate in reflecting an immigrant's experience or perception of everyday life in the wider society. Lastly, the current research is explorative and inductive in nature. In other words, it explores whether and how social identity theory can help us understand acculturation as a process, with the complexity of this process being driven by the participant's own acculturative experience. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use data analysis methods more suited to the verification of established hypotheses.

The main questions in the interview schedule were:

1. Please tell me about your experience with New Zealanders, and whether that has changed over time.
2. How do you feel about being part of (ethnicity) in this new society?
3. Do New Zealanders and people from your own culture spend their spare time differently? If so, how? And why do you think there are such differences?
4. Do you think New Zealanders are fundamentally different from people from your own country (in terms of values, beliefs, attitudes)? If so, how do they differ? Can you give an example from the past where it shows such differences?
5. What are some of the positive aspects and negative aspects of your own culture?

6. What are some of the positive aspects and negative aspects of the New Zealand culture?
7. How do you think your culture is perceived by people from other cultures and New Zealanders?
8. Can you describe how other cultures are perceived by New Zealanders?
9. Are you a member of any groups/ clubs/ societies? What is your level of involvement with them? Do you take pride in being a member?
10. What are your relationships like with people from your culture and New Zealanders? Are the qualities the same? Do you bond with them at the same level?

It should be noted that the actual wording of the questions varied between each interview session depending on the participants' understanding. Various prompts were used as the results of how participants answered the questions. An additional number of questions were also added spontaneously in each interview when interesting points were raised. One particular goal of this interviewing process was to simulate a naturalistic conversation; therefore the researcher gave minimal inputs that were only appropriate to the context of the conversation, and only steered the conversation into the themes of interest when it was relevant to do so. The interview was recorded using either a voice recorder or handwritten notes, depending on the participant's choice, but no identifying information (such as names) was recorded. This was acknowledged by the participant. Only a random identifier was assigned to the questionnaire and the voice data, with the sole purpose of matching them up for data analysis. The results were analysed using coding techniques through the software NVIVO, and were interpreted under organised 'themes' and 'sub-themes'. A more comprehensive description of these themes will be found in Chapter 4, which follows.

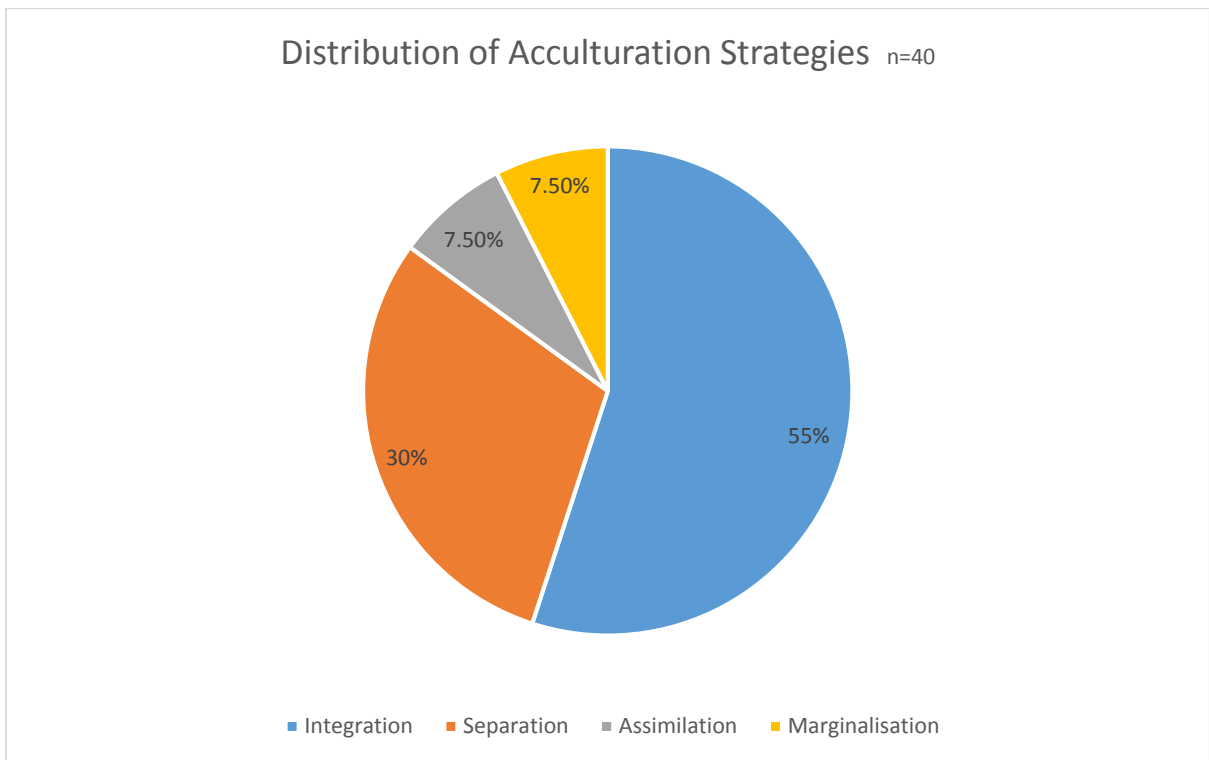
## Chapter 4 Quantitative and Qualitative Results

### 4.1 Quantitative analysis

The current study intends to incorporate Berry's framework explicitly, by using scales to determine ethnic and national identity of a non-specific group of immigrants. Based on the assumption that Berry's framework is universal, a relatively loose prerequisite for recruitment was used in data collection, and as a result, I was able to gather a group of participants who were from a wide range of countries (including Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Ireland, the UK, Korea, China, Taiwan, the Solomon Islands, etc). And also unlike other more focused, qualitative acculturation studies, the current sample also consists of people of all ages. More specifically, 67.9 percent of the participants were aged between 18 to 30, 21 percent were aged between 31 to 40, 3.6 percent were aged between 41 to 50, while 7.1 percent were aged 61 or over. 28.6 percent were males and 71.4 percent were females. The participants have spent an average 8.57 years in New Zealand, ranging from 1 to 18 years (the standard deviation was 4.95 years).

On the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, the participants scored a mean of 2.91, with a standard deviation of .52. In terms of national identity, the mean score was 2.57. 25 percent of the participants strongly disagree with the statement "I think of myself as a New Zealander", 10.7 percent disagree, 46.4 percent agree, while 17.9 percent strongly agree on the statement respectively. The participants are grouped into the four acculturation profiles (Berry, 1992) based on how they score on ethnic Identity and national identity, respectively. In Section 2.2, I described using ethnic and national identity as the basis for the bi-dimensional nature of Berry's (1992) framework in connection with the psychological aspect of social identity theory. As both variables consist of 4 levels (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and

Strongly Agree), 2.5 is chosen as the mid-point. In other words, if the mean score of the scale is higher than 2.5, it is considered as “high”, and if the score is lower than 2.5, it is then considered as “low”. For example, if a participant scored 2.6 in ethnic Identity and 1.9 in national identity, he or she would be considered as being ‘separated’. After analysis, it was found that 55 percent were considered ‘integrated’ (see Figure 2), which means these immigrants identify relatively strongly with both cultures. Thirty percent were considered ‘separated’, which means they place more emphasis on the ethnic side of their identity. Seven point five percent were considered ‘assimilated’. These people have adapted to become part of the New Zealand culture and identity, but at the expense of their heritage culture. The ‘marginalised’ do not particularly identify with either culture, and account for 7.5 percent of the sample. The above results indicate that integration seems to be strongly preferred by the immigrants in our sample. Although the current research is, strictly speaking, non-quantitative (i.e. the sample size is not large enough to generalize to the general population), the results do, to an extent, complement the distribution found in other quantitative acculturation studies in New Zealand. For example, Ward and Lin (2005) found that 80 percent of the 103 Chinese participants supported ‘integration’ as an acculturation strategy, in comparison to 20 percent who supported other strategies.



**Figure 2 Pie chart showing distribution of acculturation strategies (n=40)**

By looking at the quantitative results, we gain a general idea of how immigrants adapt to living in New Zealand. As was discussed in Chapter 1, immigrants do not all acculturate in a linear fashion. In this particular sample gathered in Christchurch, New Zealand, it is clear that even with such a relatively small number of respondents, the difference in acculturation strategies is distinct. Much larger scale studies, namely the ICEYS, on a whole nation, even on multiple nations, have been conducted elsewhere. And these studies give us a larger picture of what is going on. This recent shift in using large scale quantitative data in the topic of acculturation has been useful, and the use of numerical data holds great value in terms of policy making among governmental and community based institutes. For example, the ethnic group which is the least integrated can be easily identified, so that resources can be mobilized to focus on such a group. Many empirical findings can be established (or disputed) when we manipulate these type of quantitative data. Here is an example using the data in the current study. It is logical to assume that a person would have a stronger identification with the host culture (New Zealand) when he or she spends more time in the country. To find out if this was true in

the current sample, a chi square test was run between the variable 'time spent in New Zealand' and 'national identity'. No statistically significant relationships were found ( $p = .213$ ), therefore disputing the assumption. A chi square test was used in this case because 'national identity' is a four item response, therefore was treated as a nominal variable. An additional correlation test was conducted in SPSS, treating 'national identity' as a scale type variable. The result was the same: no statistically significant relationship was found ( $p = .112$ ).

