

**Multiple Ethnic Identities  
and the Christchurch  
Malaysian Chinese**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts in Political Science

in the

University of Canterbury

by

**Phyllis Mowe**

University of Canterbury

1997

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with multiple ethnic identification in a multiethnic society. The primary objective is to investigate the fundamental dynamics which underlie the ethnic phenomenon. This is undertaken by empirically evaluating the validity of two hypotheses on ethnic identification. The theoretical framework employed is formulated from a number of works on ethnicity, particularly Barth's (1969) theory on boundaries, and Cohen's (1978) theory on nesting dichotomization. The first hypothesis concerns the flexible and situational nature of ethnic identification. Individuals identify according to sets of shared qualities which stand in contrast to other sets of shared qualities within different contexts. The second hypothesis concerns nesting identities. Individuals identify in a set of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

Empirical evidence from a case study carried out on the Malaysian Chinese community in Christchurch, New Zealand, largely verified the validity of the two hypotheses. The thesis concludes with three main findings. First it is found that ethnic identification is based on relevant and significant contrasts and similarities in relation to others which create the boundary for an identity. Second, ethnic identification is flexible, situational and individual in nature. Individuals exhibit particularism, employ different criteria and identify differently in different contexts. This quality of ethnic identification is responsible for multiple ethnic identities. Third, it is found that for some people, ethnic identification is a function of interactive experiences. This suggests that ethnic identification is not simply a function of socialization as is widely believed. The findings

of the study confirm that ethnicity is an interactive phenomenon. As a result of these findings, it is suggested that ethnicity should be conceptualized in a way which would more adequately reflect ethnicity within contemporary society.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I did not manage the task of writing this thesis on my own. I owe much of it to others who, in one way or another, assisted me during the course of researching and writing. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to my main supervisor, Dr Jim Ockey. His guidance, support and patience, from my undergraduate years to the completion of this thesis, I can never repay. Similar thanks must go Assoc.Prof. Martin Holland for his encouragement and guidance through the years.

I would also like to thank Jill Dolby, Phillipa Greenman and Alistair Pringle for their kind assistance in various ways. Thanks also to thesis-mates, Dya Fadel, Judith Fretter, Alexis Jensen and Gareth Smith for making me feel one of them. To all staff of the Political Science Department whose smiles and greetings meant a lot to me.

This thesis would not have been possible without the input of members of the Christchurch Malaysian Chinese community who kindly consented to be interviewed. To each of them I wish to express much thanks.

Finally, special thanks to my family, Anthony, for his support and love, Adrian and Maurice for not minding all those MacDonald's and KFC.

Phyllis Mowe

March 1997.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Figures	vi
Tables	vii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
- The Ethnic Phenomenon	1
- Statement of Goals	2
- Focus on the Malaysian Chinese in New Zealand	5
- Methodology	7
- Organization of Study.	8
<b>CHAPTER I: STUDYING ETHNICITY</b>	<b>10</b>
- Introduction	10
- Perspectives and Approaches	12
- Defining Ethnicity	25
- Hypotheses	34
- Working Definitions	35
<b>CHAPTER II: THE MALAYSIAN CHINESE</b>	<b>37</b>
- Introduction	37
- Historical Overview of Chinese Emigration Overseas	38
- The Hua-qiao (Overseas Chinese)	41
- The Hua-jen (Ethnic Chinese)	43
- Enduring Chinese Characteristics	45
- Dialects and Clans	50
- The Malaysian Chinese	53
- The Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch	60
<b>CHAPTER III: SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES, BOUNDARIES AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>66</b>
- Introduction	66
- Nature of Data	67
- Context and Identification	68
- Identification as Chinese	71
- Similarities, Differences and Boundaries: Identification as Chinese in Malaysia	72
- Similarities, Differences and Boundaries: Identification as Chinese in New Zealand	78

- Identification as Malaysian in New Zealand	85
- Conclusion	92
<b>CHAPTER IV: MULTIPLE ETHNIC IDENTITIES</b>	96
- Introduction	96
- Nesting Identities	96
- Nature of Data	97
- Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness: Nesting Identities	98
- Identification as Chinese	99
- Identification as Malaysian Chinese	101
- Identification based on region of origin	102
- Identification based on state of origin	103
- Identification based on town of origin	105
- Identification based on dialect	105
- Multiple Nesting Ethnic Identities	106
- Multiple Nesting Ethnic Identities: Gender, Age, and Education	107
- Nature of Data	108
- Multiple Ethnic Identities: Gender	109
- Multiple Ethnic Identities: Age	110
- Multiple Ethnic Identities: Age and Gender	112
- Multiple Ethnic Identities: Education	113
- Gender, Age and Education	115
- Conclusion	115
<b>CHAPTER V: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION</b>	118
- Introduction	118
- Nature of Data	118
- Cultural Attachment	120
- Languages and Dialects	123
- Social Interaction	126
- Marriage Partners	128
- Participation in Ethnic Related Formal Organization	129
- Nesting Identities: Individual cases	131
- Conclusion	152
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	157
<b>APPENDICES</b>	165
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	179

## FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Perspectives and Approaches	13
Figure 4.1: Gender	110
Figure 4.2: Age	111
Figure 4.3: Age and Gender	113
Figure 4.4: Identities: Chinese-Educated	114

**TABLES**

Table 3.1: Identification as Chinese and Identification as Malaysian	70
Table 3.2: Identification as Chinese	70
Table 4.1: Intensity of Identification	99
Table 4.2: Nesting Identities	100

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Ethnic Phenomenon**

The majority of states in the world have multiethnic societies. Recently there has been renewed interest in the ethnic phenomenon due to the persistence of ethnicity as the dividing force within western and non-western societies. The continued potency of ethnicity has challenged Marxist and modernization theories which claim that class and other rational economic based identities would eventually displace such “primordial” identities (Mason 1992: 572-573). Those who considered ethnicity a premodern phenomenon prevalent in the third world rather than modern or first world societies have also been proven wrong (Safran 1991: 1). Since the Second World War there has been a resurgence in the use of ethnicity as a means of political mobilization. Ethnicity has become politicized as groups compete for power, economic benefits and social status (Esman 1990: 480). Ethnic consciousness or ethnicity has been viewed as not conducive to modernization, progress, “nation-building” or to individual liberty (Safran 1991: 1). It is also not seen as compatible with the modern democratic state.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Robert Dahl, “subcultural pluralism” which is identified as religion, language, race or ethnic group, and region, “often places a dangerous strain on the tolerance and mutual security required for a system of public contestation.” Robert Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition, (London: Yale University Press, 1971).

Ethnic groups conjure images of conflict, competition and disharmony. In most discourses on the subject, the term “ethnic groups” is understood to mean ethnic minorities, particularly those which are disadvantaged or underprivileged, politically and economically. It is understandable that this usage is more prevalent, as conditions of conflict, deprivation and discrimination are more interesting, and usually, justifiably more worthy of notice. This narrow conceptual usage, however, downplays the pervasiveness of ethnicity in human society regardless of the state of the environment - conflictual, nonconflictual, equal or unequal. Within the contemporary world where cross border communication and interaction have increased immensely and societies are becoming more multiethnic through internal as well as transnational migration, the relevance of ethnicity in everyday life cannot be ignored. Even for those who do not think ethnicity plays a role in their lives, there are times when they come into contact with people for whom ethnicity forms an important part of life. Within the realm of interaction and social relationships it is difficult to avoid being, in some way, enwebbed in the phenomenon. The study of ethnicity and ethnic groups should not, therefore, be restricted in focus to ethnic minorities, politics and conflicts.

### **Statement of Goals**

It is argued that in the study of contemporary societies, ethnicity is a more applicable and useful concept than race because, at its widest, it may include race, culture, and any other relevant attributes. Ethnicity manifests itself in a number of forms, satisfies varied needs

and serves many purposes. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon any study of the subject can only attempt to provide insight on certain aspects of it. This thesis is an examination of ethnic identification within a non-conflictual context. More specifically it is an attempt to find out what determines ethnic identification and multiple ethnic identities. For this purpose, an empirical study of one particular ethnic group is undertaken: the Malaysian Chinese of Christchurch.

The thesis entails research at two levels. At one level it requires looking at the theoretical literature in order to address the conceptual questions of first, what constitutes ethnicity and second, what determines ethnic identification and multiple ethnic identities. The theoretical approach adopted in deciding these questions provides the framework for the thesis. At the other level, the research involves an empirical case study based on field research, the data from which is used to evaluate the validity of the theory and hypotheses adopted.

There are a number of goals which have motivated the writing of this thesis. It is primarily written in the belief that there is a need for studies on the fundamental dynamics of ethnic identification which could contribute to a clear understanding of the forces which structure human relationships, particularly those of inclusion or exclusion from ethnic groupings. It is a synchronic study<sup>2</sup> of ethnic identification which derived from the assumption that ethnicity is an interactive phenomenon, and thus, inherently fluid. Vincent

---

<sup>2</sup> The synchronic approach is adopted from F. de Saussure's (1966) distinction and usage of the diachronic and synchronic analysis in the study of linguistics. The diachronic is related to a "temporal axis" and is concerned with the "succession" or "sequence" of states. The synchronic is related to an "axis of simultaneity" and is concerned with a particular state within a particular time.

(1974: 376) warns that, because of its fluidity, any attempt to capture ethnicity will render meaningful analysis less possible. Yet it is precisely due to the fluidity of the concept that a synchronic study is needed. It is necessary to delimit and somehow “freeze” it within a certain point in time and space in order to make an analysis possible. The goal is as much a testing of theory and hypotheses, as a mapping out, based on empirical evidence, what constitutes the phenomenon in order to provide further insight in the understanding of such an important aspect of human existence.

The second major concern is less theoretical but has more immediate policy value. Recent immigration policies in New Zealand have resulted in an increasingly complex multiethnic society. This research is undertaken with the conviction that there is need for specific studies on the various ethnic groups which will, in one way or another, provide a better understanding of them. Broad generalizations, categorizing and stereotyping obscure the complexities within each group. Studies of this kind help in the understanding of patterns of group and interpersonal social relations in multiethnic contexts, and are useful for policy makers. They are also of use in the discourse on multiculturalism, integration and assimilation.

In examining the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch, this study contributes to the literature on the overseas Chinese in New Zealand and in western countries in general. In New Zealand, particularly, few studies on the Chinese community have been undertaken. Moreover, the available literature focuses on social issues. Even in America, where a great deal has been written on the Chinese, very little has focused on letting the subject of



study - the Chinese- give their own account of their thoughts and feelings on how they identify. This study is a contribution to filling this gap in the literature.

This thesis is also intended to fill another gap in existing literature, this time on the Malaysian Chinese. A study on the multiple identities of the Malaysian Chinese is not a novel idea. Many of the better known and most widely cited writers on the Chinese in Southeast Asia have focused on or referred to this phenomenon and used the Malaysian Chinese as a case study or as evidence in support of their arguments. Generally these studies have looked at the group within the context of the historical development of Malaysia. From the time of British rule, to the formation of Malaysia, to the present, the Malaysian Chinese have been analysed within the context of a conflictual situation within a plural society. This study differs from the existing literature in that it is an attempt to study the Malaysian Chinese within a totally different environment. The new environment is not one that has changed markedly over time thus simultaneously causing changes to the groups within it. It is a situation in which a group has been transplanted from an environment of conflict to a non-conflictual one. It is capturing the behaviour of the group at this particular point which is novel.

### **Focus on the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch**

The Malaysian Chinese were chosen as the focus of study on multiple ethnic identification for a number of reasons. First, in the last six years, a large number settled in Christchurch.

Their large increase over such a short period of time is significant in two ways: there is an adequate number for a study to be viable; and, they were all newcomers facing a new environment. The recent increase in the number of immigrants from various nations settling in Christchurch has made the city more multiethnic. In Christchurch the Malaysian Chinese are among many different ethnic groups as well as different Chinese groups from other nations. From the point of view of this study, how they identify in relation to these different groups is of major interest.

The second reason for focusing on the Malaysian Chinese is the composition of the group. The Chinese in Malaysia make up 33% of the population and are recognized by the state as an ethnic entity. Consequently, the Malaysian Chinese have remained distinctively Chinese, but at the same time are exhibiting localized characteristics. Apart from this, there is internal diversity within the group. They are divided along dialectic lines, and come from different regions and states in Malaysia. All these factors are potential bases for multiple identities. It is argued that, in Christchurch, the various identities of the Malaysian Chinese come into play more than they would in Malaysia. This is because in Christchurch there has been a convergence of people from various nations and ethnic groups, Chinese from different nations, and Malaysians from all over Malaysia. A study of how the Malaysian Chinese identify in relation to other ethnic groups, other Chinese, and among themselves, provides a potential source of data which can give substantial insight into the study of ethnicity and ethnic identification.

The above two reasons relate to the research questions. The third reason relates to field research. As a member of the Malaysian Chinese myself, I have easy access to the group. More importantly, as one who has gone through the same socialization, and political and historical experiences, I am better able to understand what is being conveyed in their responses. Moreover, they would be more relaxed and willing to talk more freely with someone from their own community. There is, however, a negative side to this. It is possible that being interviewed by one of their own (in most cases someone they know personally) might influence responses. For example, they might answer in a way which they think I expect them to, or they might be less open because of the fear that I would be judgemental of their views. However, post-research analysis indicates that these concerns were not a significant problem and this could be seen clearly from the varied and unrestrained nature of their responses.

## **Methodology**

This study combines the quantitative and qualitative method in its collection, analysis and presentation of data. Data for the case study was obtained through face-to-face indepth interviews with 57 members of the Malaysian Chinese community. Due to the complex nature of the concept of ethnic identification, and the need to elicit data that represented as close as possible the actual feelings and thoughts of the subjects, the interviews were based on an interview schedule comprising a set of questions which were “open ended”.

This means that depending on how a question on the schedule was initially answered, further “probes” would lead to other questions and more discussion for clarification and elaboration. Apart from letting the respondents give their own account of how things are, this method has an added advantage in that it allowed the interviewer more flexibility in dealing with the respondents, where there was variation in terms of educational background, life style, language or communicative fluency. The use of a standardized set of questions, all of which must be covered during every interview, ensured that the answers could be categorized and compared. Further methodological details are given in Appendix A .

### **Organization of Study**

The first chapter comprises the theoretical core of the thesis. From a review of existing literature on the ethnic phenomenon, an attempt is made at formulating a definition of ethnicity. In this respect, the most significant observation arrived at is the situational nature of ethnicity. Within contemporary usage, ethnicity is an interactive phenomenon and must be analysed within an interactive context. By extracting, and then integrating aspects of different theories from various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and political science, a definition of ethnicity is derived. Based on this definition of ethnicity and the assumptions underlying it, two hypotheses on multiple ethnic identification are postulated.

The second chapter provides a historical and contextual background of the Malaysian Chinese. The first part of the chapter gives an historical overview of Chinese emigration from China, and highlights general enduring features and characteristics of the overseas Chinese. The second part focuses briefly on the Malaysian Chinese in Malaysia, Malaysian Chinese immigration to New Zealand, and the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch. Serving mainly as an introduction to the Malaysian Chinese, the chapter is limited in focus to those aspects which have some bearing on how the Malaysian Chinese view themselves and others, how they structure their relationships and consequently how they identify.

Chapter 3 and 4 each analyses data within a thematic framework based on the two hypotheses. Chapter 3 investigates what constitutes ethnicity and how people identify within different contexts. The 4th chapter explores the phenomenon of multiple nesting identities. The 5th chapter expands on the previous two chapters by looking more closely at the processes of inclusion in, and exclusion from an identity. The concluding chapter draws conclusions from the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER I

### Studying Ethnicity

A survey of the literature on ethnicity reveals the lack of consensus among writers on the necessary elements which constitute the concept. One explanation for this diversity is that, “In studies of ethnicity the fundamental beliefs governing the analytical process have for the most part been ideological and political... Because ethnicity has historically been a sensitive political issue, studies in the area have closely mirrored changes in the political environment.” (Bentley 1981: xiii).<sup>1</sup> Another explanation is that the phenomenon is a major subject of study in various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, political science and psychology. This in itself would have been a source of confusion, but in addition to this some studies on the phenomenon have adopted eclectic approaches.<sup>2</sup> A more significant reason is the difficulty social scientists have with the concept itself.

The complexity of the ethnic phenomenon is admitted by all who deal with the subject. Works on ethnicity or related to ethnicity almost invariably begin by pointing to the difficulties in defining the concept “ethnicity”. Isajiw in his article “Definitions of ethnicity” noted that of “...65 sociological and anthropological studies dealing with one or another aspect of ethnicity... Only 13 of these included some definition of ethnicity; 52 had no explicit definitions at all” (1985: 5). To a large extent this is due to the numerous

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the prevalence of the assimilation perspective in the studies of ethnicity in North America stems from the ideological commitment to social equality and the belief that assimilation would work toward attaining this (Bentley 1981: xiii).

<sup>2</sup> See Kellas whose “integrated theory” on nationalism and ethnicity is derived from sociobiology, neurophysiology, social psychology, political science and anthropology (Kellas 1991).

interrelated factors the concept subsumes (Fishman 1977: 16). Ethnicity has been analysed in terms of culture, primordialism, groups, boundaries, interest, conflict, nationalism and a myriad of other factors related to the ethnic phenomenon. In their own way all contribute to an understanding of the concept. The danger is in defining the concept wholly in terms of one of these factors. To do this, Epstein observes, “is to confuse an aspect of the phenomenon with the phenomenon itself (1978: 96).

Nevertheless, writers, some of whom are authorities on the subject, make the mistake of doing just that. Isajiw in his article gives the following as his definition of ethnicity:

“Ethnicity refers to: an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or to descendants of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group” (1985: 16). Here ethnicity is seen as a group of people with some common attributes. It is inadequate to define ethnicity as groups of people, just as it is inadequate to define ethnicity in terms of boundaries (Barth 1969). Kellas, on the other hand, simply defined ethnicity as “the state of being ethnic or belonging to an ethnic group” (1991: 5).

It is obvious that before we can research and analyse something, we need to know what it is. Herein lies the first major problem with the concept. Delimiting and defining the phenomenon itself requires theorizing. To do this, it is necessary to bear in mind several points. First, due to the fact that ethnicity is multifaceted, any attempt to narrow things down into a more specific definition risks making the mistake of highlighting only one aspect of the concept. Second, as ethnicity takes varied forms in

different places and different societies<sup>3</sup>, it is necessary to avoid being parochial. Third, as a historical phenomenon it is changeable (Fishman 1977: 16). Fourth, as a phenomenon which is to be studied, analysed and explained, ethnicity should be conceptualized such that it can be operationalized and observed. Consequently, it is necessary to resort to generalizing in order to get a more comprehensive definition of ethnicity which is at the same time observable. This will, in turn, provide the theoretical framework for analysing what determines ethnic identification.

### **Perspectives and Approaches**

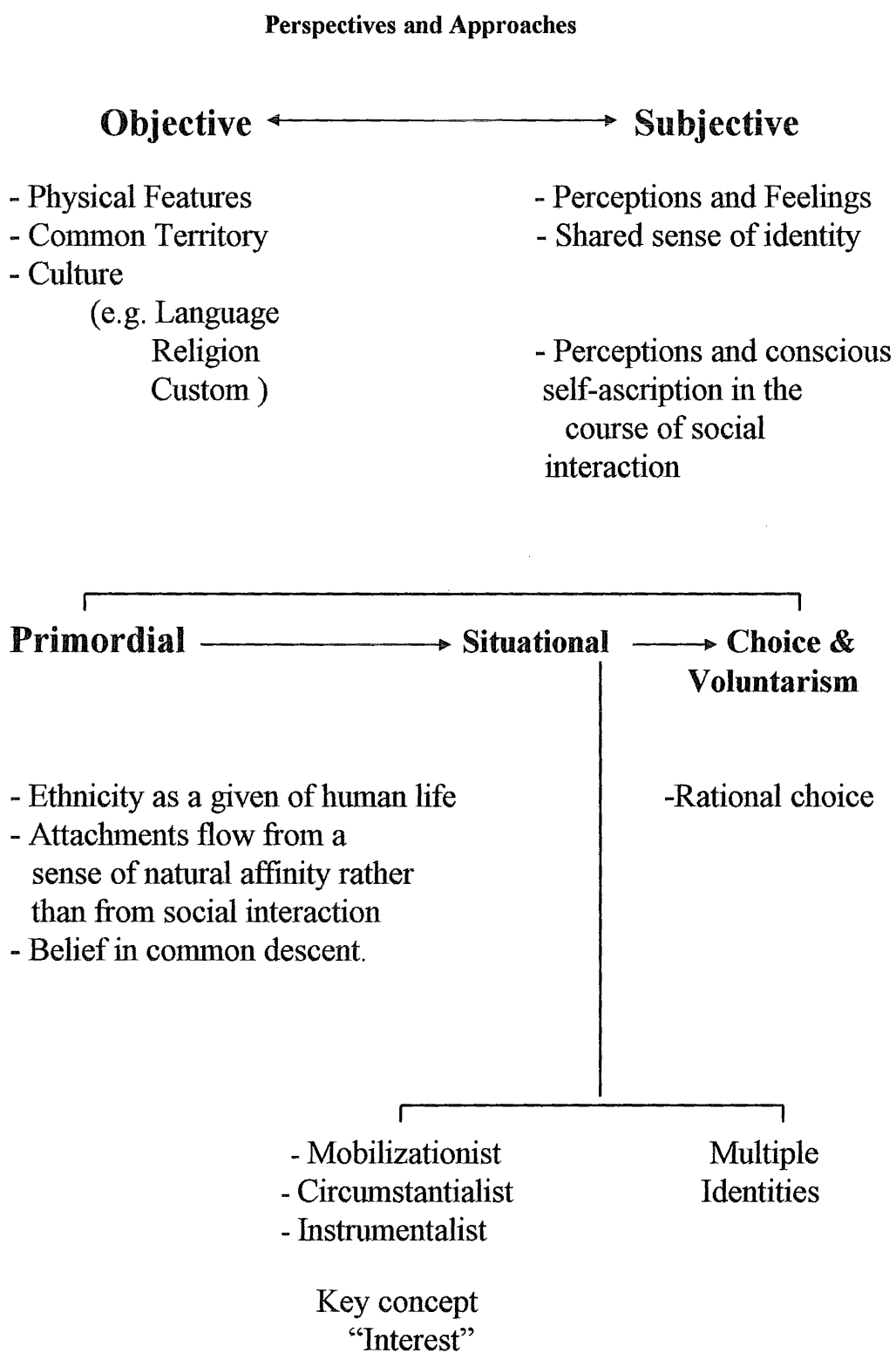
Literature on the ethnic phenomenon can be broadly classified at one level as adopting one of two polarized approaches - the objective approach and the subjective approach - or of some combination of the two. Below this level, writers take positions along a continuum between another set of two polarized perspectives - primordial at one end and situational at the other - each focusing on what is advocated as the most salient manifestation of ethnicity. The two levels overlap each other in the sense that writers taking one position at one level will simultaneously be taking other positions on other levels.

---

<sup>3</sup> As Isajiw pointed out, to say in general what ethnicity is, is different from what ethnicity is in North America, in Europe, in tribal societies and among immigrants (Isajiw 1985: 7).



Figure 1.1



The objective approach is typical of earlier anthropological attempts to define ethnicity. Ethnic groups are taken as distinctive concrete entities existing “out there” (Isajiw 1985: 8). Ethnicity is inherited, passing from generation to generation in unchanged form. As such, it is a “given”, and membership in an ethnic group is involuntary (Edwards 1985: 8). The objective criteria include characteristics such as physical features, common territory and culture (which may constitute a number of things such as language, religion, customs and practices) . Of these, the use of culture as the focus of study is the most common. The best known example of the extreme use of the objective approach is Naroll’s “On Ethnic unit classification” which is a discussion of the problem of defining the ethnic unit “conceived of as the basic culture-bearing unit - that group of people whose shared learned way of life constitutes a whole culture...” (1964: 283).<sup>4</sup>

The objective approach provides a convenient way of classification (Edwards 1985: 8). Where methodology is concerned, “differences in groups become differences in trait inventories” and the analysis of ethnic groups becomes the analysis of culture. Its inadequacy as an analytical tool is obvious, as ethnicity clearly involves more than common territory, physical features or culture. With reference particularly to the use of culture as the primary defining characteristic of ethnicity and ethnic group, ethnicity is certainly not a bundle of unchanging cultural characteristics (Jenkins 1994: 197). It persists over generations while cultural contents undergo changes. Ethnic groups

---

<sup>4</sup> For another example of the treatment of social groups as culture-bearing units see M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard , Eds., African Political Systems, (London: Pub. for the International Institute of African languages and cultures by the Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1940).

continue to exist even though interaction would have caused significant modifications to its cultural contents, and in some cases, long after concrete links with the past have ceased. It is the difficulty of reconciling this contradiction which made it necessary for writers to turn to the subjective approach.

The subjective approach, rather than treating ethnicity as a “bundle of cultural traits” and ethnic groups members as “general ‘bearers’ of the norms and values of their cultures” (Jenkins 1994: 197), takes into consideration the perceptions and feelings of individuals and their identification with their groups. Generally, the subjective approach postulates that there is a shared sense of identity among members of the group. The group is “self aware” that it is distinctive (Wolf 1986: 100). A classic example of the subjective approach is Weber’s definition; “We shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of custom or both... it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership (*Gemeinsamkeit*) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity” (Weber 1968: 389). Weber’s view of ethnicity is foremost that of shared belief. Another example is Gordon’s “shared sense of peoplehood” to mean ethnicity and “a group with a shared feeling of peoplehood” to describe an ethnic group (1964: 23-4).

At its extreme, the subjective approach goes further than described above. It defines ethnicity as voluntary and within interactive context, the result of perceptions and conscious self-ascription on the part of individuals in the course of social interaction

(Jenkins 1994: 197). This position is best exemplified by Barth's definition of ethnic groups in terms of boundaries. To Barth, "Socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, not the overt 'objective' differences..." Focus would be on the "criteria for determining membership and the ways of signaling membership and exclusion" (Barth 1969: 15). Criteria for investigation shift from contents to boundaries.

Barth's approach has become something of a landmark in the study of ethnicity in that it departs in a significant way from the then prevalent emphasis on contents and culture. His comment with regard to culture is that "... much can be gained by regarding this very important feature as an implication or result rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organization (Barth 1969: 11). Although Barth's work exerted wide influence on later studies, it has also been widely criticized for downplaying culture and for being too subjective in his emphasis on voluntarism on the part of the individual.<sup>5</sup> Barth himself later modified his position to include the importance of culture and history (Barth 1984: 77, 85-86).

Most post-Barth writers take the middle ground, combining both subjective and objective in their approach or basing the subjective on the objective. I have chosen to categorize these latter writers as adopting a combination of the two approaches on account of the fact that the subjectivity is predicated on some objective factors no matter how remote. Others, notably Isajiw, refer to this approach as the subjective approach

---

<sup>5</sup> See Pierre L. Van Den Berghe, "Ethnic Pluralism in Industrial Societies: A Special Case?", *Ethnicity* Vol.3, 1976, p.242-255, R. Paine, "Two modes of exchange and mediation" in B. Kapferer (Ed.), *Transaction and Meaning*, (Philadelphia, PA:ISHI, 1976), T.M.S. Evens, "The prediction of the individual in anthropological interactionism", *American Ethnologist*, Vol.79, 1977, p.579-97.

even though he notes “The psychological identification as being different is on account of the various attributes of one’s background, cultural, religious, racial, etc....” (Isajiw 1985: 9). I find the distinction necessary because the subjective as exemplified by Barth can be voluntary and need not be based on the objective (Barth 1969).

It has been largely accepted that both the objective and the subjective are necessary in order to understand ethnicity and ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, this middle approach is similar to the pre-Barth subjective approach whereby the shared “belief” or “sense” are based on some objective characteristics. Thus when Gordon noted that “there is a common social-psychological core to the categories ‘race’, ‘religion’ and ‘national origin’ - the sense of peoplehood - and the term ‘ethnic group’ is a useful one for designation of this common element” (1964: 28), he is actually combining the objective and the subjective.

Later writers adopt this approach to reconcile the contradiction of mutability of contents and the persistence or immutability of boundaries. It is inevitable that groups, as dynamic entities, would undergo change, but no matter how much individuals or group change, there must be some real connection between the present and the past (Edwards 1985: 8). Keyes, in formulating an alternative conception which takes culture as central but at the same time accepts that the contents of culture changes in the course of interaction, comes up with the idea of “shared descent” as basic to the concept of the

---

<sup>6</sup> K. Wolf stresses that the group “must be self aware, ie it must perceive itself as distinguishable. This is the subjective dimension of ethnicity, and it must be balanced against such “objective” criteria as common territory, religion, physical traits or historical experience” (Wolf 1986: 100).

ethnic group. Ethnic groups are a type of descent group who base their common descent on cultural attributes which they believe they share in common (Keyes 1976: 203,208).

At this point we move on to the next level in the schema of stratified approaches and perspectives. On this level writers are divided over the fundamental question of whether ethnicity is “primordial”, that is, a “given”, or “situational”, which involves choice and voluntarism. Along a continuum between the two poles, writers can be broadly categorized into two groups. One group comprises those who debate the relationship between ethnicity and the way ethnic groups mobilize or are mobilized, and what dimension is the most salient in mobilization. This group concentrates mainly on interest, competition, conflict and politics. The other group, which includes those who focus on multiple ethnic identities, emphasize ethnicity as an interactive phenomenon. This is the view adopted in this schema.<sup>7</sup>

The wide usage of the term “primordial” followed Shils’ use of it in his discussion of primary groups. He noted that attachments between members of a kinship group have “significant relational qualities” which he called primordial. He described the primordial as characterized by “coerciveness”, “ties of blood”, “common territory”, “sacredness” and “passion and fervour” (Shils 1957: 142,144). This theme is further elaborated by Geertz who commented in his study of multiethnic, multilingual and multiracial new states that these societies are prone to “disaffection” founded on

---

<sup>7</sup> Other views have been proposed, for example, Smith contrasted the primordial and situational as opposite poles and not as a continuum (1990:20). Other writers (Mckay 1982, Nagata 1981, Brass 1979) have placed primordialism and mobilization (or other terms for it such as instrumental or circumstantial) in opposition.