#### **4.2 Qualitative analysis – rationale**

Although the difference in acculturation strategies should be no more than the four basic types identified by Berry, one would speculate that the different backgrounds of these immigrants would provide very different reasons as to why they acculturate the way they do. Quantitative methods focus on the macro scale, and arguably lose a personal touch when it comes to telling the immigrants' stories. The use of qualitative interviews in the current research helps infer meanings and provide a context as to how the participants rate themselves on these scales. What does it mean when an individual chooses to endorse maintenance of his/her heritage culture over the new culture? What is the motivation behind choosing this particular path and not others? What were their expectations when they chose to live in this country? Do these expectations dictate how they live their lives? It is possible that ethnic and national identity influence how immigrants perceive either culture, and that their perceptions then influence their actual behaviour such that a positive feedback loop develops. For example, a low score on national identity might indicate a more negative perception of the national culture, and that negative perception might dictate certain behaviour, such as avoiding social situations involving the national groups, with that in turn contributing to a 'low' national identity. In other words, these acculturation processes might

cover a broad time period. Responding to questions on a scale refers only to a specific point in time. What is the *process* of acculturation and what cognitive processes are involved? 'Step 2' of the research design (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4) is intended to address this.

Furthermore, when asked to rate on a quantitative scale how much the participants think of themselves as a New Zealander, what really is their definition of a New Zealander? This creates a new set of implications as, firstly, there is an objective, academic discussion about the New Zealand identity, and the conclusion seems to be unclear and remains open to debate. But more importantly, the participants' view in most cases is entirely subjective. Their definition of the New Zealand culture might be entirely different from everyone else's, and the source of this information might be based on the immigrants' own personal experiences and relationships with different social circles. This is just an example of how complexity can arise when we look into a phenomenon at a micro scale. Therefore, I feel that using qualitative interviews is essential in achieving the aim of the current study – to identify the cognitive footprints (such as perception) of the social identity mechanism in the process of acculturation. Hence they will serve as the main source of the data. Certainly some other studies have also utilized more focused methods in order to examine 'the story' behind how a particular group of people acculturate. Lo (2011), for example, used covert observations and interviews to explore how Chinese Canadians use adventure education as a mean to acculturate. The current study is the first of its kind to utilise quantitative methods in order to help systematically analyse the qualitative component, while establishing a direct link to Berry's acculturation framework.

### **4.3 Qualitative analysis – overall themes**

The inductive nature of the semi-structured interviews allowed the emergence of various recurrent themes and aspects of life that are unique to the acculturation of immigrants. Some aspects were mentioned by the participants repeatedly when they talked about their experience in the new culture. The remainder of the chapter will discuss, under each of these themes, the classification of participants into Berry's (1992) acculturation styles and their implications from a social identity theory perspective.

First, though, a point that was mentioned frequently by the participants was the drastic difference in both day to day social interaction and the general social environment in the host culture when compared to the heritage culture. Human beings are social beings, and social interaction is essential for both our emotional well-being and our ability to function effectively in society. Different cultures have their own sets of social norms that are different from others. New Zealand culture is similar to most Western, European cultures that are individualistic, which can be very different and can be challenging to understand and adapt in the case of migrants who come from countries where collectivism is emphasized. This is especially true for immigrants whose English is not proficient. Other than the social environment, the change in the physical environment also plays a major role in the immigrants' life because the physical environment tends to promote and restrict certain lifestyles. According to environmental determinism in human geography, the environment can determine (or can be influential on, at least,) human activities and qualities in many ways (Frenkel, 1992). For our participants, this may come in the form of commuting, food, clothing, recreation, etc.

Another major theme that emerged during the data analysis is differences in perception. As expected, among participants the perception of New Zealand as a place, culture, and its



people is polarising. The motivation behind moving into this country, the expectation of what life is going to be like, personal experiences and social relationships, all play a part in influencing perception. The perception of the heritage culture among the participants also seems to be similarly variable, and not only in terms of it being negative or positive, but also whether the perception is simple and stereotypic, or detailed and accurate, and whether the perception echoes a particular cultural belief. The last major theme that emerged during the data analysis relates to participants' own values, beliefs, and personalities, which are part of the personal aspects of identity, rather than their social identity. The constant nature of the personal identity can act as a stable anchor during the acculturation process, but it is also evident from the data that a change in both the social and physical environment can present a set of challenges which leads participants to choose to reject conflicting beliefs or integrate new beliefs.

#### **4.4 Perception**

In terms of social interaction, most participants seem to be aware of the ethnicity of the people that they interact and form relationships with. This distinction is often clear and explicit, and participants can show clear preference towards or against one ethnicity. When asked about social interaction, one Thai participant stated,

*"I don't associate much with Asian people these days. I've sort of drifted apart from them when I go to school, I think it's because I don't... how do you put this? um, I mean I see some Asians at school and things but because I don't really know them, I didn't form a group with them."*

Similarly, a Korean participant stated,

*"I try not to talk to Korean... I try to avoid the conversation with Koreans, because then they are going to start on how much my husband is making. And like those questions I don't like anymore."*

A participant from the Solomon Islands stated,

*"I don't mingle with students from my country. I hang out with mostly Asians and the American exchange students....It's very hard to socialize with Kiwis but it's easy to socialize with other people and from that group, if the Kiwi joins the group or know someone in the group then I can socialize with them, but I don't... it's quite hard for me to socialize with Kiwis."*

Another Korean participant stated,

*"I don't really mind hanging out with Kiwi friends if I could but my life I don't really. I always see my Korean friends, not Kiwi friends. I feel more comfortable with Korean friends of course. I wish I have close Kiwi friends but it's hard to get along with them."*

A Chinese participant stated,

*"We Chinese students always hang together after school....I am always more closer to Chinese people. For Kiwis, we are friends, but not that good. I think we can understand each other, but still the culture is different. We can understand each other, but you know we just cannot get the point."*

The preference over members of which group participants develop relationships with is often paired with some form of justification, which might involve an attribution that is associated with the internal characteristic of that group, rather than it being circumstantial. For example,

the second quote from the Korean participant above implies that 'nosiness' is a trait that is representative of the Korean group; and the third and fourth quotes can be interpreted as indicating that, most, if not all, New Zealanders are hard to get along with.

#### **4.4.1 Separation**

New Zealanders are perceived by participants in the 'separated' profile, in particular, as being unfriendly, close minded, nosy, inflexible or unable to 'understand' people from a different culture. Examples of such can be classed as stereotypic, as such dispositions are attributed as an inherent characteristic of the group (in this case, New Zealanders). The data show that descriptions that are generally associated with personal traits, such as friendliness (or unfriendliness) and extraversion were recognised by the 'separated' participants here as being traits that are representative of the whole group, therefore implying the variance within the group is ignored. It can be conjectured from a social identity theory perspective that such stereotypic perception is due to the fact that the national group in question is perceived by the participant as an out-group, therefore the out-group here is being derogated by the participant.

However, the data do not suggest that the type of seemingly stereotypic perception represents the general attitude, or that any deliberate behaviour were made by the participant to discriminate against certain ethnic group. In some cases, the actual adaptation might even contradict the acculturation style as it is measured in this research. One immigrant from the UK in particular who scored 1 (the lowest possible score) in the national identity scale, spoke fairly negatively about New Zealanders.