“primordial attachments”. These attachments stem from “the assumed givens of social existence... these congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on... have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves...” and “for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural - some would say spiritual - affinity than from social interaction” (Geertz 1963: 108-9). These primordial qualities have been advanced as the core of some definitions on ethnicity. Some writers advocate the biological and genetic dimension, while others take up the cultural.

Taking after Shils’ and Geertz’s idea of primordialism, Fishman defines ethnicity in terms of paternity, which is “the recognition of putative biological origins and therefore with the hereditary or descent related ‘blood’, ‘bone’, ‘sensitivity’, ‘proclivity’ derived from the original putative ancestors of a collectivity and passed on from generation to generation in a bio-kinship sense” (Fishman 1977: 16-7). In the same vein, sociobiology theorists explain ethnicity as an extension of kinship and the attachments related to it as similar to those found between kin. It is argued that through “natural selection” which favours kin, human societies build up their “inclusive fitness” which perpetuates these qualities. Sociobiology does not deny the importance of culture, but it is treated as secondary in that it is “a superstructure that builds on a biological substratum” (Berghe 1981: 6, 239).

The primordialists may differ in their emphasis but they are united in their argument that ethnicity is based on descent. Considering that currently there are not many

groups which can realistically trace a common origin, common descent as a necessary condition is not actual traceable descent but a belief in a common descent (Brass 1979: 35). Whether it is actual or a belief, one is born into it, it is learned and internalized from birth as a “given” of human life, and its coercive property is capable of arousing deep loyalties and sentiments.

The primordial perspective’s strength lies in its usefulness for understanding the deep seated emotional, sometimes irrational basis of ethnicity. It is less useful as a comprehensive explanation of ethnicity in that the primordial factors are usually seen as static, immutable, coercive and involuntary. Its limitations are obvious particularly after cumulative research has shown the variability of ethnic identities. Most of these studies conclude that instead of being determined by the primordial, ethnicity is actually a response to situations (Mckay 1982: 396-9). This is a more flexible conception of ethnicity in that it involves conscious choice and not an innate cardinal predisposition. It is argued , for example, that depending on the situation, it may be to an individual’s advantage or disadvantage to emphasize or deemphasize ethnic identity (MacDougall 1982: 8). The main criticism directed at the primordialist perspective has been its failure to take into account social, political and economic context.

Returning to my schema of various approaches, at the other end of the scale from the above “ethnicity as a given” perspective is the situational perspective. In its extreme form, ethnicity as situational sees membership in an ethnic group as a matter of voluntarism and choice (rational or emotional) depending on the situation. An example of



this approach is the rational choice theory of ethnicity. The fundamental assumption of the rational choice theory of ethnicity and ethnic relations is that individuals try to achieve “maximum net advantage” (Banton 1987: 121-7). Individuals weigh the costs and benefits of choosing between alternatives and will prefer choices which bring optimum benefits. With these presuppositions, it is assumed that ethnic boundaries are not self-maintaining. Individuals decide how they want to ethnically align themselves, and their actions shape ethnic boundaries. There may be times that individuals find they have no alternative but to make a certain choice, but it still involves an “act of will on their part” (Banton and Mansor 1992: 599,601). This type of situational approach places emphasis on the individuals who make the choices. The choices may be motivated by interest (economic, political or social status) or mere expediency. The primordial sense of belonging is absent, lacking or superseded. The main weakness with such a point of view is that there is unlikely to be a free choice of ethnic identity because it is recognized that humans have a strong attachment to their primordial identities (Taylor and Yapp 1979: x). In all societies - modern, modernizing or traditional - people harbour primordial attachments developed from early life which engender emotional significance. These often provide the basis for socio-political groupings for those who remain conscious of their significance. Even for those who have in one way or another lost or rejected concrete links with their origins, these attachments continue to exist in the subconscious to resurface in response to appropriate stimuli (Brass 1978: 35-36). For this reason, I prefer to place the other approaches along a continuum between the extreme primordial and

situational poles.<sup>8</sup> Although these approaches tend to relegate the primordial factors to epiphenominal roles, they accept or recognize that these factors always form the bases or potential bases for ethnic identification.

Most of these situational approaches which reject ethnicity as a primordial “given”, but in varying degree accept elements of primordialism as necessary conditions, can be categorized broadly into the mobilizationist group. The mobilizationist perspective regards ethnicity as “reactive” (Nielson 1985: 133, Nagata 1981: 89), a dependent variable which is subject to social context. Ethnicity is not an innate need to belong, but a conscious effort to gain access to social, political and material resources (Mckay 1982: 399). The key concept within this perspective is “interest”. Glazer and Moynihan refer to ethnicity as a new word with a new usage that reflects a new reality.<sup>9</sup> Ethnicity is the “new major focus for the mobilization of interest” which challenges the mobilization of class on one hand and nation on the other (Glazer and Moynihan 1975: 18). The reason why ethnicity has become so effective as a means of pursuing interest is because it can “combine interest with an affective tie (Bell 1975: 169). In summary, ethnic mobilization is the process whereby groups, within certain situations, make use of the primordial, objective and subjective aspects of ethnic characteristics as the basis of organization in order to pursue some interest.

---

<sup>8</sup> Smith places the primordial and situational in opposition but places approaches that stress the historical and symbolic cultural attributes of ethnic identity (ie. myths of descent and historical memories) and which see the ethnic group as subject to historical change, between the two poles (Smith 1991: 20). Within this schema, these approaches would be positioned close to the primordial.

<sup>9</sup> This “new usage is the steady expansion of the term ‘ethnic group’ from minority and marginal subgroups at the edges of society - groups expected to assimilate, to disappear, to continue as survivals, exotic or troublesome - to major elements of society” (Glazer and Moynihan 1975: 5)

Although all those who hold the mobilizationist perspective agree on the primacy of interest, they advance different models of why and how groups mobilize. Ethnic mobilization may take place within societies where inter-ethnic group relationships are hierarchically structured. This is Hecther's "internal colonization" or "cultural division of labour" model (Hecther 1974: 1154). The relationship between the superordinate and the subordinate groups is similar to the core and periphery relationship in post-colonial international relations. Ethnic solidarity on the part of the subordinate group is strengthened by the perception of exploitation by the superordinate group. (Nielsen 1985: 133). Mobilization may also take place in an unranked environment where different ethnic groups compete for the same resources. This is the ethnic competition model (Nagel and Olzak 1982: 130-7).<sup>10</sup> The circumstantialist group on the other hand regard ethnicity as reactive in response to "specific immediate circumstances" (Glazer and Moynihan 1975: 20), which give it the "potential for action and mobilization" (Nagata 1981: 29). The circumstantialist group is complemented by the instrumentalist group who see ethnicity as a tool used by elites in the pursuit of interest (Brass 1979: 39-40, Smith 1986: 9-10). Ethnicity is seen to provide a readily available base that can appeal to mass support in the competition for wealth, power and prestige. Moreover, in a world of scarce resources but better communication, "ethnic symbols and boundaries" are more effective in securing higher commitment and in uniting different sectional interest (Smith 1986: 9).

---

<sup>10</sup> This model argues that the intensification of ethnicity occurs where the cultural division of labour has been eliminated and groups stand equal to each other. For another model on unranked system see D. Horowitz 1971 and 1985. For discussion of other models see Olzak 1983.

Like the primordial perspective, the mobilizationist perspective does not provide a general explanation of the ethnic phenomena. It is useful for understanding ethnicity for groups in certain situations, particularly situations of conflict and competition (Mckay 1982: 399). It is also useful for understanding the intensification, resurgence or revival of ethnicity. Its main weakness is in defining interest too narrowly in terms of political and economic interest.<sup>11</sup> Apart from the fact that humans also struggle over ideal interests, by putting such strong emphasis on interest and defining ethnicity in these terms the mobilizationists are making the mistake Epstein drew attention to. They are confusing one aspect of the phenomenon with the phenomenon itself.

Reverting to the continuum between the primordialists and the situationalists, the final approach in the schema is that which stresses ethnicity as an interactive phenomenon by focusing on multiple ethnic identities. Particularly within multiethnic or multicultural contexts, the existence of overlapping and criss-crossing ethnic markers result in people having more than one ethnic identity. From her case studies, Nagata observed that individuals switching between alternate ethnic identities do not appear to show any signs of personal insecurity or marginality from not having a fixed identity (Nagata 1974: 343). The fact that it is theoretically possible and empirically demonstrated that an individual can have multiple identities has been pointed out by many writers.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> An example of this is Abner Cohen whose approach focused on the political use of ethnicity in cities - described as "whatever cultural mechanisms are available in order to articulate the organization of their grouping" (Cohen 1974: xviii). See also his study of African towns (Cohen 1969)

<sup>12</sup> See R.H. Jackson, "ethnic identities tend to be multiple for most individual" (Jackson 1984: 23, 214), K. Wolf, "multiple identities are a reality deserving of serious consideration" (Wolf 1986: 105). For empirical examples see Keyes 1976, on Thais in Thailand, MacDougall 1982, on Singaporeans in Singapore, Nagata 1974, 1981, on the Malays in Malaysia, Grodzins 1956, on Americans in the United States.

In this literature review of the ethnic phenomenon, the importance of context surfaces throughout. While some writers have stressed interactive context without being specific on the nature of context and some (particularly the mobilizationist) have stressed various specific contexts related to the pursuance of interest, there appears to be a gap in the literature on those situations which are non-competitive or non-conflictual. The proposition is to develop a theoretical definition within a non-competitive, non-conflictual context which is at the same time applicable within other contexts. Context may modify its form but the underlying substance remains the same.

### **Defining Ethnicity**

The importance of Barth's idea of boundaries as the main reference point in the development of studies on the ethnic phenomenon is widely acknowledged. Prior to Barth, the ethnic group had been treated as isolated. Barth highlighted four elements which generally form anthropological definitions of ethnic groups. The term ethnic group refers to a population which is "biologically self-perpetuating", shares cultural values and forms, constitutes a sphere of "interaction and communication", and has members who identify themselves and are identified by others as making up a category which is different from other categories of the same kind (Barth 1969: 10-11). While this may not have been a problem in the study of primitive isolated tribes, when it comes to studying contemporary societies where close contact and interaction between groups form a large

part of group dynamics, it becomes grossly inadequate. An understanding of the concept of ethnicity must take into account the interrelationship and interaction between groups, as it is within these interactive situations that ethnicity becomes more salient and boundaries become significant and meaningful. The key to understanding ethnicity and ethnic identification lies in identifying the most common basis for these boundaries - how they arise and why they persist - regardless of time and space.

Barth's original idea on ethnic boundaries has been acclaimed for shifting attention to boundaries which at that stage provided an answer to the question of why an ethnic group persists even after its culture had undergone change. However, he has been widely criticized for emphasizing boundaries and downplaying contents. Both Barth and his critics appear to regard boundaries and contents as separate things. Boundaries and contents are different but inseparable aspects of ethnicity. Boundaries cannot exist without contents, and contents do not delimit groups unless they give rise to boundaries.

It is generally accepted that contents comprise both the objective and subjective primordial characteristics. Defining an ethnic group solely in terms of the objective isolates the group in terms of cultural basis and imposes an artificial boundary. The group must also have self-recognition in terms of having a sense or perception of groupness. This subjective feeling of ethnicity may be generated by the objective elements which characterize the group. This self-recognition, however, is insufficient. Barth gives the most critical feature of an ethnic group as that of self-ascription and ascription by others (Barth 1969: 13).

Self-ascription and ascription by others are processes of internal and external definition. The internal definition is when members of a group express to ingroup or outgroup members their nature or identity. The external definition is the process of defining others. These processes parallel the concept of ethnic groups - which “define themselves, their name(s), their nature(s) and their boundary(s)”, and ethnic categories - which “are identified, defined and delineated by others”. The defining features of the two processes may coincide, in which case one will validate the other. When they do not coincide, the imposition of an identity and characterization on the categorised may have significant implications on the nature of the group. Since in reality there is an intricate interplay of both processes in group dynamics, actual distinction is quite impossible (Jenkins 1994: 198-201).<sup>13</sup>

Given that ethnicity involves both self-ascription and ascription by others, within interactive situations how do boundaries arise? Barth’s ethnic ascription “classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity presumably determined by his origin and background”. The features that determine ethnic group differentiation however, are not an aggregate of “objective differences” between groups but comprise only those which group members consider significant. Differences may be heightened or lessened according to “ecologic variation” and certain cultural features may be projected as

---

<sup>13</sup>A.D. Smith refers to ethnic categories slightly differently as a population designated by others as a group but which may “have little self-awareness, only a dim consciousness that they form a separate collectivity” (Smith 1991: 21).

differences while others are downplayed (Barth 1969: 13-14).<sup>14</sup> This implies some kind of choice and variation from group to group. Barth's idea can be expanded upon by taking into consideration content differences which are significant, rather than just objective differences. Within interactive situations it is what is significant which determines the inclusiveness and exclusiveness in ascribing self and others. The next question is, on what basis are these differences significant.

Nagata, writing from the circumstantialist perspective, pointed out that "the social category or group that is salient for a given interest will be identified by those primordial characteristics that most effectively differentiate them from the significant opposition categories in connection with that particular issue" (Nagata 1981: 95). Fishman has this to say about ethnic identity - it "requires not only boundaries (contrast) but opposition across boundaries for such identity to be most fully articulated. Certainly, all would agree that ethnicity is most consciously and forcefully enacted when both contrast and opposition, boundaries and conflict, are consciously recognised (Fishman 1977: 26). From this it can be concluded that what is significant is what would effectively differentiate, and what would effectively differentiate is what stands in contrast or opposition. The same would be applicable in non-conflictual and non-competitive interactive context.

---

<sup>14</sup> cf. R.H Jackson, "Some indicators can be highlighted while others can be ignored according to the situation, which may largely dictate one's choice of an ethnic identity" (Jackson 1984: 214). See also, Keyes, mentioned earlier (Keyes 1981: 7).



This emphasis on contrasts, however, tend to obscure the fact that contrasts alone are not sufficient for explaining boundaries and ethnic identification. The importance of the objective and subjective elements which are shared by members within a group, that is, the similarities, cannot be ignored. In locating contrasts, people are at the same time locating similarities. They provide internal unity and group cohesion. On the other hand, as far as boundaries and ethnic identification are concerned, similarities have no meaning unless they demarcate, and they demarcate when they stand in contrast. Just as contents and boundaries are inseparable, similarities and contrasts are also different but inseparable processes.

What comes out significantly thus far is the situational quality of ethnicity. The level of opposition or contrast within situations shape identification. It follows that the same individual can be grouped according to what is of relevance in different situations (Handleman 1977: 192). This means that people can have multiple ethnic identities and can identify differently in different situations. It is to this phenomenon that we turn for further insight in our attempt to understand ethnicity and ethnic identification.

Ethnicity provides the channel through which individuals are linked to society - its social norms and values, to notions of "life" and view of "the world" (Fishman 1977: 16). Ethnic identity is used as a frame of reference in the structuring of social relationships. Particularly in societies which are multiethnic and multicultural there are numerous overlapping and crisscrossing ethnic markers which allow individuals multiple identification. "A person may have a different identification pattern for each ethnic

identity which he may ascribe to himself or to others, and each ascription alternative may have different saliency at different moments” (Glaser 1958: 31). It is with multiple identities in mind that Cohen describes ethnicity as “a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness” (1978: 387).

Cohen’s explanation of ethnicity resembles a social distance scale. The phenomenon of social distance has considerable relevance to the ethnic phenomenon. Shibutini and Kwan, writing on “popular conceptions of ethnic identity” draw attention to the phenomenon in relation to situations where there is close contact between members of different ethnic groups. Awareness of differences affects the level of intimacy between people and they maintain social distance accordingly. (1965:110-12). The social distance scale Cohen refers to concerns measuring social distance (degree of closeness) according to the number of features people share.

Cohen explains the process of self-ascription and ascription of others as both objective and subjective, and based on certain “diacritics”. The diacritics used may be any of the numerous characteristics associated with groups to which significance is attached, but those most commonly used are the more distinctive ones such as physical appearance, name, language, history, religion and nationality. It is similar to a social distance scale in that the more diacritical markers one shares with a group, the closer one is to that group. This means that the degree of inclusiveness decreases or increases inversely in relation to the number of diacritics. At the same time, those diacritics which are shared by the largest number of people are used at the most inclusive level. Those at

the less inclusive levels are of more salience to progressively smaller and closer knit groups. Ethnicity differs from a social distance scale in that ethnic diacritics are clusters of inherited sets of characteristic features at varying distance outward from the individual, which may potentially form the basis for a boundary or exclusive grouping . At any level, a boundary is created in relation to significant others which give rise to the we/they dichotomy(1978: 386-7). Cohen's concluding definition of ethnicity is that it "is a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to assign persons to groupings that expand and contract in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the membership" (1978: 387). Cohen's conception of ethnicity as a set of descent-based cultural identifiers omits to take into account the fact that it is possible for a set of cultural identifiers to comprise more than one series of dichotomization. Where there are more than one series, each series is based on diacritics which overlapped between series, and diacritics which differ.<sup>15</sup>

While Cohen's analysis of ethnicity in terms of diacritics, inclusiveness and exclusiveness provide a convincing explanation of the multiple ethnic identity phenomenon, his concluding definition loses the full explanatory power of what goes before it in two ways. First, his definition only takes into account contents which he limits to descent-based cultural identifiers. Second, he points to the expansion and contraction of the set of descent-based cultural identifiers in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of membership without indicating how the contents expand and contract. In other words, his definition only takes into account the

---

<sup>15</sup> For example, an Indian or a Chinese identity would comprise series which go along the direction of languages and dialects, or along the direction of regions, provinces and districts.

relationship between expansion and contraction, and inclusiveness and exclusiveness. A more adequate definition needs to include some specificity on how expansion and contraction occurs. In the light of what other writers mentioned above have written on the ethnic phenomenon, the following is proposed as an alternative definition.

*“Ethnicity is a set of objective and subjective qualities possessed by a collectivity which, when in contrast to similarly defined qualities possessed by other collectivities, expand and contract in inverse relation to the degree of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of membership”.*

This definition constitutes the substance of ethnicity regardless of time and place. The form it takes depends on context. Thus, for example, within a conflictual or competitive environment ethnicity (or some relevant aspect of it) may be emphasized for some purposes. This is what happens when ethnicity is politicized in the pursuance of some interest.

The definition formulated is of the type referred to earlier as an internal definition. It has been pointed out that ethnicity involves both self-ascription and ascription by others. Ideally a definition of ethnicity should include both processes. The following reasons explain why, for the purpose of empirical analysis, an internal definition is preferred. First, while self-ascription and ascription by others are separate processes which merge into each other, the distinction is theoretically possible but difficult to analyse empirically. Second, the internal is more observable in that it involves analysing only those who self-ascribe. Including both internal and external would mean having to analyse in terms of those self-ascribing, those who ascribe, and the impact of the latter on

those ascribed. The complexity of such an approach would make it excessively difficult to undertake analysis. It is admitted that defining ethnicity purely in terms of the internal limits its comprehensiveness, because ascription by others, in varying degree, does have implications on those ascribed. The problem of omitting the effects of ascription by others can be minimized, however, by assuming that these effects are incorporated into the self-ascribing process.

Based on the definition and assumptions discussed above the following propositions are postulated:

1. The analysis of ethnicity must take into account both contents and boundaries which are different but inseparable aspects of ethnicity.
2. Contents and boundaries are objective and subjective qualities which form identification markers.
3. In the present world of high communication and interaction between and within societies, ethnicity can no longer be analysed in terms of distinctive concrete ethnic entities on which boundaries are imposed based on some predetermined criteria. Ethnicity must be analysed within the context of interactive situations where boundaries are erected.
4. Ethnicity is situational. Individuals identify according to what is relevant, significant and what would effectively differentiate between themselves and others in different situations. At any given time, shared qualities which stand in contrast to other shared qualities become temporarily the primary determinant and marker of

ethnic identification.

5. In most societies, particularly those which are multicultural and multiethnic, individuals have multiple ethnic identities. Each identity may have different salience at different times.
6. Ethnicity is a set of nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

Based on the above propositions the following hypotheses are advanced;

1. *Ethnic identification is flexible and situational. Individuals identify according to what shared qualities stand in contrast to other shared qualities within different context.*
2. *Ethnic identification is a set of nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.*

The thesis is concerned with empirically evaluating the validity of these hypotheses based on a case study conducted on the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Broadly, in addition to assessing the hypotheses, the analysis of data is directed towards mapping out the process of ethnic identification and the occurrence of multiple ethnic identities.

The next chapter provides a chronological overview of the Malaysian Chinese and serves as contextual background. This chapter concludes with a table of definitions as they are used in this thesis.

## Working Definitions

**Ethnic identification:**

Ethnic identification is the process by which aspects of ethnicity are used to define oneself in relation to others.

**Ethnic identity:**

Ethnic identity stems from and is a function of ethnic identification. It is the possession of a set of ethnic qualities generally expected of a member of that identity.

**Ethnic group:**

An ethnic group is a collectivity of individuals who possess ethnic qualities which demarcate them from other groups.

**Ingroup:**

Ingroup denotes a state of being within a particular group.

**Reference group:**

A group used as the basis for comparison.

**Culture:**

Culture is used broadly and loosely to refer to any factors which are commonly considered as culture, for example, customs, traditions, values and beliefs.

**Acculturation:**

Acculturation is the blending of aspects of a different culture (or cultures) into an existing one.

**Socialization:**

The process whereby individuals learn and internalize the culture, values and norms of their ingroup.

**Categorization:**

Categorization is the process of labeling individuals as members of an ethnic group regardless of what those labeled may think themselves.

**External categorization:**

External categorization is the process of labeling individuals as members of an ethnic group by people outside the group.

**Nation:**

A nation is a legal sovereign state.

**Nationality:**

An individual's nationality is his or her legal status as a citizen of a nation.



## CHAPTER II

### The Malaysian Chinese

This chapter serves as an introduction and contextual background to the case study on the Malaysian Chinese. It is an exploratory explanation of the Malaysian Chinese heritage: their culture, behaviour and way of thinking, which began its odyssey in China through subsequent Chinese experiences overseas. The picture is one of continuities, modifications and adaptations. The chapter does not attempt a comprehensive overview but is limited in focus to those constituents which have some bearing on how they view themselves and others, how they structure their relationships and consequently how they identify.

In relation to the research question, there are two main reasons for specifically choosing the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch for study. The first reason, as already noted, is that in the last six years a large number have settled in Christchurch. In the three years to March 1994, 1068 migrants from Malaysia settled in Christchurch making it the biggest migrant group in the city over that period. The exact number of Chinese among the group is not yet known but observation indicates that they constitute the majority. Their large number in such a short period of time makes them a suitable group for study in that all are newcomers facing a similar environment.

The second reason for choosing the Malaysian Chinese is the make up of the group. Due to the large percentage (33%) of Chinese among the Malaysian population

and the “accommodationist” policy of the Malaysian government, the Malaysian Chinese have managed to remain distinctively Chinese. Regardless of this, they are also internally diverse. Most notable is the linguistic differences among them. Although Mandarin is widely used as the common language among them, most of the time in everyday life they speak various dialects not mutually intelligible. Apart from this, Malaysia is made up of a federation of states with the states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia having separate historical development prior to the formation of Malaysia. Furthermore, the Malaysian Chinese in New Zealand, as a migrant group, have re-emigrated from Malaysia. These factors provide the potential basis for multiple identities.

This chapter is in two parts. The first provides a background of the Malaysian Chinese by chronologically tracing general factors related to Chinese overseas emigration. It gives an overview of the historical origins and reasons for emigration, the changing pattern of emigration, the changing status of the emigrants, the endurance of Chinese culture and characteristics, and some differentiating features among them. The second part gives an overview of the Malaysian Chinese in Malaysia, Malaysian Chinese emigration to New Zealand and the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch.

### **Historical Overview of Chinese Emigration Overseas**

Historically, noteworthy Chinese exploits overseas peaked during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) which saw Chinese naval power at its height. Numerous accounts highlight

the achievements of the legendary Admiral Cheng Ho who led the Chinese fleets on imperial expedition throughout Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean gathering tributes for the Chinese emperor. The tribute system became a channel for trade in that the tribute missions were made up of merchants who traded for themselves or on behalf of their rulers. This was, however, official trade which took place at the border or the Chinese capital, and formed only a small part of Chinese commercial activities. Long before Cheng Ho's journeys, Nanyang (the Chinese name for what is now Southeast Asia) was where the Chinese and the Arab worlds met in trade. What Cheng Ho's journeys did was to bring the potentials of the region to the attention of more Chinese.

During the 15th and 16th century Chinese naval supremacy diminished and the Ming dynasty became withdrawn and inward looking, however, private maritime trade flourished. This was in contravention of imperial decree - which banned all private overseas trade and outlawed those who went abroad - until 1567 when a system of private trade was introduced. Quite a number of the earliest Chinese overseas settlements came from the junk trade. There were also some emigration for political reasons. Indo-China for example had for a long time been a sanctuary for those who supported fallen dynasties. It was here that a large number of Ming supporters settled when the dynasty ended. (Pan 1990: 3-7)

In 1644 the Manchus of the Ching dynasty took over China. Although they lifted restriction on foreign trade, their official policy prohibited emigration and travel. This policy only ceased after 1898 when circumstances forced a change in official

attitude.(Tan 1986: 42). In the meantime, neither the Manchus' isolationist policy nor the restraint of family ties and commitments could stop emigration which increased dramatically after the mid 19th century. The pattern of migration differed from the past, with both internal factors which pushed people to migrate, and external factors which pulled people away from China, responsible for the huge flow.

Underlying the "push" factors was the fact that life in South China from the mid 19th century was becoming unbearable. First, there was overpopulation. Along the coast of east Guangdong and south Fujian about 4 million people were occupying 4,492 sq. miles of land. In one extreme example in south Fujian, 519 persons depended on one acre of cultivated land for their livelihood. Nature had also not been kind. Floods and famines added to the people's misery. In 1929, more than 3 million died of starvation when the Yellow River flooded the region. All this led to widespread poverty and created a huge displaced population. (Tan 1986: 34, 43) On top of this was the political instability China was experiencing. Since the beginning of the 19th century the Ching dynasty had been on the decline. Initial resistance and eventual submission to the western imperialist as well as internal dissension had vastly weakened the Manchu rule, rendering the exercise of authority and administration difficult. (Wang 1992: 27) In the south, desperate peasants joined bandits in staging numerous rebellions. The most well known was the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1865). It lasted 13 years, claimed 25 million lives and destroyed 600 cities and towns.

Faced with political turmoil, natural disasters and scarcity of land, many were forced to turn elsewhere for their livelihood. In 1889, the law prohibiting overseas travel was abolished when the Manchus accepted the futility of forbidding emigration. There was also the realization that impoverished China would actually benefit from overseas commercial activities and the earnings of emigrants. For the first time, Chinese official representatives overseas were given instruction to protect Chinese residing abroad.

If the “push” factors were sufficient reason for some to emigrate, for others there were also the “pull” factors. The flood of Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia was largely due to the expansion of western commercial ventures in the region. Chinese immigrants settled wherever they were mining operations, cash crop cultivation and other activities for which their labour and skills were in demand. Chinese entrepreneurs were drawn by the opportunities opened by the rapid economic expansion to undertake their own profit-making activities. (Tan 1986: 43-44, Pan 1990: 29-30 ) While European colonialism and economic opportunities drew the Chinese to Southeast Asia in the late 19th and early 20th century, Chinese emigration to America, Australia and New Zealand at this time was mainly due to the lure of gold. (Tan 1986: 44-45).

### **The Hua-qiao (Overseas Chinese)**

There are said to be 30 million Chinese spread over 109 countries in the world. (Pan 1990: 75) They are mostly originally from south China, mainly from the provinces of

Guangdong and Fujian, and to a lesser degree from Hainan and Kwangsi. Generally of peasant background, the emigrants were mostly illiterate, rural in nature and lacking in commercial skills (Skinner 1957: 29-67). On the whole, Guangdong was the most important source of Chinese immigrants because of reasons outlined above, and because of the proximity of Hong Kong which provided the doorway for millions of Chinese to get out of China. (Tan 1986: 167,171)

The Chinese term “hua-qiao” emerged in the 1890s and came into wide use after the Chinese Revolution of 1911. It was then that it acquired emotive usage, replacing all other terms and used retrospectively to refer even to those Chinese who moved overseas in earlier periods. The term “overseas Chinese” is usually used as the equivalent for hua-qiao, although it should more accurately be “Chinese sojourners” - “qiao” meaning a journey or a temporary stay. Reference to the Chinese abroad as hua-qiao was used by the Nationalist Revolutionarists (Kuomintang) as an emotive appeal for support in their cause. On the other hand, many Chinese abroad had become more self-conscious and began to call themselves hua-qiao when they realized they were regarded as Chinese in their homeland and not as foreigners and traitors.

The Manchu government repealed the law prohibiting overseas travel in 1898 and introduced the Nationality Law. Based on the principle of “jus sanguinis”, the Nationality Law was ambiguous and proved problematic for both China and the hua-qiao for a long time. Under the law, it was accepted that overseas Chinese could become foreign subjects, but they would nevertheless remain Chinese on their return to China. The legal

definition for a Chinese person was such that all hua-qiao regardless of citizenship came under the protection of China. (Wang 1992: 1-2, 7-8)

The appropriateness of using hua-qiao to refer to those Chinese who are citizens of other countries and who harbour no wish to return to China increasingly came into question through the years. After 1955 the new communist government of the People's Republic of China started differentiating between the hua-qiao who were its own citizens overseas and the "wai-chi" or "hua-jen" who are "foreign nationals of Chinese origin". (Wang 1992: 2, Suryadinata 1989: 2) In 1980 the government introduced its first Nationality Law which allowed only single citizenship. Consequently, a Chinese now ceases to be a citizen of the People's Republic of China on acquiring citizenship in a foreign country. (Suryadinata 1987: 150)

### **The Hua-jen (Ethnic Chinese)**

From 1980, the term hua-qiao or overseas Chinese no longer applies to those Chinese who are citizens of other countries.<sup>1</sup> Presently, they are referred to as "hua-jen" or "hua-ju". Hua-jen, meaning "ethnic Chinese" is more neutral. In Southeast Asia, when distinction is required, those of Chinese origin refer to themselves, or are referred to in more specific terms as the Chinese of their respective countries. Among those who speak Chinese, Chinese terms are used - Xin-hua (Singapore Chinese), Ma-hua (Malaysian

---

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, there is still some ambiguity because the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) has not changed the old Kuomintang usage of the term (Wang 1992: 9).