*"They (New Zealanders) are very small... The ones that have travelled understand where you're coming from, but they are contained within themselves. Their culture is very much within the city, very small. They don't often travel outside their heads to take on what other people are thinking. I think it's such a vast place with so few people, they don't really have to take on board what other people are thinking when they do anything. And it's noticeable."*

Researcher: *So in a way you're saying they are not very culturally sensitive?*

*"Yea, or not even sympathetic to each other."*

When asked about how other cultures are perceived by Kiwis, this same respondent said,

*"Badly, very very badly. They have a very very poor attitude to anybody with a different hue, including their own native people. Sorry I haven't heard any racist crap coming from anyone than I have when I'm over here. I was actually shocked when I heard the radio. I was just thinking some of it that came up the other day. I don't really want to repeat it. I was quite distressed by it."*

And when asked about life in New Zealand, she said,

*"Even I find it quite difficult sometimes because you always feel like there's always people looking over our shoulders to see what we're doing, whereas it doesn't happen in the UK. People don't interfere with each other, just everybody gets on with it, whereas here it's a bit like.... What's he doing... is it illegal. They going on about the number 8 culture here but they don't actually have number 8 culture. It's one of the great mysteries of our lives is what they rattle on about... because to a man, they are not very good at DIY. They are not very good at thinking out of the circle."*

Although this quote was consistent with previous examples that also demonstrate the phenomenon of out-group derogation among 'separated' individuals, the participant in question was able to develop meaningful friendships with New Zealanders and she frequently took part in social activities that involve New Zealanders. In fact, she described how she tried to avoid English people because she felt that 'she is in New Zealand now'. This highlights the importance of identifying the acculturation styles and social identity as solely psychological, which may be distinct from the eventual behavioural adaptation of the immigrant - as seen in this particular example.

Interestingly, while out-group derogation is much more apparent among the 'separated' (who score high on ethnic identity but low on national identity), generalisation and stereotypic perception of both the national group and the ethnic group are also present among participants in all acculturation styles, albeit much less frequently, when they were cued to state a preference between the heritage group and the national group. It seems they felt some sort of justification was needed following that decision or perception. It is much more reasonable, however, to believe that the sample deviates no more than the population norm in terms of thinking and acting socially acceptably. I argue that this seemingly surprising finding can be attributed to the powerful and subconscious nature of the auto-categorisation mechanism, which is activated within milliseconds, given the appropriate cues.

#### **4.4.2 Integration**

Individuals who conform to the 'integration' profile seem to take on a more varied perspective. In contrast to the initial proposition, in which integration was thought to be related to a positive, accurate, and non-stereotypic perception of both the ethnic and the national group, the final data rather suggest that these individuals are capable of perceiving

both cultures in positive and negative lights, but not necessarily in non-stereotypic terms. A participant who was born in South Korea mentioned that Kiwis are more *'straight up'* with what they think in the sense that *"they can be really open about what they want to do and what they want you to do. And you don't have to feel offended or anything."* But at the same time, he suggested that the laid-back (i.e., relaxed and informal) style of New Zealanders could be a sign of *'laziness'*. Similarly, a participant from Ukraine endorsed the fact that *"everyone is really happy and friendly towards each other (in New Zealand)"*, but at the same time she noted that *"people here seem kind of shallow, like they have to be nice to each other because that's the culture."* As the majority of the participants conform to the integrated profile, most of them are capable of, or in some cases, even eager to describe the characteristics of both the national group and the ethnic group. Perhaps one certain distinction between the integrated and the separated profiles is that, although both profiles consist of a high score in ethnic identity, integrated individuals tend to be more likely to identify the shortcomings (or what they see as shortcomings) of their ethnic culture when compared to the separated group, which might suggest that having more than one cultural group as an in-group allows *'integrated'* participants to perceive each in-group from a second perspective. The following quote from an *'integrated'* participant from the Philippines demonstrates that both stereotypic perception and derogation are present for the heritage group. And it is possible that having experienced an alternative in the same topic (punctuality) from identification with the host culture, this participant was able to make comparisons from a different perspective that would not have been possible if there was only one in-group identity, such as those in the *'separated'* profile.

*"We have a word, a Spanish term called maniana harvest. It's spelled like M-A N, enia, like ania... it's a term derived, it's a Spanish term that means a things that you are supposed to do*

*right now, you'll say maniana, or I can do it later" or "I'll do it later". You get my point? It's just like you're not putting out some time, um, about your work, you set it aside, because you have something to do...And one thing also that we call the Filipino time. When they say it's about being late, that's one of the very bad things about the Filipino, wherever you go, when they say Filipino time, they know what that means- it means that Filipino every time late."*

Some 'integrated' individuals seem to move away from the generalised perception present among the 'separated', and are arguably said to be more aware of the heterogeneity within ethnic groups – the fact that one generic description does not necessarily apply to everyone in the group. This is evident in the following quote from an interview with another participant from the UK, in which the respondent was aware that the same negative aspects can occur in both the heritage and the host culture, and that there is more than one dimension for people in each cultural group.

*"They (the English) got a real rich culture and bigger history and all that. That's a lot that goes into being English and it's all real intense and interesting. But also at the same time there's a lot of dickheads and real stupid people and arrogant people and dumb people. What I am going to say now also is that, to be honest, there's also a lot of stupid dumb Jeremy Kyle (an English talk show about people with questionable character) people in England but there's a lot of those people here as well. And those are the kind of people who are kind of more laid back as well. I mean a lot of them are angry but a lot of them also are "let's just have a beer and it's all good.""*

#### 4.4.3 Marginalisation

As with the 'integrated', the participants who were in the 'marginalised' profile also took on a more varied perspective when they talked about their heritage culture and the host culture. Unlike 'separated', their preferences for the members of which cultural groups they chose to spend time with were not justified by negative stereotypes. For example, a Malaysian participant stated,

*"I've sort of drifted apart from them when I go to school, I don't.... I think it's because I don't... how do you put this? Um, I mean I see some Asians at school and things but because I don't really know them, I didn't form a group with them...I don't mind hanging out with Asians, but it's just by nature that I'm more with Europeans more than Asians. Well Hagley is a new school for me. I'm hanging out with one Asian girl at the moment. She's like a new friend."*

The above quote shows that this participant did not socialise much with Asians when compared to Europeans because she 'did not really know them', rather than because of a negative perception towards that group. Furthermore, when asked to compare the differences between the heritage group and the host group, one Thai participant stated,

*"From what I've seen, when I was in high school and when I was at university, one boy he was a neighbour of mine when I was living in Thailand, and he came over to Christchurch. He went to a high school, and he spent a lot of his time in game booth? With games...Time Zone. Whereas, Kiwis, I see a lot of them hanging out in bars."*

The fact that this respondent used examples from people whom she personally knew, and with phrases such as "from what I have seen" and "I see a lot of them..." indicates that she



might have been aware that her perception was limited by her own experience, and that there might be possible alternatives that she did not know of. By contrast, the 'separated', and the 'integrated' to some extent, spoke more as a matter of fact, as they tended to use phrases "they are" or "everyone is". Overall, the results from the 'marginalised' group is arguably consistent with the proposition that this group does not identify either the heritage culture or the national culture as the in-group or the out-group, as they are marked by a more neutral and non-stereotypic perception of both the heritage culture and the national culture. As I had hypothesised in Section 3.2, the lack of a social identity from cultural groups among the 'marginalised' suggests a dominance of personal aspects of identity over social identity in the make-up of their overall sense of identity in general (this will be further discussed in Section 4.8).

#### **4.4.4 Assimilation**

When compared to the 'separated', the same level of derogation does not seem to occur among 'assimilated' individuals. In other words, there was no evidence in the data that clearly demonstrated an unusual level of negative or stereotypic perceptions towards the ethnic group. This is contrary to my hypothesis in which the heritage identity is 'replaced' and 'shifted' to become the out-group during assimilation. One possible explanation is that the same level of dichotomy is not found among assimilated individuals. Although the individual does not see his/her ethnic group as the in-group, it does not mean the ethnic group becomes the new 'out-group' that is opposed to the in-group. It is possible that their original social identity is merely displaced during assimilation.

I had hypothesized that the national group has become the in-group over the course of acculturation, but this was not necessarily supported by in-group favouritism among the

assimilated in the data either. In other words, assimilated participants did not speak particularly positively about the New Zealand group. However, in-group favouritism also seemed to be absent among the separated individuals. Although members of this category were marked by an apparent derogation of the New Zealand group (see Section 4.4.1), it was not complemented by an apparent positive perception of their ethnic culture, as was initially hypothesized.

What was evident from the data for 'assimilated' respondents that supported the social identity framework was an echoing of some of the stereotypical beliefs that are commonly found in the national group. One 'assimilated' respondent who was originally from Australia, expressed a belief and attitude concerning a third cultural group that is typically applicable to 'white' New Zealanders. When asked about her perception of Maori, this participant stated,

*“Um I have mostly experienced, well kind of negative stuff really like from my grandmother and stuff like that. I think they get fed up with them like they say they want more and more and like stuff like that. Like they want to own everything, that's the impression I get...I mean I just want - I see them as just as good as anyone else like I don't - I want it to be equal but at the same time I wish we could move on from the past a bit because like our generation. I just hate it when people like talk about like you know, the white man. And that encompasses me and I'm like, I had nothing to do with what the generations before did so don't tarnish me with that.”*

In this case, it is clear that the respondent identified herself as part of the dichotomy versus Maori, which is traditionally a New Zealand notion. This is an example of acculturation operating at the psychological level in which the respondent 'feels like a New Zealander' and

seems to associate with the social implication and responsibility that are associated with that identity, even though she was born and raised in Australia. In Chapter 2 it was pointed out how this echoing of stereotypic belief is one of the possible results of triggering the social identity mechanism. Karasawa et al. (2007) likewise discussed a high level of consensus among members of the in-group in the contents of stereotypic beliefs concerning social groups. This collectively shared reality, as they discussed, is facilitated and maintained through social learning. The frequent interaction with members of the national group is then likely to influence the beliefs among these assimilated individuals, and the echoing of such beliefs is further reinforced by the motivation to belong to the in-group.