Chinese), Tai-hua (Thai Chinese), Fei-hua (Philippine Chinese) and Yin-hua (Indonesian Chinese). Local terms used for some specific groups of those who no longer speak Chinese in these countries are *peranakan* Chinese (local born Indonesian-speaking Chinese), *baba* (local born Malay-speaking Chinese) and *mestizo* (Chinese Filipino of mixed blood). (Suryadinata 1989: 2-3)

More recently, there emerged a new dimension to the Chinese emigrant story. This takes the form of the emigrants of Chinese origin who are naturalized nationals of other countries.<sup>2</sup> It is a more diverse group comprising foreign-born descendants of the original emigrants and educated professionals who have re-emigrated from places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and other countries of Southeast Asia to Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe. (Pan 1990: 377) Having been exposed to varied local environment these new emigrants are different in outlook and background from the original emigrants from China. However, elements of the old persist, which enable them in various ways and to varying degrees to retain their “Chineseness”. To understand the basis for the continuity one has to look at some enduring Chinese characteristics.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wang Gungwu, a contemporary authority on the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, uses the term “hua-i” to describe these new emigrants (Pan 1990: 337)



## Enduring Chinese Characteristics

Writings on Chinese immigration almost invariably describe the Chinese emigrant from China as the typical sojourner. Most left China because circumstances forced them to do so. Their primary aim was to earn enough money abroad and eventually return to their villages, families and kinsmen. Their lack of permanent commitment to the new land made them cling to their own cultural norms, values and patterns of behaviour. They retained their own institutions and social organizations, and measured themselves by their own value standards rather than by those of the local society. (Tan 1986: 48). For a better understanding of the millions of Chinese now scattered throughout the world it is necessary to look at the influence of Confucianism on the cultural values of the original emigrants which has resulted in certain attitudes and behaviour patterns enduring.

The pervasiveness of Confucianism in most aspects of Chinese life is well known. As the official state ideology for almost two thousand years it is the core of Chinese traditional philosophy and wisdom, provides continuity in Chinese civilization and enables the Chinese to maintain their culture.<sup>3</sup> Confucianism was the basis of an elite education and a requirement for entry into state officialdom. Confucianism is a belief system into which many Chinese have been socialized from birth, and it has continued to play a widespread and crucial role in shaping Chinese attitudes and behaviour wherever they may be. Exhibiting characteristics which are consistent with Confucian maxims does not

---

<sup>3</sup> Other influential doctrines which co-exist with Confucianism within Chinese philosophy and religion are Buddhism and Taoism. In Buddhism the goal is to be reborn in paradise. This is achieved through meditation and serenity. Taoism emphasize the cultivation of ones nature and development of one's vital force. (Hsien 1975: 138)

necessarily mean being a Confucian or membership in a Confucian sect. (Redding 1990: 47) Confucianism emphasizes family ties, respect for elders, good moral sense, social obligations and a “constructive, rational approach” to human problems. It advocates regulating the family - the most basic human grouping - as the means by which an orderly society can be achieved. (Tan 1986: 18-19) This pertains to filial piety, family and lineage allegiances which involve the cultivation of such virtues as obedience, conservatism and obligation to maintain the family name and reputation. (Hsien 1975: 138)

To the Chinese, filial piety<sup>4</sup> continues after death and is the basis for ancestor worship. The dead are worshipped and asked for assistance. As only direct male descendants are allowed to take part in some critical aspects of ancestor worship ceremonies, a male offspring becomes of utmost importance to a Chinese family. (Tan 1986: 19) The Chinese male dedication to his native village is the consequence of his filiality. He is reluctant to leave his ancestral home because it is his primary duty to look after his old parents as long as they live, to mourn them when they die, to partake in ancestor worship and to tend ancestral graves. One of the reasons for the prohibition of emigration by the Chinese authorities through the centuries was the thought that those who left their homeland were failing their filial duties. (Pan 1990: 21)

That most Chinese emigrants saw their stay abroad as temporary is therefore understandable. The idea was to make as much money as possible and return home. On

---

<sup>4</sup> In the “Book of Rites” it is stated that, “of all virtues, filial piety is the first” and “Filiality has three expressions - the greatest is to honour one’s parents, the second is to refrain from disgracing them, the third is to support them.” (Tan 1986: 19)

the surface this appears to be the most obvious reasons for their frugality, industriousness and willingness to labour hard in manual and menial jobs. There are, however, other factors which account for this predisposition. Firstly, due to harsh conditions in China, most Chinese emigrants were used to a life of hard work and thrift which were necessary for survival. Particularly at the end of the 19th century, Chinese emigration resembled a mass movement of peasants. Among these people, life was an endless struggle against starvation and practices which arose out of necessity became an indispensable way of life.

Secondly, there was the strong sense of duty and responsibility toward family and kin shouldered by the male individual.<sup>5</sup> He had to be thankful to his ancestors for what his family had and at the same time he was responsible to them for whatever he did for the family's future. (Skinner 1957: 92-95) The Chinese had been socialized to work hard with the long term benefit of the family in mind (Harrell 1985: 244). Working hard and setting something aside for the future was his contribution to the betterment and survival of the lineage which ideally should take precedent over individual gratification.<sup>6</sup> Family advancement had high priority in the Chinese world view even among the peasants. (Skinner 1957: 92-93) In addition to this was the realization that although attaining a higher status was possible, a drop in status was equally possible (Harrell 1985: 218). The simplest way to success was to work hard, be thrifty, and mutually support

---

<sup>5</sup> Confucian teachings dictate the organization and relationship with the family. In all instances, the male hold the authority. Sexual inequality was accepted and widely practised (Tan 1986: 24).

<sup>6</sup> Hsien (1986: 140) pointed out that, "To a Chinese, family is much more important than any one of its members. Hungry relatives are helped out of a sense of family loyalty and obligation rather than out of sympathy with their hunger."

one's kin.<sup>7</sup> Such values apply across the board within Chinese society<sup>8</sup> from the rich who “do not commonly retire from business, but devote themselves to it with the same kind and degree of attention as when they were poor”, to the scholars, the farmers and the labourers. (Smith 1900: 28-30)

Outside China, the “great Confucian tradition” underwent some change. The Chinese emigrants slowly developed a “culture of rationalistic traditionalism” which is a mix of the old traditional values of filiality and group ties, and a new pragmatism moulded by circumstances within a different competitive environment. (Kotkin 1993:177) Two salient developments took place among the Chinese overseas. First, cut off from their native land and without access to land in the new place of settlement, they had no choice but to take up all kinds of activities to make money. They predominated in lucrative commercial activities as traders, craftsman and skilled workers. Most importantly, in the colonies, they became the vital “middleman” between the colonial officials and entrepreneurs on one side and the agrarian native masses on the other. (Kotkin 1993: 171) By the time the colonizers left, they had entrenched their foothold in the economic sector. Unlike in China, in the new places of settlement, society was not stratified

---

<sup>7</sup> This is primarily because ideals promoted by Confucianism ethic such as “scholarship, government position, the extended family under one roof, proper homage to one's ancestors” were possible only through achieving elite status which is attainable even by even by the peasants. There were cases in China where the son of a peasant, with the support of his lineage, gained high education and official position and thus enabled his family and lineage to be part of the scholar- official class. Examples of these may be rare but they are enough to give hope to the masses. (Skinner 1957: 92-93)

<sup>8</sup>This image of frugality and hard work was how the Chinese perceived themselves and how they were usually perceived by others. Because of this perception, the Chinese believed they possessed these qualities and reinforced them through socialization.

into merchants at the bottom and educated elite at the top of the social ladder. Wealth was the means by which a higher social status could be achieved and there was no better way towards achieving this goal than by engaging in business. The importance of the Chinese (in some countries their dominance) in the economic sphere has continued to this day. A very crucial factor in their economic success story is the fact that their business activities were in no small way aided by clan or family ties which ensured cooperation and support both abroad and locally.<sup>9</sup> Such ties remain strong, and what may appear to be simple family or kin connection may extend to local and to global networks.

The second development was that, although emphasis on good education remained a priority, it shifted from being a means for achieving elite status to being a means for achieving financial success. The Confucian legacy of studiousness was redirected away from the study of traditional classics toward achieving excellence in modern education. Among the Chinese overseas, Confucian values permeate Chinese society through learning. In places like Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, where Confucian education is part of formal education, it is learned both at school and at home. In Malaysia, Indonesia and other places of Chinese emigration, where it is not part of mainstream formal education, it is learned in the home. Confucian teachings in the family are near universal, although among many they are propagated without conscious

---

<sup>9</sup> There was “no network like the network of Chinese connections which joined market to market through clan or family ... whether at home in China or abroad in Southeast Asia” (Pan 1990: 132). “Sometimes it seems like everyone’s related. I know someone in Taiwan, and he knows someone else in Hong Kong, and you link them together and you have this network and you find this opportunity” (Kotkin 1993: 170).

connection to Confucianism. In its most common and generalized form, they are almost universally enforced by parents who emphasize “discipline and order”. A common pattern in most homes is the indulgence given to young children who then develop a high degree of dependence on their parents. This dependence in turn ensures compliance to strict discipline. Notable is the strict control exercised over older children especially in education. (Redding 1990: 48) Chinese parents, retaining the old values of putting the long term benefit of the family first, give top priority to providing their children with the best education they can. The new wave of emigration is to a large extent the search for better education and prospects for their children’s future.

By their pragmatism, the Chinese overseas retained, modified or discarded aspects of their traditions to accommodate current needs. In the meantime some of the Chinese developed a very complimentary image of themselves. To them, hereditary Chinese qualities such as diligence, prudence and thrift plus the superiority of Chinese culture were the explanation for Chinese success evident everywhere. They attribute economic success to Chinese business-mindedness - a quality which they believed was partly genetic and partly acquired by upbringing. (Pan 1990: 244)

### **Dialects and Clans**

The above description focused on traits commonly attributed to Chinese in general. They tend to stress the homogeneity of the community, and obscure internal differences,

especially to an outsider. The Chinese overseas are divided most pronouncedly according to dialects and clans. In places such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where the emigrants were predominantly of Cantonese descent, dialectic division does not surface. In Southeast Asia, however, they are divided along distinct dialectic lines. The biggest dialect groups overseas are the Hokkiens, Teochews and Cantonese. The Hokkiens (or Fukienese) from Fujian province are possibly the oldest settlers in Southeast Asia. They make up the majority of the Chinese in Malaysia, Singapore, the island of Java in Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Teochews (or “Swatow people” as they are sometimes referred to), from eastern Guangdong, are numerically dominant in Thailand, Sumatra and Cambodia. The Cantonese, from southwest Guangdong, are most numerous in South Vietnam, North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In these countries, Cantonese is the lingua franca among the Chinese. Apart from these three groups, there are Hakkas, Hainanese, Foochows, Henghuas and numerous others. (Tan 1986: 175)

Chinese dialects are generally not mutually intelligible, although some, for example, Teochew and Hokkien are quite similar.<sup>10</sup> What makes the dialect groups distinctive from each other are not just linguistics but also differences in everyday customs, traditions and temperament. These bind speakers of the same dialect group together. In addition to dialect groups the Chinese are further divided into clans or surname groups. Clans or “zu” are actually the extension of lineage through five or more generations, but among the Chinese overseas, it is not always blood ties that bind the clan

---

<sup>10</sup> A peculiar linguistic feature of the Chinese is that, although their various dialects are not mutually intelligible, there is only one written form which is universally understood.

together but the same surnames. Having the same surname constitutes a kin relationship because of the belief that every surname is descended through the male line from one ancestor. The clan is thus a wider grouping, embracing both lineage and common surname. (Freedman 1979: 91, 135-6)

The most visible evidence of dialect and clan divisions are the dialect and clan associations which have commanded strong loyalties. These associations are the means by which social arrangements which existed in China, but which could not be replicated overseas, could be maintained. In China, the emigrants had lived in same dialect provinces and same surname villages.<sup>11</sup> Overseas, even though in most places “migration chains”<sup>12</sup> had been established by the mid 19th century (Hamilton 1977: 340), they were more dispersed. The only way the solidarity of dialect and kinship ties could be expressed was through the establishment of formal associations. (Freedman 1979: 78-9)

The crucial role of associations in the maintenance of identity among Chinese overseas can be looked at in three ways. Firstly, they have been regarded as the most positive force in enabling the Chinese to maintain cultural continuity and identity. As the major agencies available to give help to emigrants who faced problems with resettlement and adjustment in a new place, they provided a feeling of belonging. Associations also

---

<sup>11</sup> In China, Fujian and Guangdong were notable for their huge clan villages. Whereas in other provinces clans or lineages make up parts of a village, in Fujian and Guangdong the clan comprised the whole village with members sharing the same surname and holding property in common. These villages varied in size from small hamlets to those with population of a few thousand. (Pan 1990: 18)

<sup>12</sup> “Migration chains” refers to the migration of individuals to areas where their kin, people they know have already settled. This tendency had given rise to overseas communities with, for example, strong language ties. (Hamilton 1977: 340)



played the central role in upholding and encouraging Chinese culture. They held activities to commemorate important dates and celebrate festivals. They kept alive interest in Chinese art, music and education by facilitating and sponsoring these activities. In more recent times they have become important in “resinifying” those whose cultural ties have weakened (Cushman & Wang 1988: 301). Because they have been the major factor in the maintenance of Chinese culture they have also been seen as a negative force - a hindrance to the assimilation of the Chinese into the host society (Wickberg 1988: 303). These two views have been highlighted more than the third, which is that associations have been the formal structures which divide the Chinese. Emigrants, on settling in a new place, quickly find themselves absorbed into the organizational fabric and allegiances of the local Chinese community (Pan 1990: 111).

### **The Malaysian Chinese**

The features described in the above sections are clearly exemplified by the Malaysian Chinese and make them a good case for study. A contemporary authority on the Chinese overseas, Suryadinata notes that, culturally the Malaysian Chinese are more “Chinese” than those in Indonesia, Thailand or the Philippines. (1987: 139) Being less assimilated or acculturated into the host society, the majority of Malaysian Chinese identify strongly as Chinese. This can be attributed to three reasons. First, the large size of the Chinese population in terms of numbers and percentage. Second is the policy of “divide and rule” under British colonial administration; and third, the postcolonial government’s

“accommodationist policy” a legacy of British colonialism. A chronological look at history will explain and expand on these factors.

Chinese traders had been visiting Malacca, a settlement in the South of the Malay Peninsula since the 7th century. Situated where the monsoon winds meet, it had long had a Chinese population. The influx of Chinese immigrants into the peninsula began with the presence of the British who gave rise to increased economic activities. (Pan 1990: 23, 27-28) The largest flow between 1860 to 1940 were poor peasants who came to work as tin miners and heavy labourers - jobs which the indigenous Malays looked upon with contempt. Generally, Chinese workers were drawn to companies owned and managed by Chinese. Through hard work and frugality, a large number moved on to cash crop cultivation, petty commercial activities such as trading, and then further on to become contractors and small-scale manufacturers. (Esman 1987: 402) The immigrants tended to group together according to dialect, clan and place of origin. Each group usually lived closely together and most took up the same occupations. In the same way, particular dialect and clan groups dominated different sectors of commerce and industry. Each group would usually respect the others' area of dominance. These patterns of behaviour accounted for the formation of associations, trade guilds and secret societies. (Snodgrass 1980: 36-7) They were also the reasons why dialects were, and still are, mainly spoken instead of Mandarin (Kuo-yu) which is the accepted common Chinese language and medium of instruction in Chinese schools.

By the time the first censuses were carried out in the Malay Peninsula in 1891, the predominantly male Chinese immigrants, numbering 165,000, made up 40% of the population. This was in spite of the very temporary nature of their stay. Between 1916 and 1929, for example, those who returned to China numbered about 45% of those who arrived. (Snodgrass 1980: 26) The British authorities treated the Chinese as what they were thought to be - transient aliens, who, as long as they did not question British authority or interfere with the affairs of the Malays were left to make their own living. Consistent with British colonial policy, the British administrators were more concerned with their commitment to the protection and preservation of the interests of the native rulers and their people. (Vasil 1984: 40-1) In the absence of a system of governing laws by either the British or Malay rulers, the Chinese devised their own regulatory framework based on their own customs and institutions. (Snodgrass 1980: 36)

The colonial policy of the British consequently contributed substantially to the maintenance of Chinese identity. Their compartmentalization of economic activities along ethnic lines further aggravated the distinctiveness of each ethnic group.<sup>13</sup> The indigenous Malays were confined to the cultivation of subsistence crops and fishing while the immigrant Chinese and Indians involved themselves in the commercial and industrial sector. This division created other concrete divisions such as the concentration of the Chinese in urban areas and the Malays in the rural areas. (Funston 1980: 1-2) In the cities

---

<sup>13</sup> Malaysia is often cited as the classic example of a specific kind of "plural society". Furnivall used the term to describe a society which, as a consequence of British colonization, had a dual economy comprising a precapitalist type subsistence economy involving the labour of local indigenous people, and a cash economy involving imported foreign labour. The most significant feature of this type of society is the "medley of people" living side by side and yet separated within the same political unit. (Furnivall J.S., *Colonial Policy and Practice*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1948, pg. 403)

and towns, the Chinese were able to take advantage of the English education available to gain qualifications for skilled and professional occupations.

Culturally, sectorially and spatially, the majority of the Chinese were separated from the other ethnic groups. By 1956, it was clear that the majority of the Chinese would stay in Malaya. When the Federated States of Malaya finally gained independence from the British in 1957, the population of 6.8 million was made up of 50% Malays, 37% Chinese and 11% Indians. (Jesudason 1989: 1) During gradual decolonization in the 1950s, the understanding was that the British would only leave on condition that a multi-ethnic arrangement was arrived at in the transfer of power. The plan was to have a democratic system of government within a multi-ethnic framework. (Ahmad 1989: 352-4) This condition was fulfilled in the form of the Alliance Party comprising the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The period between 1954 and 1956 was one of goodwill between the ethnic groups. An attitude of “give and take” and consideration for each other’s interests and sensitivities prevailed. (Vasil 1984: 144) Differences were subdued in order to present a united front. In 1956, the Alliance Party, representing the three major ethnic groups, led the “Merdeka” (independence) mission to London for talks. The result was the “Bargain of 1957” which was to become an important component of the constitutional negotiations to reach a mutually acceptable balance between the interests of the groups. (Snodgrass 1980: 46) Although the final outcome constitutionally ensured the special rights of the Malays, their political and cultural dominance (and after 1969, their economic dominance), the system recognizes the

existence of the other ethnic groups and provides room for accommodating their interests. It was largely due to the success of the new Federation of Malaya Government in the first five years of independence that Sarawak and Sabah (then North Borneo), two other states under British responsibility, joined the federation. On 16th September 1963, the Federation of Malaysia came into being.<sup>14</sup>

The Chinese in Malaysia are recognized by the state as a distinct political and cultural group. Based on a 1991 census, in West Malaysia, out of a total population of 14,797,616, the Chinese make up 31.1%. In Sabah they make up 14% of the total population of 1,863,659, and in Sarawak, they make up 29% of the total population of 1,718,380. (The Far East and Australasia 1996:558) In politics, the Chinese are members of state councils and parliament, and participate in government at both state and federal levels. The chief minister of the state of Pulau Pinang, and seven federal cabinet ministers are Chinese.

Of particular significance to the culture and identity of the Chinese is the post-colonial government's policy of allowing the continued presence of Chinese schools even after the National Language Act of 1967 which made Malay the official and national language. Under the British, four streams of education - English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil - serving the needs of the various communities had existed. Control and subsidization of Chinese schools by the British authorities had begun in 1923 and

---

<sup>14</sup> The states of Sarawak and Sabah on the island of Borneo are usually referred to as East Malaysia while the Malay states on the peninsula are referred to as West Malaysia or Peninsula Malaysia.

continued until 1960 when the post-colonial government stopped supporting Chinese secondary schools. (Snodgrass 1980: 240) Although the Malayan Government withdrew its support, the secondary schools were allowed to continue as self-supporting independent schools. Chinese primary schools are still government subsidized and make up a substantial component of the present education system. In 1974, for example, 30% of primary school children attended Chinese primary schools.<sup>15</sup> (Rudner 1994: 323)

Also of importance to the Chinese maintenance of culture and identity is the presence of nationwide media in Chinese. Substantial time is given to Chinese shows and programmes on both private and government owned radio and television networks, at local and national level. Chinese newspapers command wide readership nationwide.<sup>16</sup> Local and imported Chinese books and magazines abound in shops. Imported Chinese movies draw large crowds, attracting both Chinese and non-Chinese audiences.

Although the Malaysian system recognized the Chinese as a distinct group culturally and politically, certain developments within the country particularly after the implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1969 caused growing dissatisfaction

---

<sup>15</sup> In addition to Mandarin, the children in these schools are also taught Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) which is compulsory. This also prepares them for secondary education in the government or government-aided schools should they not wish to continue in the independent Chinese schools. A totally Chinese education practically leads to dead ends because, first, no further education is available at tertiary level, and second, it is not officially recognized for the purposes of employment (Snodgrass 1980: 250).

<sup>16</sup> Three newspapers with daily nationwide circulation of above 100,000 are, China Press (126,271), Nanyang Siang Pau (168,905) and Sin Chew Jit Poh (230,072). In the state of Sarawak, See Hua Daily News has a circulation of 37,663. In the state of Sabah, Overseas Chinese Daily News has a circulation of 20,731. Willings Press Guide 1996, United Kingdom: Reed Information Services, pg. 860-62

among many Chinese. The NEP's "affirmative action" policy and Malay Special Rights programmes for the benefit of the Malays especially in the field of education, forced many to seriously consider their future status and prospect in the country. The first factor which became a cause for anxiety was the strict enforcement of the Malay language law in the schools. Apart from Chinese and Tamil primary schools, and independent Chinese secondary schools, all schools would undergo a gradual but complete conversion to a centralized system of education with Bahasa Malaysia (ie. the Malay language) as the medium of instruction. The conversion of the English language medium schools meant that the Chinese could no longer make use of English education as the means for socio-economic mobility. The government's imposition of the National Language Law, however, has not altered the fact that having the ability to speak English gives people advantages socially and economically, nor that most Malaysians tend to think not very highly of Malay as a medium of education.

The second factor is the government's efforts to increase the educational opportunities of the Malays which are undertaken at the expense of the other communities. One main complaint was the unequal admission criteria in favour of the Malays which greatly expanded the intake of Malay students into tertiary education. In the sixties, when admission was based on merit, the student population in the University of Malaya, the only university at that time, was 21% Malays, 60% Chinese and 19% Indians. In 1970, with affirmative action, the number of Malay students increased to 40% while the number of Chinese and Indian students went down to 49% and 11% respectively. This was in spite of hugely expanded student numbers due to the

establishment of two new universities. In 1978, the percentage of Malay students increased to 75%. In addition, while in the past the granting of scholarship had been biased towards a preference for Malays, by the early 1970's it has become official policy. (Esman 1987: 403, Lim 1985: 258) With local tertiary education unavailable for their children, Chinese parents have to send their children overseas at very high costs. Many made the decision to emigrate to countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand for the sake of better prospects for their children.

### **The Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch**

The emigration of people and capital on the part of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan to western countries, especially Canada, the United States and Australia has been a continuing phenomenon. More recently, however, a new wave of emigration (in the sense of a marked increase) is taking place. The feeling of insecurity with regard to China's intentions, though longstanding, has become more intense for those in Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> In Southeast Asia, discrimination and repression in various ways led to dissatisfaction and the search for better prospects elsewhere. The Malaysian Chinese emigrants are representative of the latter group. In the last decade, New Zealand has been added to the list of destinations for Chinese emigrants. A brief

---

<sup>17</sup> In Hong Kong, by 1990, 50,000 people were emigrating annually. According to one survey, nearly four in ten people and nearly half the professionals in the colony were thinking of emigrating. In Taiwan, between 1985 and 1991, 50,000 Taiwanese were estimated to have emigrated overseas each year. According to one survey in 1991, at least one in ten middle-class residents were thinking of emigrating. (Kotkin 1993: 182-3)



overview of Chinese immigration in New Zealand will place the Malaysian Chinese in context.

The recent influx of Chinese immigrants to New Zealand began with the introduction of the 1987 Immigration Act which was a turning point from the country's previously discriminatory immigration policies. Under the new Act, the criteria for selecting potential immigrants would be based on "personal merits, qualifications and potential contribution to New Zealand" regardless of the country of origin. This replaced the 1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Act which had based immigration on an entry permit system. Under this earlier system, there was no restriction on immigrants of British or Irish descent. For others, permission or refusal was at the discretion of the Minister of Customs who decided based on "the merit of the individual case". There were no stipulated criteria, and acceptance or rejection were never explained.<sup>18</sup> The loosening of restriction in 1987 can mainly be attributed to the fourth Labour Government's economic restructuring efforts to improve the country's domestic economy and to draw in foreign investment. The aim of the new immigration policy was twofold; to offset the outward migration loss (which had averaged 18,000 a year for the previous decade) that New Zealand was suffering, and to improve New Zealand's competitive edge by attracting quality immigrants. (Ip1995: 173, 187) The 1987 Act opened New Zealand's door at a time which coincided with the search for new shores by many Chinese.

---

<sup>18</sup> The story of the New Zealand Chinese from the time of their first arrival in the country in 1866 to work in the Otago goldfields had been one of persecution and discrimination. Literature on the community invariably highlight this aspect in its history. With regard to discrimination and Chinese immigration, the 1920 Act was seen as the ultimate in closing New Zealand's door to the Chinese. (Ip 1995: 173-5)

In 1994 the Chinese population in New Zealand was estimated to be about 57,000. A breakdown of this would show about 10,000 New Zealand-born, 10,000 who arrived before 1986, and 37,000<sup>19</sup> who arrived after 1986. (Ip 1995: 190) As can be seen the third group of more recent immigrants has outstripped the other two groups jointly. The new arrivals are a more heterogeneous group in their language, nationality and general outlook than the local Chinese whose immigrant ancestors were largely Cantonese peasants who emigrated directly from China. They are mostly business people and professionals who have been granted permanent residence through the Business Immigration Policy or Points System.<sup>20</sup> (Ip 1995: 191-2) Many give “racial harmony” as their reason for choosing New Zealand over countries like the United States, Canada and Australia. (Ip 1995: 194) The present Chinese community in New Zealand is consequently a very diverse group. The Malaysian Chinese are one component of a community comprising Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia.

In the period from 1991 to 1993, 5098 resident permits were granted to applicants from Malaysia. (Ip 1995: 190) In the three years to March 1994, 1068

---

<sup>19</sup> The accuracy of this figure is doubtful as a large number (at least 50%) of those categorised as having come from places like Indonesia, Vietnam or Malaysia are actually Chinese. (Ip 1995: 190)

<sup>20</sup> In the period between the implementation of the new Immigration Act in 1987 and the introduction of the Points System in November 1991, most were granted permanent residence through the Business Immigration scheme which sought “people with good business ideas, initiative, demonstrated ability and investment capital”. Applicants were “assessed on their potential contribution to the economy and society”. The number of business immigrants dropped and more came in through the Points System when it was introduced. Under the Points System, numerical values are given for qualities such as education, professional qualification, skills, work experience, age and settlement funds which are then added up. Automatic permanent residency is granted to those who accrue points in the high 20s. (Ip 1995: 191-2)

immigrants from Malaysia settled in Christchurch.<sup>21</sup> It can safely be assumed that the majority of these are Malaysian Chinese.<sup>22</sup> Quite a number choose to live in Christchurch, because Auckland was considered too “big city”. Christchurch, with its more quiet and conservative lifestyle was seen as providing a more conducive environment for bringing up children especially with regard to education. With these priorities in mind, most chose to live in the northwest of Christchurch which is considered a better area.<sup>23</sup> Factors which contribute to this idea of the northwest are: proximity to what are believed to be good schools<sup>24</sup>, proximity to the University of Canterbury and the higher socio-economic image of the area. This last factor is due as much to the wish to maintain socio-economic status as to security reasons. Most think that living in a good neighbourhood would avoid the problems they associate with working class areas. Apart from this, there appears to be a general belief that people in good areas are more tolerant.

The Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch belong to various dialect groups and come from different states in Malaysia. Characteristic of the Chinese, they exhibit a tendency to group together and socialize according to dialect and their place of origin in Malaysia. Most visible in this regard are those from Sarawak. This could be because there are

---

<sup>21</sup> In the year ending March 1992, the figure was 236. This jumped to 423 in March 1993. (The Mail, 23rd March 1995, p.1)

<sup>22</sup> Information on the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch is gathered through interactive observation and participation within the community.

<sup>23</sup> Particularly in the case of immigrants from East Malaysia, this conception of the northwest is largely due to the marketing efforts of immigration consultants and real estate agents.

<sup>24</sup> Parents are not too particular about primary schools, but the most preferred public high school is Burnside High School. Those who were not accepted into Burnside would go to Riccarton High School or Papanui High School. A number of these would continue the attempt to transfer to Burnside High.

numerically more of them. In Christchurch, the Malaysian Chinese from Sarawak provides a contemporary example of chain migration. Immigrants from the towns of Kuching and Sibü mostly come to Christchurch to join relatives and friends. Those from Sibü especially, have shown a preference for living close together in the same neighbourhood or even the same street. There is also a strong tendency on the part of the Foochows from Sibü to stick together.

Further differences within the Malaysian Chinese community exist in terms of educational background and religious affiliations. They are either educated in the Malay, English or Chinese language, or some combination of the three. Almost all are either Buddhist or Christian. Those who are Christian belong to different denominations. Some organize into groups formally and informally. There are those who joined wider based organizations such as the Canterbury Chinese Association and the Christchurch Chinese Church, and those who joined newly formed more specific organizations such as the Malaysian Association (1992), the Foochow Association (1994) and several religious groups. Some groups are not formally organised but are nevertheless distinct groups, for example the Malaysian Chinese Catholics in northwest Christchurch.