A point worth considering is whether or not the same level of assimilation can be achieved among immigrants who are from a vastly different culture. The 'assimilated' individuals in the sample are from Western European cultures, more specifically, Ireland and Australia, but the 'integrated' respondents come from many East Asian cultures (such as the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan) as well and they scored highly on the national identity scale. Perhaps it is more reasonable to suggest that the similarity with the national culture can help but definitely does not determine an assimilated style?

#### **4.5 The role of language**

Difference from the national culture can present challenges for the assimilation of immigrants, especially in the form of language as this skill is essential when it comes to the ability to make friends of locals, shopping, busing, and dealing with authorities and other aspects of normal daily life. Language was a common theme that reoccurred frequently during the interviews. When asked about social interaction with Kiwis, one participant stated, *"I still can't really*

*follow their conversation. Their colloquial English is too hard for me. It's too hard for me and their humour, yeah it doesn't make sense to me now and then.*" Another participant on the other hand talked about *"hanging out with mainly Koreans"* in his years in primary school, because he *"didn't really know English"*. Of course, a second language is a learned skill. While the lack of proficiency in the initial years of settlement can be a challenge, it becomes less of a problem through repeated exposures to the language, as many of these immigrants are settling in New Zealand relatively long-term when compared to travellers.

In contrast, much less emphasis was placed on the role of language during social interaction by immigrants whose native language was English. Instead of seeing it as a challenge, language for them seemed to be a device that reminded them that they are foreigners, and can be used by them as a measure to indicate how much they have assimilated into the society - e.g., the loss of an accent and acquisition of New Zealand slang and pronunciations. A participant from the UK, for example, pointed out the difference in pronunciation of words like 'hair, there, wear, stare, care'. Certainly, this is also true to an extent of people for whom English is not their native language. But, again, instead of a challenge, language seems to be more of an interesting topic for native English speakers as it tends to generate conversations and friendly teasing. Another participant from the UK also indicated that New Zealanders were confused about some of the words she says, but found such confusion 'funny'.

Language seemed to be tightly integrated into other aspects of the immigrants' cognition. Those who are 'integrated' possess the ability to speak both the host and home language fluently, and they mention 'shifting modes', in which, when they communicate with people from their home culture, they then 'shift' into a different mode, and vice versa. According to the participants, this process seems to occur relatively unconsciously, where they can easily

shift between both 'modes' without much effort. For example, one Japanese participant stated, *"It's just I am Japanese. So I do it naturally, without thinking much. So even here, I meet some Japanese people, I still become like really polite."* Similarly, another participant from South Korea expressed, *"It's just a second nature thing you know, when you see an Asian face you just kind of switch into an Asian mode. You know what I'm talking about right? And when you see a Kiwi face, you switch to Kiwi mode."* The context of the interviews with these Japanese and Korean participants suggest that this 'mode shifting' is not just about shifting languages, but also shifting sets of behavioural and social norms. Wood (2007) stated that, "we learn a cultures' view and rules in the process of communicating" and that "in learning language we learn the values of our culture" (p.164). One example raised by Wood (2007), is the abundance of words that refer to time in the English language (such as hours, minutes, seconds, days, weeks), which reflects the preoccupation with time and efficiency in Western cultures.

This does seem to raise the question, however - does proficiency in English dictates the extent of assimilation? If so, the legitimacy of my central argument – that assimilation is one of the four possible manifestations dependent on the outcome of the in-group/out-group categorisation - would be undermined because it implies that acculturation is an acquired skill that follows a set path. However, a further look at this issue reveals that the relationship between language skill and acculturation is not so simplistic. Lo (2006) stated that, "while acculturation is seen as providing better opportunities for language acquisition, it is a 'chicken or egg' issue. Rather than arguing which one comes first, acculturation and language acquisition need to be considered together, as they certainly happen simultaneously and impact on each other" (p.20). In other words, it would be blunt to claim that proficiency in English is a requirement of certain acculturation preferences, but assimilation does help

facilitate the acquisition of the second language. The social identity theory framework suggests that it is entirely possible for someone to have mastered the host language and choose not to be associated with the host culture.

#### **4.6 Intercultural differences**

Apart from the obvious linguistic differences - and as these different 'modes' suggest - there are some fundamental differences in cultures that might come in the form of social norms and differences in expectations and responsibilities of social roles in the respective society. There are possibly many complex reasons as to why such differences exist, such as legislation, social structures and agencies, philosophy, literature and the physical environment. For example, according to Wood (2007), Americans and Germans perceive physical touch differently. Americans and Indians also have different ideas about forming lines prior to entering buildings. Communication in particular, according to Healey and O'Brien (2004), is closely linked to culture as it is said to sustain, express and alter culture. This is evident from my research data,

*"If we meet somebody we don't hug them, but in general, in the Solomon culture, we shake hands. Even when we say goodbye, we don't hug people....because I know that it's not acceptable. When I feel comfortable when I meet the friend who is white, I hug them. But when I meet a friend who's from Solomon Island, I, even here, we don't hug, we just shake hands or we just say hi because that's the normal practice for us."*

It is important to note that this particular participant conforms to the 'separated' profile, one which stresses the importance of acquiring the understanding of this type of basic differences in cultural practice and being able to adapt, among migrants with *all* acculturation styles.

It is commonly argued (such as by Hofstede, 2001) that Western countries are more individualistic than others. They focus more on autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, a right to privacy, primacy of personal goals, behaviour regulated by attitudes and acceptance of confrontation; whereas collectivistic cultures, such as East Asian countries, focus more on collective identity, emotional dependence, in-group solidarity and harmony, duties and obligation, family integrity and behaviour regulated by in-group norms (Uleman et al., 1995). According to Chen and Starosta (1998), these types of cultural differences are reflected through communication style as well. Individualistic cultures are said to practice a 'low-context' communication style, where it is explicit and precise, in comparison to the 'high-context' communication style practiced by collectivistic cultures, where similar understandings and values are assumed and where, therefore, meanings are not 'spelt out' as explicitly. One participant from the Ukraine noticed this difference regarding the content of communication style. When asked if she does things differently when she 'hangs out' with international people and Kiwis, she said,

*"We do the same things but we talk about different things. So Kiwi friends are sort of we just sort of talk about shallow things that don't really matter, but with my international friends we talk about more long term things our plans our goals like something that's quite important.*

*Researcher: Can you give an example like what do you mean by shallow?*

*Shallow is like, just you know about your day like who you've seen like, what are you gonna buy, something like that. Um, not important things. Important things are those that are about your life, about your personal life and your feelings. Something like that."*

What this participant here describes as 'shallow' could be interpreted in the light of Chen and Starosta (1998), that Kiwis may simply tend to talk more explicitly about the details in their lives that this participant regards as relatively unimportant and taken for granted in her own ethnic culture.

#### **4.7 The role of social values – a paradox in social identity?**

It is inevitable that under extensive exposure, immigrants will acknowledge and become familiar with the different sets of social rules in the host society, but they might choose to adopt or reject these new ideas if they are found to be in conflict with their previous beliefs. The strong emphasis on the idea of family unity is illustrated by an interview with a participant from the Philippines, who was conscious of the influence which, she believed, Western individualism placed on her children.

*"Umm I don't see to be. I don't consider negative, it's just the culture. I respect other cultures, but things that I cannot from Kiwi culture, I cannot absorb, I cannot tolerate, or permit my family to practice that culture. It's totally contradictory to our culture. So I cannot see my children having family of their own, and then behaving loosely. They are very loose in terms of family attachment, you know they are more attached to friends, their sports, their passion, it's not something I can allow my family to absorb. That aspect of the New Zealand culture.*



*I always encourage my children to keep in touch with their cousins back home, and in the US. I for one, we live... they want to go somewhere abroad, go on holidays, and they looking at savings. That holiday has to be going back home, and that holiday has to synchronise with the time their cousins are coming home as well. It's not holidays because their friends are going to Australia, or they want to save for their tickets to Australia, no. That's not gonna happen. If you want to save money for a trip for a holiday, save your money for a trip to go back home."*

From a social identity perspective, it would seem that 'separated' individuals who identify highly with their ethnic group (but not with the national group), strive to reject social values that are associated with the out-group, especially when they are found to be in conflict with the values that are characterized by the in-group, as with this participant from the Philippines, who was also in the 'separated' profile. Paradoxically, the data suggest that it was those who are in the 'separated' category who were more likely to endorse attributes of the New Zealand culture, and integrate those into their lifestyle. This was despite the fact that this sometimes created conflicts with members of the same ethnic group, such as their family who, in some cases, might even confront the individuals about their displeasure with their new lifestyle. Even though this Filipino participant is concerned about the loss of family attachment through exposure to individualism, she also endorsed certain aspects of the New Zealand culture. According to her, she likes the fact that 'it's okay to say no' in the work setting when she feels that the workload is getting too much, and that she's trusted by her employer to accomplish her own tasks, which has allowed her to spend more quality time with her family and take care of her own personal pursuits. By contrast, in the Philippines, she was expected to be obedient at work and found this stressful, which in fact was one of the reasons she moved to New Zealand – to pursue a more relaxed lifestyle.

Another example comes from a participant from the Solomon Islands who, reflecting upon her heritage culture, stated,

*“Being educated and I have got my own job and I got my own house and everything. Nobody tells me what to do because they don’t feed me and that’s my principle. I do things according to what I want to do. So it’s sort of against the culture because I’m a female but I guess when you have your own money and things like that, they don’t control you so...The other thing which I also like about the NZ culture is being an adult, you have to be independent and not attached to the family. Yea... which I.. in my culture, my sister is still attached to the family. And my Dad still keeps on saying ‘you do this, you do that’. But not me. I think this thing really influences me and when I go home I just live differently from my family...it’s a big thing, and some of my family members don’t like it. They say I’m being influenced by the NZ culture so. It’s not right according to my culture, but my Dad says it’s ok, it’s how I want to live.”*

Similar notions of independence were also recorded among ‘separated’ Chinese participants. In China, according to one participant, it is obligatory for a female to be married and form her own family before moving out of home. She found that it is socially acceptable for anyone to move out at a young age in New Zealand and has chosen to follow the same lifestyle. She also finds it to be a struggle having to explain that to her family and friends in China, who perceive what she is doing as ‘weird’. Previous scholars (Schwartz et al., 2006) have also hypothesized that “individuals who accept and adopt aspects of the receiving [host] culture may be criticized and ostracized by more ‘traditionalist’ members of the heritage culture, diaspora, ethnic enclave, or religious community.” (p.14) Such contrasting expectations of receiving and heritage culture create a ‘tug of war’ that can create considerable distress for affected individuals (Schwartz et al., 2006)

There are some possible explanations as to why such paradox exists. I speculate that unlike 'assimilated' individuals, those who are 'separated' still largely gain identity from their ethnic culture, and that is their default identity; therefore, they are much more aware of whether they are being influenced by new social values and ideas. Unlike those who are 'integrated', the 'separated' individuals have not internalised the harmony between two contrasting cultures. Therefore any potential conflicts also become more apparent to them. Further, and consistent with the framework of psychological adaptation proposed by Ward and Kennedy (1994), those who adopt integration are the most psychologically adjusted (See Section 2.1). Thus, the kind of distress described by Schwartz et al. (2006) seem to be most applicable to those who are 'separated'.

#### **4.8 The role of personal identity and its association with 'marginalisation'**

The other possible explanation as to why these 'separated' individuals do not totally reject ideas that are normally attributed to the host culture is because of the disassociation between these ideas and the social identity. These 'host attributes' concern aspects like personal autonomy, achievement and happiness which, I speculate, spill over to the personal aspects of identity from the social identity domain. Schwartz et al (2006, p. 11) contended that *"the person's personal identity – one's most fundamental goals, values, and beliefs and the coherence among these ideals – has the potential to stabilize the individual during the transition to a new society. The presence of a coherent set of goals, ideals, values, and beliefs may help individuals decide how to proceed in the face of such incompatibilities, whereas lack of coherence in one's personal identity may render one susceptible to the extremes of either the new receiving culture or one's culture of origin."* Therefore, the acculturating individual is able to adopt these what appear to be aspects of the New Zealand culture when they are

compatible with, and enhance their core goals, values and beliefs, even though the New Zealand culture is perceived as the out-group. The participants in this research have voiced their opinion on issues from animal rights, law enforcement, binge drinking to violence, etc. While some of these issues can be paired with certain cultural practices, more generally, these issues represent personal attitudes which can be a result of individual differences in upbringing, significant others, genetic disposition and other factors that happen prior to or independently of the acculturation/ social identity process. Therefore, some stereotypic beliefs may appear to contradict the acculturation style.

An apparent documentation of this dichotomy of personal identity and social identity in acculturation was evident in the behavioural adaptation of the immigrants. A naïve social identity perspective assumes that immigrants would practice the stereotypic behaviour of the culture that they identify with (see Section 3.2). For example, a ‘separated’ Chinese immigrant would be expected perhaps to play Mahjongg in their spare time, eat Chinese food, listen to Chinese music, and so on; whereas ‘assimilated’ immigrants would engage more in stereotypic New Zealand activities (such as DIY, drinking beer, or whatever that might be). The notion of personal identity explains that it is often not so straightforward.

An ‘integrated’ participant from Taiwan, for example, stated,

*“...people here when they get around they do very casual stuff like, like we would prepare lots of food. Chinese people love food, but here they have BBQ, and beers, and salad, something simple. Nothing that takes too long to do.*

*I enjoy it. I enjoy the socializing part. I don’t really enjoy sausages. But now it’s always good to see people there. They work five days a week. They need to relax. They need to have that Friday night. Sometimes they do on Wednesday night.”*

This respondent demonstrates that his decision to engage in a seemingly cultural activity is also mediated by his personal food preferences and the need to socialise and relax, rather than being purely culturally motivated.

However, Schwartz et al. (2006, p.11) stressed that “personal and social identity may be inextricably intertwined, particularly in cases where aspects of personal identity coincide with ideals of a particular social or cultural in-group to which an individual belongs.” Therefore, the relationship between social identity and personal identity is multi-directional. First, aspects of the social identity can be adopted to maintain a coherent personal identity. Second, aspects of personal identity can partly be a function of the social group one identifies with, because some cultures might emphasise or de-emphasise the need to have just such a coherent *individual* personal identity. It is important, then, to unravel personal identity from social identity in the study of acculturation. It is unclear from the data at this stage the extent to which personal identity influences acculturation. As it stands, it is possible that personal identity can operate both as a coherent, stable anchor that is independent of social identity, and a function of the social identity that emerges from the varying outcomes of the in-group/out-group mechanism. What is certain from the data is that personal identity can manifest through both the psychological and behavioural aspects of acculturation.

In theory, the ‘marginalised’ (who do not identify with either cultural group) would be likely to display a dominance of personal identity over social identity in the overall make-up of their self-identity. It was hypothesized that this group tended to rely less on in-groups for the make-up for their overall sense of identity (see Section 3.1). This was tested using the Aspect of Identity Questionnaire, which measures the orientation of different aspects of identity. However, only one participant in the sample fitted the ‘marginalised’ profile (there were more

'marginalised' participants but they were not tested with the AIQ as it was only implemented halfway through the data collection, see Section 3.3.3), and in that person's case, the orientation was not obviously skewed towards the personal aspect of identity over the collective aspect of the identity ('3.9' for PI vs '3.3' for CI). Furthermore, no significant difference was found when compared to the participants in other acculturation styles either (the sample in this research would not be comprehensive or suitable enough anyway for a proper quantitative analysis other than used for basic descriptive analysis for demographical variables, even if any significant relationships were found).