For the purpose of studying multiple ethnic identification, the Malaysian Chinese community in Christchurch provides a potential source of informative data. As recent arrivals, they are a more uniform group in that they would not have undergone much local acculturation. In Christchurch, they are living not just among other ethnic groups such as European, Maori, Japanese or Korean, but also among other Chinese from China,

Taiwan, Hong Kong and other places. Moreover, compared to the Chinese from the other nations, they have more internal differences in terms of dialect and region of origin in Malaysia. How they identify in relation to other ethnic groups, to other Chinese, and among themselves would provide substantial insight in the study of ethnicity and ethnic identification.

## CHAPTER III

### Similarities, Differences, Boundaries and Context

The previous chapter has outlined some aspects of the Malaysian Chinese heritage which shape the way they construct their view of others, and how they structure their relationships. Derived from the hypotheses on ethnic identification stated in chapter one, the following questions arise. How do the Malaysian Chinese identify? What factors are significant in determining identification? Do they identify differently in different situations? And do the Malaysian Chinese have multiple ethnic identities? In considering these questions, this and the following chapter use data from the indepth interviews conducted on members of the Malaysian Chinese community.

The data in each chapter is analysed within a thematic framework based on the two hypotheses. This chapter analyses data in terms of the first hypothesis, namely that:

*Ethnic identification is flexible and situational. Individuals identify according to what shared qualities stand in contrast to other shared qualities within different contexts.*

This means that, within any given interactive *context*, individuals identify according to what is relevant, significant and would effectively differentiate them from others who are not of that identity. These *objective* and *subjective* qualities<sup>1</sup>, which are sets of shared or similar qualities, give rise to *boundaries* and become, temporarily, the primary

---

<sup>1</sup> What constitute *subjective* and *objective* qualities is explained in chapter 1.

determinant and marker of ethnic identification. This flexibility gives ethnic identification its *situational* quality. People may use different criteria for identifying in a certain way within a different *context*. They may also identify differently in different *contexts*.

### **Nature of Data**

Interviewees were asked to place themselves in different contextual situations. These were situations the respondents had either lived through or had experienced to varying degrees. Within each situation they were asked whether they identified in a certain way, and to provide the reasons why they did or did not do so. First, they were asked whether they identified as Chinese when they were among people from the various ethnic groups in Malaysia. Second, they were asked if they identified as Malaysian when among people from various nations and ethnic groups in New Zealand. Third, they were asked if they identified as Chinese when among people from various ethnic groups in New Zealand. Responses on how they identified were rated as none, weak, moderate or strong depending on intensity as indicated by the respondents. The explanations given for responding in a particular way to a particular identity were taken as significant in determining that identity.

The goal here was to find out how people identify in different situations and what determined that identification. Questions on identification as Chinese in Malaysia and in New Zealand were directed towards two aims. The first was to find out if people who

identify in a certain way would use the same or a different criteria for that identification within different situations or *contexts*. The second was to find out if people identify differently in different *contexts*. That is, would those who identified or did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia identify the same way in New Zealand. Questions on identification as Malaysian in New Zealand were part of second goal. They were aimed at finding out how people who identified or did not identify as Chinese would identify ethnically based on country of origin or nationality when they were in New Zealand<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the preceding goals, all questions are simultaneously directed towards unveiling what factors are significant in determining each identification for each respondent in each *context*. For the purpose of describing and presenting data, the personal nature of identity requires that a substantial reliance be placed on the use of quotations from the respondents.

### **Context and Identification**

Of the 57 respondents, 41 identified either weakly, moderately or strongly as Chinese when in Malaysia.<sup>3</sup> This increased to 46 when in New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> Data was further analysed to see if respondents who identified or did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia identified the same way in New Zealand. Thirty-five (61.4%) of the respondents indicated some change in intensity. Twenty-three of the 34 stated an increase in their identification as Chinese in New Zealand and 12 stated a decrease. Of particular interest are the 8 who

---

<sup>2</sup> The term “nationality” is used herein to mean the officially recognized status based on citizenship in the country of origin, in this case Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup> See Table 3.1. Ten respondents identified as weak, 11 moderate and 20 as strong.

<sup>4</sup>See Table 3.1. Seven respondents identified as weak, 13 as moderate and 26 as strong.



stated they did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia<sup>5</sup> but who did so moderately or strongly in New Zealand, and the five who identified moderately or strongly in Malaysia and none at all in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> They demonstrated most clearly the importance of *context* in determining the way people identify.

Thirty-six (63.1%) respondents indicated having either a weak, moderate or strong Malaysian identity in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Data was analysed to find any patterns or relationship between identification as Chinese and identification as Malaysian. No significant patterns were apparent. Around half of the various intensity categories concerning Chinese identification in both *contexts* indicated some degree of identification as Malaysian. This, however, is in its own way significant as it shows that a large number of people identified according to nationality, regardless of how they had identified ethnically as Chinese. What constitutes this nationality- based Malaysian identity and Chinese identity is examined in the rest of this chapter. The focus is on people's use of relevant and significant factors to explain why they identified in a certain way.

---

<sup>5</sup> These eight respondents make up 50% of the 16 who did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia.

<sup>6</sup> These five respondents make up 45.4% of the 11 who did not identify as Chinese in New Zealand.

<sup>7</sup> See Table 3.2. Eight respondent identified as weak, 7 moderate and 21 strong.

**TABLE 3.1.****IDENTIFICATION AS CHINESE & IDENTIFICATION AS MALAYSIAN**

		Identification as Malaysian				Total
		None	Weak	Moderate	Strong	
Identification as Chinese	None	4	0	1	6	11
	Weak	1	2	2	2	7
	Moderate	6	1	4	2	13
	Strong	10	5	0	11	26
	Total	21	8	7	21	57

**TABLE 3.2****IDENTIFICATION AS CHINESE**

		In New Zealand				Total
		None	Weak	Moderate	Strong	
In Malaysia	None	5	3	4	4	16
	Weak	1	2	3	4	10
	Moderate	3	1	2	5	11
	Strong	2	1	4	13	20
	Total	11	7	13	26	57

## Identification as Chinese

As a generalized observation, 90% of those who identified as Chinese (moderately or strongly) in Malaysia and New Zealand gave reasons which are commonly given in the literature for ethnic identification. Respondents gave shared qualities such as birth, physical features, language and culture<sup>8</sup> as the main determiners. Relating to culture, respondents referred to features such as traditions, customs, lifestyle, food, dress, behaviour, character, values, Chinese thinking, and “the way we see things”. Beside these factors, the other significant factor in determining identification was external *categorization* either by government or by others.

Examined at the individual level, there was wide variation in what each respondent considered the more important or significant factors. People differed in what they felt were the most important things which made them identify or not identify in a certain way. Apart from this, for each individual, the factors which were relevant and significant for an identity might differ in different situations. What comes out clearly overall is that an identity is based on what are recognized and accepted as shared qualities or *similarities*, which stand in *contrast* to other shared qualities and which give rise to *boundaries*. Where there is no *contrast*, there is no *boundary* and the need to identify in a certain way is not felt.

---

<sup>8</sup> The term “culture” as used by the respondents appears to refer mainly to customs and traditions. Some would mention culture in addition to other factors which could be considered part of culture. For the purpose of this paragraph, the broader concept of culture is used.

### Similarities, Differences and Boundaries: Identification as Chinese in Malaysia

The importance of *contrast* in identification is clearly shown by those who did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia. Of these 16 respondents, 14 said they did not identify as Chinese because they did not feel any difference in relation to the people of the other ethnic groups. Most of the respondents said they interacted and socialized freely and comfortably with members of other ethnic groups. Answers were phrased in very similar ways;

*“Only if asked, otherwise will not think or is conscious of it.”*<sup>9</sup>

*“Will mix with all. All are the same.”*<sup>10</sup>

*“Not conscious of it. Mix equally well with all.”*<sup>11</sup>

*“Easily mix with all. The main thing is common talk.”*<sup>12</sup>

*“People talk freely. We talk about common things.”*<sup>13</sup>

*“Do not feel the difference. People in Kuching mix.”*<sup>14</sup>

*“Never thought about it. Do not feel they are different.”*<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Respondent No.10, Group D

<sup>10</sup> Respondent No.4, Group A. From notes translated from Foochow.

<sup>11</sup> Respondent No.14, Group A.

<sup>12</sup> Respondent No.6, Group A.

<sup>13</sup> Respondent No.7, Group A.

<sup>14</sup> Respondent No.15, Group B.

<sup>15</sup> Respondent No.6, Group D.

*“Everyone the same, equal.”<sup>16</sup>*

For some respondents, the absence of any feelings of difference was due to the close relationship they had with members of other ethnic groups;

*“Used to the people. Our servant girls were natives. There was no differentiation on colour or skin.”<sup>17</sup>*

*“I did not feel the difference. There were few Chinese in my class at school and I mix with Ibans.”<sup>18</sup>*

*“I am dark, hang around Malays and never put myself in Chinese position back in Malaysia.”<sup>19</sup>*

*“I do not feel an outsider.”<sup>20</sup>*

*“Comfortable with all. I never thought about it or have a feeling they are different.*

*Sometimes I am more comfortable with Malays and Ibans.”<sup>21</sup>*

One respondent summed up what he felt as follows;

*“Feel Malaysian. All things done Malaysian style”<sup>22</sup>*

Six of the ten who gave their identification as Chinese as weak, gave reasons similar to the above for not identifying strongly.

---

<sup>16</sup> Respondent No.2, Group B.

<sup>17</sup> Respondent No.16, Group B. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

<sup>18</sup> Respondent No.7, Group D. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

<sup>19</sup> Respondent No.9, Group D.

<sup>20</sup> Respondent No.13, Group B.

<sup>21</sup> Respondent No.4, Group C.

<sup>22</sup> Respondent No.3, Group D.

*“ I interacted with a mix from young. This is due to the influence of my father 's attitude. I was brought up to think of people as people. ”<sup>23</sup>*

*“Due to my childhood background. Neighbours a mix. Also my background as a banker. ”<sup>24</sup>*

*“I know I am Chinese, but I do not feel Chinese, more Malaysian. I do not feel the difference. I mix with all. ”<sup>25</sup>*

*“ I know I am Chinese, it is a fact. But I mix well with others and would not mind being absorbed into their culture. I do not have the “I am a Chinese ’ attitude ”<sup>26</sup>*

*“I blend in well with other races. I mix easily with all. I do not feel the difference even when they have different customs like festivals. We go along with them. ”<sup>27</sup>*

*“I feel more a Malaysian, a mixture of everything. I was brought up that way. My parents have a wide variety of friends and they feel the same towards all. ”<sup>28</sup>*

While for some the feeling of non-difference from others was something which may be generally felt at all times, for others it can be seen that constant close contact and familiarity with people from other ethnic groups had diluted the feeling of difference.

---

<sup>23</sup> Respondent No.1, Group C.

<sup>24</sup> Respondent No.2, Group C.

<sup>25</sup> Respondent No.12, Group B.

<sup>26</sup> Respondent No.10, Group B.

<sup>27</sup> Respondent No.13, Group D. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

<sup>28</sup> Respondent No.3, Group B.

*Contrasts* were not felt, or were of no significance. On the other hand, as the following respondents who identified strongly show, isolation from people of other communities may strengthen the feeling of being Chinese. Family teachings and socialization were also important.

*“It has been instilled in me that I should be proud of my heritage. I grew up with Chinese.”*<sup>29</sup>

*“It is the way I was brought up. I will always think of myself as Chinese. I mix with Chinese more.”*<sup>30</sup>

The above observation that close interaction erased *boundaries* does not have general application. For some, the *contrasts* remained and in some cases may even have become accentuated. A respondent who identified strongly as Chinese had this to say:

*“I will mix with all, but there are differences - language, skin. Chinese look more high class and have better manners. Some of the others spit.”*<sup>31</sup>

Two others, although they identify weakly, explained the reasons for their identification as follows:

*“The only reason for grouping with the Chinese is the fear of making mistakes in talking, action, et cetera.”*<sup>32</sup>

*“Only aware of it when unable to communicate.”*<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Respondent No.12 Group D.

<sup>30</sup> Respondent No11, Group B.

<sup>31</sup> Respondent No.7, Group B. From notes translated from a mixture of Foochow and English.

<sup>32</sup> Respondent No.10, Group A. From notes translated from Hokkien.

<sup>33</sup> Respondent No.10, Group C. From notes translated from a mixture of Foochow and Hokkien.

The factors which make up the *contrasts* or *differences* which give rise to *boundaries* were peculiar to the individual. Although most gave the usual factors such as birth, physical appearance, culture, and language, the various combinations and differing emphasis placed, including with regard to the different aspects of culture, suggested a highly individual nature of identification. For example, of the 31 respondents who identified as moderate or strong, 11 gave physical appearance as one of the determining factors, but another 4 stated that physical appearance had nothing to do with their identification. Eleven respondents gave language as a factor, with two naming it as the sole reason for identifying as Chinese. Five mentioned food and five mentioned dress. A more idiosyncratic reason was the one given by the respondent who said that as a Chinese he was different because he was:

*“Richer, behaviour better. For example, teachers like me better.”*<sup>34</sup>

The preceding data represent *contrasts* and *differences* which spring from the individual. As the following responses show, for others the feeling of *contrasts* or *differences* was imposed or forced on them. One respondent who identified strongly had this to say;

*“It is a fact, not by choice. Born a Chinese and people label me a Chinese.”*<sup>35</sup>

For 5 other respondents, *categorization* by the state either strengthened, or was the reason for the feeling of difference, and by implication the reason for identifying.

---

<sup>34</sup> Respondent No.12, Group D.

<sup>35</sup> Respondent No.5, Group B.



*“It is because of the political, social and economic make up of the country which is based on racial lines. The state is making one identify as a Chinese.*

*Socially I do not identify as a Chinese.”<sup>36</sup>*

*“Because of government policy. As a Chinese one is different from the Malays. One is in competition with them and is not in equal position with them. I do not feel the same way when I am with Malays here in Christchurch.”<sup>37</sup>*

*“It is the government that separates you, the people don’t. When we mix there is no barrier because all are Malaysians. We grow up together, work together and go through the same education system. We are all originally Asians.”<sup>38</sup>*

*“Politics is most important. Government policies strengthen the feeling of being non-native.”<sup>39</sup>*

*“It is the system which identifies you. It forces you to be distinct. Socially I will still identify as a Chinese but not so strongly.”<sup>40</sup>*

The highly individual nature of identification gives it its *situational* quality.

---

<sup>36</sup> Respondent No.5, Group C.

<sup>37</sup> Respondent No.1, Group B. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

<sup>38</sup> Respondent No.15, Group A.

<sup>39</sup> Respondent No.9, Group C. From notes translated from Hokkien.

<sup>40</sup> Respondent No.6, Group C.