The qualitative results do show, however, that among the 'marginalised', personal values can operate independently of cultural/ social identity during acculturation (as these respondents do not identify with either culture). The 'marginalised' Thai participant, for example, stated, *"I think it's different culture, like the Asians are brought up differently, whereas the Kiwis are more easy going. Like for example, they don't mind so much if their children drink, or they have a culture here for binge drinking, whereas, even though I came to NZ, well I emigrated to NZ when I was about 11 and I still hold my tradition, not drinking and not smoking, so far?"*

**Researcher:** *Is it your personal choice?*

*I'm influenced by my parents as well, they don't drink or smoke.*

**Researcher:** *So do you think of it as a negative thing, for the NZ culture?*

*Well it's not so great for your health, but because my dad came from a poor family, he tends to save a lot - he rather spend on technology than smokes.*

**Researcher:** *That's good, back to other Asian people, do they spend their spare time differently than New Zealanders?*

*From what I've seen, when I was in high school and when I was at university, one boy - he was a neighbour of mine when I was living in Thailand, and he came over to Christchurch. He went to a high school, and he spent a lot of his time in game booths with games, Time Zone. Whereas, Kiwis, I see a lot of them hanging out in bars.*

**Researcher:** *And what about you personally? What do you do with your spare time?*

*When Christchurch was still standing, I liked going out clubbing sometimes, but I spent a lot of my time at school. When I was at university, I tried to finish my degree before I go travelling.*

**Researcher:** *So you do go to bars and stuff to drink?*

*Oh I don't drink alcohol, but I go there with friends."*

The anti-drinking attitude can be attributed to a lack of identification with the New Zealand culture (as this participant perceives alcohol drinking as a characteristic of the New Zealand culture), and is therefore consistent with the social identity perspective of the 'marginalised' style. The above conversation nevertheless shows that this attitude was primarily formulated by her significant others (her father) as well. The influence of significant others, while social in nature, is rather part of personal identity because it does not concern belonging to a collective group and the psychological benefits that follow from promotion of in-groups. Furthermore, while the fact that this participant likes going clubbing might appear to conflict with her social identity/ acculturation style, this conversation reveals that it is motivated more by personal needs for socializing, rather than a fondness for drinking, which is typically associated with

New Zealand culture. The clubs or the bars in this case then, can be said to act purely as a backdrop or an environment that is able to facilitate personal needs.

#### **4.9 The role of the physical environment**

Revisiting the paradox discussed above - that integrating 'new aspects' from the host culture is much more apparent among the 'separated' - the data show that the environment, other than personal identity, is another factor related to the migrants' adaptation that is independent of their acculturation style. In other words, one might not be particularly concerned with assimilating with the host society, but he/ she might still show traces of behavioural change that can be perceived as a sign of adaptation. However, such behavioural change might in fact be influenced by environmental constraints rather than a change of identity. Such discrepancy, that can arise from using cultural identification rather than behavioural adaptation as an indicator of level of acculturation, has been noted by past researchers, such as Hui et al. (1992) and Wallendorf (1984).

One 'separated' participant from the UK stated,

*"We cycle more. Well I cycle more than when I used to in the UK. I don't know whether.. That's kind of an interesting thing. Because cycling here is much more kind of a sporting activity than in the UK. In the UK, I just ride my bike to work. It's quicker than the bus. But here it's "no I'm a triathlete", you know or a cycle race or something.*

**Researcher:** *So you picked up a little bit of that?*

*Yea I have a pair of cycling trousers. So that's my engagement with the Kiwi culture...What can we say that we do is typically Kiwi? We have a barbeque. I suppose there's reasonable overlay*



*of behaviour between England and New Zealand. Maybe there's not so much of a difference. I mean here's an example from Hong Kong. I mean the practice of shopping in the evening. Which we don't do here either. I bet if we lived in Hong Kong we'd do shopping in the evening. Because that's what people do. "*

While this seems to be an instance of the 'separated' individual integrating with the social norm of the society, it can also be interpreted simply as the new environment enabling certain lifestyles that were not possible in the ethnic environment. The wide, flat roads and the various cycling lanes in the city of Christchurch arguably make recreational cycling enjoyable in comparison to what cycling would be like in the crowded, narrow streets of some cities in the UK. And this is comparable to the example of shopping in Hong Kong given by this participant, where extending shopping hours and family friendly urban areas at night allow late night shopping to be a viable activity. This could be attributed to the nature of the physical environment as much as a Chinese cultural characteristic. Just as the new environment in the host culture can encourage a new lifestyle, it can also restrict certain lifestyles that were previously possible in the ethnic culture, regardless of one's desire or orientation to maintain an ethnic identity. An 'integrated' participant from Taiwan (who scored high in ethnic identity), indicated that one of his favourite pastimes in childhood was going on adventures, especially in abandoned buildings in the city. He expressed regret at not being able to find the same kind of excitement here in Christchurch - which is a much more suburbanized and carefully planned city when compared to many Asian cities.

The concept of the physical environment playing a role in influencing human behaviour has long been recognised by human geographers. For example, some demonstrated how density can affect human interaction in terms of negotiating personal space and anonymity. In a study

of Sense of Community in Hong Kong, Mak et al. (2009) demonstrated that in a high-rise neighbourhood where personal space is limited, crowding and reduced privacy are inevitable. Instead of trying to get to know everyone in the neighbourhood, urban dwellers are often characterized by increased anonymity and alienation (Geis & Ross, 1998). And for migrants, in particular, the sole difference in geography can dictate the type of food they eat, the clothes they wear and the way they commute. A large number of participants often talked about these changes. Therefore, while social identity theory is useful in explaining the psychological basis of acculturation, especially in terms of why the four different styles exist, the actual adaptation is a complex result of the combination of social identity processes with other social processes.

#### **4.10 Summary**

The main argument of this thesis is that acculturation is an example of social identity as outlined in the social psychological literature. The four acculturation styles proposed by Berry (1992) are the manifestations of the different outcomes of in-group/ out-group identification, which is treated as a universal mechanism by social psychologists. The current research agrees with the proposition by providing empirical evidence that the differences in acculturation style are indeed matched by a difference in cognition due to the in-group/ out-group mechanism, as suggested in social identity theory. 'Separation' is paired with negative stereotyping towards the host culture. 'Integration' is marked by both positive and negative perception of the heritage culture AND the host culture. There were also some evidence of a recognition of heterogeneity and diversity within the cultural groups on the part of the 'integrated'. While 'assimilation' was not found to be marked by derogation towards the heritage culture, it is characterised by the echoing of stereotypic beliefs that are associated with the New Zealand culture. For the 'marginalised', a non-stereotypic and neutral perception was found when

compared to participants of other acculturation styles. It is possible that the 'marginalised' are less likely to include collective groups as part of the overall sense of identity, which is mitigated by focusing more on personal aspects of identity, such as personal goals and needs.

However, a review of the relationship between personal identity and social identity revealed that the nature of this relationship can be murky. While it is possible that personal identity acts as a coherent anchor that mitigates the change of identity during acculturation, it might also be a function of social identity, especially among cultural groups that emphasise individualism.

The inductive nature of the qualitative part of this research allowed me to identify three additional themes that were also influential in the process of acculturation. In this chapter, I discussed them in relation to the significance of social identity. The first theme was the role of language. While it was found that the difference in language can provide a challenge to assimilation, especially for those who are in the 'separated' profile, that difference can facilitate social interaction among those who are more integrated. However, proficiency in English is not necessarily a requirement for assimilation because this relationship does not develop in a linear fashion - i.e., assimilation also helps with the mastery of the second language. The 'integrated' were not only found to be especially gifted in shifting between the native language and the second language, and also seemed to be able to effortlessly shift between two sets of social norms and social rules.

The second theme was differences in social norms and social values. Not only did the 'separated' seem to understand the differences, they also spoke more often about integrating aspects of the New Zealand culture, which was found to create conflicts with members of their

ethnic group. While this is in contrast with the predictions from social identity theory, I provided two explanations to why this paradox exists. First, the 'separated' are more 'consciously aware' of any integration of the new culture, and any conflicts that arise psychologically and socially are on-going. By contrast, the 'integrated' have long accepted the dual identity and harmonised the negotiation of different social norms. The second explanation is that, unlike the generic stereotypes, these social values are more complex and specific in nature, therefore they become detached from the social identity and are associated more with personal aspects of identity among the 'separated'. Personal identity, as discussed above, can also mediate the process of acculturation as it interacts with social identity.

The final theme is the influence of the physical and social environment. Human geographers have documented how the environment can influence the way people behave, and this was evident in the behavioural adaptation of the immigrants. Regardless of the acculturation style and social identity, the immigrant might still show traces of behavioural change that can be perceived as a sign of adaptation as the result of constraining and enabling factors in the new environment. In the next chapter (Chapter 5), I revisit what this thesis has covered so far, and discuss the implication of my results and the limitation of my research.

## Chapter 5 Discussion and Limitations

### 5.1 Summary and Discussion

In Chapter 1, I highlighted the relatively recent increase in global migration and the fact that it continues to do so. I then briefly described the history and current experience of immigration in New Zealand. Since the founding of the country, New Zealand has gone through periods of influx of immigrants in one form or another, and this trend is only set to continue in the context of globalization. However, discrimination and racial inequality are still very much evident in today's society. The term 'acculturation' was then introduced. I explained the meaning of the term and introduced Berry's well accepted acculturation framework. The four acculturation styles developed by Berry (1992) were described. I then suggested that there could be a common psychological process responsible for the nature of interactions between people of different ethnicities in the context of migration. The minimal group paradigm in social psychology states that people form groups based on very little information and this process happens automatically. For this reason, it is otherwise known as auto-categorisation. It is here that I explicitly stated the approach, and originality, of the thesis: that social identity theory may explain the social cognitive basis of the four acculturation strategies. I identified this as a gap in the literature.

In Chapter 2, I took a broad look at the emphases of recent acculturation studies and the nature of their methodologies in New Zealand and elsewhere. I then introduced the work of Colleen Ward, who contributed to New Zealand acculturation studies and to the expansion of Berry's framework by incorporating a recognition of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. In this chapter, I also explored the concepts of National Identity and Ethnic Identity, and their roles in guiding how one acculturates. By examining the broader concept

of identity, and social identity in particular, in the social psychology literature, a conceptual connection was then made between the two fields. The effects of social identity have long been studied by social psychologists. A number of cognitive and behavioural footprints are apparent as people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups. They are the tendencies to which people think and perceive others due to that distinction. For example, people are found to react more positively to in-group members and likely to perceive out-groups as being homogenous.

I proposed that these footprints were keys to testing empirically whether social identity is the primary social-cognitive mechanism at play in acculturation. This study is not the first to explore this overlap between the two fields, but it is the first to suggest a connection at this fundamental and conceptual level and attempt to test this connection empirically. The last section of Chapter 2 briefly described aspects of New Zealand's history and culture to establish a reference point with which to compare participants' experiences of the culture.

Chapter 3 described the aim and methodology of this research. Given the extensive research on the in-group/ out-group mechanism, a number of predictions could be formulated and were proposed as reference points when it came to discussing the findings of the qualitative data. With reference to the methodology employed, in this chapter I gave details of the recruitment process and elaborated on the two-step design of the data collection process, according to which a quantitative survey was used to obtain demographic information and data from Ethnic and National Identity scales, while qualitative interviews were used to shed light on the processes involved in acculturation.

Chapter 4 consisted of the reporting and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results. As expected from the literature review, 'integration' was the most common acculturation strategy in the sample. By using questionnaires to profile the participants, I was able to match their 'cognitive footprints' to the operation of social identity cognitions. Acculturation profiles are matched closely by a conscious preference with respect to the group of people that participants choose to socialize with, and the presence of the 'cognitive footprints' under each profile were largely consistent with the hypotheses derived from social identity theory. The inductive nature of the qualitative methods allowed me to identify additional themes in the topic of acculturation, which are the importance of language, social norms and social values, personal identity, and the physical and social environment. I discussed the complex nature of these factors' interaction with social identity and how they can appear to contradict one another in the adaptation of the immigrants.

Having studied in New Zealand since the age of 15, I was able to witness auto-categorisation at work on various occasions. Compared with the situation in High Schools in Hong Kong (where I was raised), students in New Zealand do not spend the whole day with the same group of people in class. It was always interesting to see who the students sat next to when I arrived at each class, especially at the start of each term when the students had not formed a habit as to where they sat. Almost all of the time, the Asian students liked to sit together at the front, and that is not necessarily because they were friends (although many of them did become friends by the end of the term). There developed a common perception, among the New Zealand students, that 'the Asians like to stick with each other'. Being Asian myself, I did feel compelled to sit with these other Asian students unless I already knew someone in that class. That is because I felt it would be easier and would make me feel more comfortable. This is a reflection in hindsight. In other words, I do not recall elaborating and rationalizing such

decisions as to where I should sit. It was rather automatic in nature. Interestingly, the New Zealand students also separated among themselves in similar fashion, although the differences were more obscure and were not immediately apparent. For example, the 'popular' students tended to sit together, and then there were the boys, the girls, 'quiet' ones, who liked to focus on the study, and the ones who played sport.

As was discussed at the beginning of this thesis, social identity theory applies in many social situations, and ethnicity seems to be one of the most powerful agents when it comes to people distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups. This is probably because the difference is often immediately apparent, and therefore requires a minimal amount of information processing. It is not surprising, then, that absolute assimilation was traditionally seen as the ultimate end point of acculturation; hence elaborate efforts are still being made in order to 'integrate' immigrants into the mainstream society. There seems to be a common expectation that immigrants are expected to learn 'the New Zealand way'. Those who are visibly 'foreign' and refuse to adapt to the new culture might be put at a disadvantage, even though it is also becoming increasingly recognised in the society that diversity is a good thing. According to an online news article (2014), New Zealand First leader Winston Peters recently called "for immigrants to 'fit in' and warned that immigration policy and racial 'appeasement' were dividing the country" (<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/9749504/Immigrants-should-fit-in-says-Peters>). He stated that "In total half a million people have moved into and out of New Zealand ... New Zealand has gone from a nation of united people to an urban collection of communities, many clinging to where they were, rather than where they are now." Peters also said that many people living in New Zealand did not identify as being from here, and that migrants needed to be "pleased to be here, pleased to sign up to our flag and value our traditions, and be prepared to stand up for this country."



The main achievement of this thesis has been to provide evidence that such a strategy of absolute assimilation might not be compatible with the basic psychological operation of the process of acculturation. In absolute assimilation, immigrants are required to consciously 'override' this rather automatic and 'instinctive' process of auto-categorisation and shift their 'default' identity. The current research, however, through recognizing the presence of cognitive footprints that are closely related to the in-group/ out-group mechanism, suggests that assimilation is not about 'overriding' this process but rather is merely one of the manifestations. Regardless of the immigrants' acculturation style, social identity and the in-group/ out-group mechanism are predominant influences in determining the way that such styles are expressed differently. Perhaps an analogy can be found in the societal view of homosexuality, where it is becoming increasingly accepted that being attracted to the same sex is not a lifestyle or choice that can be 'corrected' through deliberate effort, but rather is a variant of heterosexuality (and other orientations). Therefore, this interpretation also reinforces Berry's framework, that four different acculturation styles can exist independently regardless of socio-economic factors, and of how long and for how many generations the immigrants have settled in the new country, because it is largely based on a common psychological process, and such a process is relatively resilient to social pressures.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking finding was how much the operation of this in-group/ out-group mechanism during acculturation can lead to biased perceptions. The tendency to perceive groups as having certain characteristics based on this mechanism can be dominated by a sense of emotionality, rather than rationality. For the 'separated,' there was almost no agreement on the negative perception of the attributes of New Zealand culture and New Zealanders. All members of this profile seem to pick on different things as they justify their lack of identity or dislike towards the New Zealand culture. Their perception seem to be based

on emotions and personal experiences, rather than factual evidence; and such opinions do not seem to be shared among members of the ethnic group to which they belong. These seemingly biased statements can be said to be filtered through the cognition from the in-group/ out-group mechanism. Psychologists would probably not be surprised as they are familiar with how the accuracy in the way we process information can be undermined by the presence of generic cognitive mechanisms. Various cognitive biases are well documented - for example, the mere exposure effect, the fundamental attribution error, the just world belief, the by-stander effect, the availability bias, and so on.

The implications of this discussion for society then can therefore be contradictory to mainstream beliefs, because the primary influence of a psychological mechanism in acculturation suggests that we have little control over how immigrants acculturate. Traditional efforts seem to focus on the encouragement of assimilation with the host society, but the immigrants cannot, and do not 'consciously' choose to assimilate, rather it is determined by automatic processes that dictate how they distinguish in-groups from out-groups. Therefore, this research indicates that there is no clear answer to the debate as to whether immigrants should "fit in" or whether their cultural uniqueness should be retained. Revisiting Peters' statements, it might be logically incompatible for the immigrants to feel "pleased to sign up to our flag and value our traditions, and be prepared to stand up for this country", if the New Zealand group was not perceived as part of their in-group. And it is certainly not 'right or wrong' as to which group should be perceived as the in-group or which group should be perceived as the out-group, providing that both serve the same function as contributors to self-identity and self-esteem according to social identity theory.

One of the main questions raised at the beginning of this thesis was ‘why do immigrants acculturate in the way they do?’ It seems from this research that they acculturate partly based on the negotiation of their social identity. A remaining question is whether or not it is possible to influence the results of such a process? I speculate that a propensity to acculturate is likely a result of a complex combination of influences from both ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ that happen prior to the acculturation, such as the personality traits (e.g., openness to experience and extraversion might determine the acceptance and interaction with various groups) and past events (e.g., past experiences during the interaction with groups outside the acculturation context, such as church groups, sports clubs, or peers, and cues of hierarchy in such groups.) Therefore, it is unlikely, from a policy stand-point at least, that immigrants’ acculturation can be significantly influenced. What can be done though, is to influence the behavioural adaptations of the immigrants because these can act independently of the psychological nature of social identity (as concluded in Section 4.10). This can be done by improving the physical environment and social environment, which in turn can lead to a better lifestyle and well-being for all people, not just for immigrants. In conclusion, this research fills a gap in the acculturation literature by examining and providing empirical evidence for the fundamental role of social identity formation in the process of acculturation. While it might be beneficial for social institutions that are interested in the matter of immigration, I also hope that this information will be available to and useful for immigrants (especially young immigrants) who are struggling with their purpose and conflicting identities in this new country.

## **5.2 Limitations**

There are a number of limitations concerning the recruitment of participants, the nature of the methodology and the collection of data. The primary goal in designing the recruitment

process was to include sufficient participants to represent each of the four acculturation styles. It was anticipated from the literature that assimilation and marginalisation would be significantly less preferred than other styles. Indeed, only 3 of the 40 participants recruited conformed to the 'assimilated' and 'marginalised' styles. A larger sample size would have been beneficial in terms of substantiating claims about the psychological characteristics of immigrants who conform to these styles. For the qualitative aspects of the research, the exact number of participants is not as significant. Had 80 participants been recruited then it is likely that a sample of more than 5 can be drawn who conform to these styles. This skewed coverage in acculturation styles also provided challenges during the data analysis and report process. The over-representation of the integrated group means a significantly larger amount of editing of transcripts was needed. That is, there were significantly more quotes in this group that support the same point or fall within the same theme, therefore making them redundant. They were omitted in the report of the findings to make the layout of the chapter flow more consistently. By contrast, the assimilated group and the marginalised group can be said to be over-represented in terms of the reporting of the data, so the conclusions drawn from such a sample are inevitably more tentative. A potential alternative would have been to use a purposive sampling technique, but this was decided against because the potential for preconceptions would have been large if the acculturation styles of the participants were known before the interview was conducted.

As the recruitment process took place in public locations in Christchurch (close to shopping malls), mainly during the afternoon (see Chapter 3), it is possible that the selection of the time and place under-represented certain people. First, professionals and students are usually at the office or school at this time. Second, people who own motor vehicles would be less likely to be encountered on the streets. There are also some people who are more willing to take

part in the research than others. People accompanying children were less willing to be engaged. Lastly, the physical environment of other cities can be vastly different from Christchurch, which might affect how immigrants adapt. In particular, the difference in population density can have an effect on how often, and with which group of people, the immigrants interact on a daily basis. Due to constraints of resources and time, it was not feasible for me to recruit participants from locations outside Christchurch. While the distribution between acculturation styles is expected to vary according to the sampling procedure, however, the characteristics associated with each style should stay consistent given my working assumption that a common psychological process governs the acculturation process.

In addition to sampling, a further limitation concerns the nature of the methodology. Unlike most scientific studies that utilise the hypothetical-deductive model, which involves the falsification of hypotheses, the current study is more exploratory in nature. Although I had detailed several 'hypotheses' before the data was collected, the data extracted using qualitative interviews with such a small sample size are, in a strict scientific sense, neither sufficient nor appropriate to formally falsify those hypotheses. It is possible that any conclusions drawn are ad-hoc in nature, as a number of explanations and 'themes' were provided *after* certain phenomena were identified from the quotes. Therefore, in principle, the possibility of the existence of any evidence that are contrary to the current proposition cannot be ruled out. It is suggested that in future research, further quantitative techniques should be utilised. For example, some form of numerical system can be designed to measure the strength and frequency of stereotyped perceptions of each participant. However, as I stated in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, the implementation might be difficult in the topic of acculturation due to its complex nature involving many influences (e.g. the physical

environment and personality), and because any psychological and behavioural changes are broad and can occur gradually over a long period of time (e.g., the integration and rejection of social values).

One specific aspect of this study that may have influenced both the amount and richness of the qualitative data was the interaction between my ethnicity and those of the interviewees, especially given the focus on acculturation and processes of 'in-group/ out-group' attribution. Sound qualitative research techniques (such as avoiding asking leading questions and double barrelled questions) were utilized, and any statements I made during the interview process were designed to be 'neutral' rather than leading. However, it is likely that the data gathered was affected by the fact that I, as the researcher, was visibly not a 'New Zealander'. It is consistent with social identity theory that immigrants (particularly in the case of the integrated category) engage in an 'automatic mode shifting' process when interacting with New Zealanders versus people who come from their home culture. It is therefore very possible that the way participants talked to me or the kind of information that was given to me might be different from that made available to a New Zealand-born, Pakeha, researcher. This would have been especially the case for participants from East Asia, who might have associated me with their ethnic group due to my Asian complexion and my background. If this was the case, I would have also been considered free of the negative attributes that were associated with New Zealanders by 'separated' participants. This group of respondents may have responded with trust and openness, including talking more frankly about New Zealanders in a negative light. They might have thought that I would not be offended because of their perception that I, like them, was not a Kiwi.

# Appendix 1 Research Information Sheet

**Lincoln University**  
**Faculty of Environment, Society, and Design**

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled *Acculturation: A social identity perspective*. This is the thesis component required to complete my Master of Social Science degree at Lincoln University. Acculturation deals with the changes to an individual following intercultural contact. In other words, it gives an understanding as to how an immigrant adapts to the new society.

The aim of this project is to investigate the process of acculturation using a perspective from social identity theory, a theory commonly used in social psychology to describe how people process information about others.

Your participation in this project on the day will involve answering a short (takes no more than 5 minutes) questionnaire that consists of predetermined response options, and then participate, at the same meeting, in an interview that should take no more than 35 minutes. (The interview will be very relaxed and can be conducted at your home, at my workplace or somewhere else that is mutually convenient.).

With your permission, the interview will be recorded using a voice recorder so that I can fully concentrate on our discussion. I will also take notes from time to time. This will be made clear to you again on the day. To ensure anonymity, no uniquely identifying information (other than basic demographic information, such as whether you are male or female) will be gathered. The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. There are no foreseeable risks in your participation, and your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your cooperation, and the information you provide, up until the data analysis begins which will be on 1<sup>st</sup> May. In case you wish to cancel or reschedule our meeting, please contact me via the details below. I will contact you prior to the meeting for a reminder (on the day or the day before). Your participation is much appreciated.

The project is being carried out by:

Name of principal researcher: Darren Chan

Contact details 0273322799, Darren.Chan@lincolnuni.ac.nz

He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

Name of Supervisor: Bob Gidlow

(If you are a staff member seeking HEC approval please provide Group Leader/Division Director details)

Contact Details : Bob.Gidlow@lincoln.ac.nz; phone 03 325 3820 x 8766

The project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

## Appendix 2 Questionnaire

**Name of Project:** Acculturation: A social identity approach

The aim of the project is to investigate the process of acculturation using social identity theory, a theory commonly used in social psychology to describe how people process information about others.

### Section A: Demographics

1. How old are you (tick one)?  
 18-30    31-40    41-50    51-60    over 60
2. How long have you been living in New Zealand for? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What ethnicity do you identify yourself with? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Gender: Do you identify as:    Male                       Female

### Section B: Ethnic identity

The questions are about ethnic (your culture of origin) identity. Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

**(4) Strongly agree   (3) Agree   (2) Disagree   (1) Strongly disagree**

I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs	
I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	
I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	
I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	
I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	
I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	
I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	
In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	
I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	
I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	
I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	
I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	

### Section C: National Identity

The final question is about national (New Zealand) identity. Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember there is no 'right' or 'wrong' response.

**(4) Strongly agree   (3) Agree   (2) Disagree   (1) Strongly disagree**

I think of myself as a New Zealander.	
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**Thank you for completing this brief questionnaire. Now I would like to ask you for your thoughts on.....**

**Sense of identity**

The next questions are about your sense of identity. Please read each item carefully and consider how it applies to you using the following scale:

**1 = Not at all important to my sense of who I am**

**2 = Not very important to my sense of who I am**

**3 = Neutral**

**4 = Important to my sense of who I am**

**5 = Extremely important to my sense of who I am**

My personal values and moral standards	
My popularity with other people	
Being a part of the many generations of my family	
My dreams and imagination	
The ways in which other people react to what I say and do	
My personal goals and hopes for the future	
My physical appearance: my height, my weight, and the shape of my body	
My emotions and feelings	
My reputation, what others think of me	
My thoughts and ideas	
My attractiveness to other people	
My gestures and mannerisms, the impression I make on others	
The ways I deal with my fears and anxieties	
My social behaviour, such as the way I act when meeting people	
My feeling of being a unique person, being distinct from others	
Knowing that I continue to be essentially the same inside even though life involves many external changes	
My self-knowledge, my ideas about what kind of person I really am	
My personal self-evaluation, the private opinion I have of myself	
My race or ethnic background	
My religion	
Places where I live or where I was raised	
My feeling of belonging to my community	
My feeling of pride in my country, being proud to be a citizen	
My commitments on political issues or my political activities	
My language, such as my regional accent or dialect or a second language that I know	

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