This *situational* quality of ethnic identification is demonstrated succinctly by the respondent who answered the question on Chinese identification in Malaysia as:

*“Sometimes none, sometimes strong. I will not feel it with friends who are liberal. I will feel it with people who emphasize their ethnicity and when it comes to state politics and injustice.”*<sup>41</sup>

Another respondent said:

*“I will only feel it if I am the only one among many from a particular ethnic group - the odd one out. Otherwise I would not think of it.”*<sup>42</sup>

In the next section, further examination of the *situational* quality of ethnicity is undertaken by analysing responses on identification as Chinese in New Zealand.

### **Similarities, Differences and Boundaries: Identification as Chinese in New Zealand**

In this section, for the purpose of analysing further the *situational* quality of ethnic identification, the focus is on the following. First, in New Zealand, do the respondents identify in the same way as they did in Malaysia. Second, for all respondents regardless of whether they indicated some change or no change, did the reasons for identification remain the same in both situations. And third, what is significant about any variation or non-variation in terms of *contrasts* and *similarities* and in relation to intensity.

---

<sup>41</sup> Respondent No.12, Group C.

<sup>42</sup> Respondent No.1, Group D. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

In New Zealand, the intensity of identification for 22 (39%) respondents remained the same as in Malaysia. Thirty-six (63%), however, expressed a shift in the level of intensity between the two *contexts*. Twenty-three (41%) indicated an increase and 12 (21%) indicated a decrease. The number of respondents who strongly identified as Chinese increased from 20 (35%) to 26 (46%) and the number of respondents who did not identify as Chinese dropped from 16 (28%) to 11 (20%). A more detailed breakdown of the numbers in each category of intensity for both *contexts* is shown in table 3.1. By looking at the “total” columns, it can be seen that the change in numbers is not substantial, but overall there is, nevertheless, an increase in intensity in the respondents’ identification as Chinese in New Zealand.

Looking first at the respondents who expressed positive identification as Chinese, it can be seen that a high percentage expressed some variation in or a completely different criteria for, identification. Factors not important in Malaysia became significant in New Zealand and conversely, some factors which were important in Malaysia became insignificant. For example, the four respondents who felt their identification as Chinese was largely due to government policy in Malaysia this time emphasized other factors. One respondent had a strong feeling of solidarity with other Chinese because of external categorization by others;

*“Here in New Zealand the government don’t, the people do... Media racial talk tends to focus on negative. It makes me pull back and hesitate to mix because of fear of confrontation.”*<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Respondent No.15, Group A. Identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia due to government policy.

Culturally the respondent felt the difference in habits, the home and in bringing up children, but the strongest factor was the feeling of community with other Chinese, the feeling of loss in a different environment and the search for a “comfort zone”. Of the other 3 respondents, one felt Chinese because of the way of thinking, food, topics of conversation and similar interests with the Chinese.<sup>44</sup> Another respondent emphasized culture;

*“My roots. Man without culture is nothing. One must feel that way so that one can contribute to the group.”<sup>45</sup>*

The third one gave physical reasons;

*“It is hard to get away from race. Your appearance, everything that identify you as Chinese.”<sup>46</sup>*

The crucial role of *context* in determining identity as well as determining what factors are significant for identification was shown most clearly by the 11 (19%) respondents<sup>47</sup> who did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but who expressed varying levels of positive identification in New Zealand. While all these respondents had not felt any significant *differences* to warrant identification as Chinese in Malaysia, in New Zealand the situation was not the same. This time, most of them expressed the awareness

---

<sup>44</sup> Respondent No.1, Group B. Identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia due to government policy.

<sup>45</sup> Respondent No 5, Group C. Identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia due to government policy.

<sup>46</sup> Respondent No.6, Group C. Identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia mainly due to government policy.

<sup>47</sup> Of these, 3 identified weakly, 4 moderately and 4 Strongly.

that they were born Chinese and that their culture, language and physical appearance were different. One respondent who had been “*comfortable with all*” in Malaysia said he felt visible physically, had different lifestyle, food, different family values, and different views and perspectives.<sup>48</sup> Other respondents came up with three other interesting and noteworthy reasons which were not manifested in Malaysia. One felt Chinese because of the attitude of people outside the group;

*“It is just a weak feeling. I am more conscious of it as a result of people’s attitudes. People are particularly kind, like ‘You’re Chinese, you need help.’ There is no affinity with the Chinese”*<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, another identified as Chinese because of pressure from members of the ingroup;

*“Others in the group would expect you to be one of them. Otherwise they will think you are arrogant.”*<sup>50</sup>

Unlike the above two, the next respondent’s identification is due to the feeling of affinity with the Chinese;

*“Psychologically I interact more freely with own Chinese people. I feel they are my own kind. It is not due to appearance but my way of thinking.”*<sup>51</sup>

Apart from the fact that people attribute their identification to different factors in different *context*, the other notable thing about the responses given for identification in

---

<sup>48</sup> Respondent No.4, Group C.

<sup>49</sup> Respondent No.14, Group A. Identified weakly.

<sup>50</sup> Respondent No10, Group D. Identified as moderately.

<sup>51</sup> Respondent No 13, Group B. Identified strongly.

New Zealand was that they tended to include factors of a different kind to those given for identification in Malaysia. As some of the responses given indicate, respondents talked about having a sense of belonging and a feeling of sharing qualities with other Chinese. More examples of responses to this effect were provided by the following interviewees. One respondent ascribed her shift from a weak to a strong identification to;

*“The feeling of comfort with other Chinese, but not of strong views about others. It is easier to communicate with the Chinese. This is because I do not know the language of the others and I do not feel I belong.”*<sup>52</sup>

Another respondent said her strong identity is due to different behaviour and way of life but phrased her reasons in a way which emphasized the feeling of sharing *similarities* with other Chinese;

*“The Chinese are more traditional, the others are more open. I feel it is difficult to live and converse with them. With the Chinese the lifestyle is the same so it is easier to communicate with them”*<sup>53</sup>

Two other respondents also stressed the feeling of belonging to the Chinese community, with each giving a different reason. One attributed it to his being *“suspicious of other races”*<sup>54</sup> and the other said he got *“along very well with the Taiwanese”*<sup>55</sup>

Returning to the point made earlier that the factors given for identification in New Zealand are of a different kind, the other notable observation is the increase in the number

---

<sup>52</sup> Respondent No.10, Group A. From notes translated from Hokkien.

<sup>53</sup> Respondent No.7, Group B.

<sup>54</sup> Respondent No.2, Group C. Weakly in Malaysia, moderately in New Zealand.

<sup>55</sup> Respondent No.7 Group D. None in Malaysia, strongly in New Zealand.

of respondents who referred to Chinese “thinking” or values as a factor. Seven respondents referred to it compared to only two in Malaysia. Also noteworthy are the responses of three others who felt Chinese because of the pressure of other people’s attitude;

*“People categorize you and this makes you feel you belong to the group. I feel I have to belong to a group. I feel a little Chinese because of upbringing but this would not matter if people do not categorize. On its own the feeling is weak.”*<sup>56</sup>

*“I feel Chinese because of what others feel about me and not the other way.”*<sup>57</sup>

*“Conscious of what people think”*<sup>58</sup>

Although the number is not enough to make a conclusive generalization, the data in this section nevertheless show that in New Zealand there was a shift towards the *subjective* dimension of ethnic identification. More references were made to feeling a sense of belonging. What was manifested more clearly was the highly individual and *situational* nature of ethnic identification. Further evidence of the importance of *context* was shown by the six respondents whose identification shifted from positive identification to negative identification as Chinese.

Among the 11 respondents who did not identify as Chinese in New Zealand only 5 had identified the same way in Malaysia.<sup>59</sup> Of the other six, one had identified weakly,

<sup>56</sup> Respondent No.13, Group D. Weakly in Malaysia, strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>57</sup> Respondent No.8, Group B. Moderately in Malaysia, strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>58</sup> Respondent No.4, Group B. Strongly in Malaysia, moderately in New Zealand.

<sup>59</sup> Among the 16 respondents who did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia, 5 identified the same way, 3 weakly, 4 moderately and 4 strongly in New Zealand.

3 moderately and 2 strongly. Of the 5 who did not identify as Chinese in both places, 4 gave the same reasons, which was that they did not feel any difference. More interesting are the responses of the 6 who said they did not identify as Chinese because they felt an alternative identity. For these respondents, the different *context* gave significance to qualities which warranted a different identification. Two said they felt Malaysian Chinese rather than Chinese.<sup>60</sup> One said she felt Malaysian and had this to say;

*“I feel Malaysian rather than Chinese. Being brought up in Malaysian society, I do not know the true Chinese.”*<sup>61</sup>

Two said they felt Asian for the following reasons;

*“Asians stick together here compared to Sarawak. Asians are totally different from Kiwis in appearance and physical features. For example, when entering some place, you are immediately conscious you are different. In Malaysia when you go somewhere all are Asians and there is no great difference.”*<sup>62</sup>

*“I will not identify as Chinese but as Asian. This is because of my accent when I speak English and my physical appearance. I look fair and people think I am Japanese.”*<sup>63</sup>

Another respondent explained not identifying as Chinese because;

<sup>60</sup> Respondent No.2, Group A and Respondent No.17, Group B. They identified as Chinese strongly and moderately, respectively in Malaysia. Their reasons for identifying as Malaysian Chinese were discussed under a different interview question which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>61</sup> Respondent No.8, Group A, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia.

<sup>62</sup> Respondent No.9, Group D, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia.

<sup>63</sup> Respondent No.12, Group D, identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia.



*“It is not a Chinese feeling. I feel non-white. I feel there are two groups in the world - the white and the rest. I put myself in the other.”<sup>64</sup>*

The above responses exemplify further the *flexible, situational* quality of ethnic identification and the importance of *contrasts* in determining identification *boundaries*. Due to this nature of ethnic identification, it is possible for people to have alternative identities which are effected through the possession of qualities which are relevant for each identity. Data on the identification as Malaysian in New Zealand in the next section further sheds light on this observation. It shows what factors respondents use as reasons for identifying as Malaysian. It is also demonstrated that it is possible for people to have simultaneous alternative ethnic identities within the same *context*.

### **Identification as Malaysian in New Zealand.**

As a fact of nationality, all the respondents would identify officially as Malaysian. This is because, at the time of the interview, all the respondents held permanent resident status and had not acquired citizenship in New Zealand.<sup>65</sup> As the interview question was concerned with their identification based on what they actually felt, the responses were more varied. In their identification as Malaysian, respondents, including both those who had identified positively as Chinese and those who did not, referred to qualities of a

---

<sup>64</sup> Respondent No.10, Group B, identified as Chinese weakly in Malaysia.

<sup>65</sup> For immigrants from Malaysia, acquiring citizenship in another country requires, by Malaysian law, giving up their Malaysian citizenship. Many immigrants, particularly those who still have interests such as property and business in Malaysia, are, therefore hesitant about getting citizenship.

different kind to that used for the Chinese identity. For those who identified positively to both identities in New Zealand, the qualities existed side by side, each exercising significance when appropriate and relevant.

Table 3.2 provides responses on identification as Chinese and identification as Malaysian in New Zealand. Thirty-six respondents identified as Malaysian - twenty-one identified strongly, 7 moderately and 8 weakly. Twenty-nine of these had also identified as Chinese - 16 strongly, 7 moderately and 6 weakly. The breakdown within each category of intensity for both identities is shown in the table. Taking as evidence the number of respondents (21) who said they did not identify as Malaysian, it can be concluded that legally defined nationality alone was not sufficient basis for identification for many people. This is shown quite clearly by some of the responses by those who did not identify as Malaysian;

*“I will identify as Malaysian if asked, but I do not feel Malaysian.”<sup>66</sup>*

*“I will not identify as Malaysian unless people ask. I identify as Malaysian because I come from Malaysia and not because I feel Malaysian.”<sup>67</sup>*

Two respondents said they did not feel Malaysian because they had studied and lived in Singapore for a long time.<sup>68</sup> Eight others said they did not identify as Malaysian because

---

<sup>66</sup> Respondent No.7, Group A did not identify as Chinese at all.

<sup>67</sup> Respondent No.8, Group D identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and moderately in New Zealand.

<sup>68</sup> Respondent No.15, Group B did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified weakly in New Zealand. Respondent No.5, Group D identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and in New Zealand.

they felt an alternative identity. Three of these said they felt Asian,<sup>69</sup> another 4 felt Chinese,<sup>70</sup> and 1 felt Malaysian Chinese<sup>71</sup>.

Nationality may be the basis for a weak identity, but for those who identified moderately and strongly, this identity involved more than just a matter of official nationality. Evidence of this was shown clearly in the responses of those who identified moderately and strongly, but this observation is given further support by those who explained their weak identification as due to the lack or absence of factors which they believed would have strengthened the identity. Instructive of this are the following explanations given by three respondents for their weak identification;

*“I would identify as Malaysian, but I do not know if I feel Malaysian. I feel neutral no sense of love or distaste for the country.”<sup>72</sup>*

*“I lived and studied in Singapore a long time, so long that I do not know my own country. If I had a choice, I would identify with Singapore.”<sup>73</sup>*

---

<sup>69</sup> Respondent No.15, Group A identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and strongly in New Zealand. Respondent No.4, Group B identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and moderately in New Zealand. Respondent No.7, Group B identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and in New Zealand.

<sup>70</sup> Respondent No.10, Group A identified as Chinese weakly in Malaysia and strongly in New Zealand. Respondent No.5, Group C identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and in New Zealand. Respondent No.8, Group C identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and in New Zealand. Respondent No.7, Group D did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>71</sup> Respondent No.3, Group D, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified moderately in New Zealand.

<sup>72</sup> Respondent No.5, Group B, identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and weakly in New Zealand.

<sup>73</sup> Respondent No.8, Group B, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and strongly in New Zealand.

*"I have no strong attachment to it. I do not like the lifestyle or the people who are not open-minded or sympathetic."*<sup>74</sup>

To the above respondents, their lack of attachment to the country was the cause of their weak identity. The feeling of attachment to the place and people made up a very important aspect of the identification as Malaysian. It was given as the main reason for the majority of those who indicated a moderate or strong Malaysian identity. Seventeen attributed their identification to their feeling of attachment to the country or to the people. Another 5, although they did not specifically state an attachment, also attributed it to the fact that Malaysia was their place of origin. Other factors mentioned were, Malaysian culture (9 respondents), language (6 respondents) and traits (2 respondents).

To those who identified as Malaysian because Malaysia was their country of origin much more significance was attached to the identity than mere nationality classification. Respondents associated identification with a high degree of psychological attachment. What this meant to the respondents can best be captured through the words of some of the respondents themselves;

*"It is pretty strong. Malaysia is where I was brought up. It is my country."*<sup>75</sup>

*"I grew up there. It is a principle, a respect for the country. My roots are there.*

*Compared to other Asian countries, the Chinese in Malaysia are better off."*<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Respondent No 16, Group B, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>75</sup> Respondent No.6, Group C, identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and New Zealand.

<sup>76</sup> Respondent No.9, Group C, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and strongly in New Zealand. From notes translated from Hokkien.

Some respondents exhibited stronger emotional attachment to the place and the people than the above;

*“I love the place. It is home.”<sup>77</sup>*

*“I feel a sense of belonging to Malaysia because my roots are there. It is my place of birth, I grew up there and my mind is oriented there.”<sup>78</sup>*

*“It is my place of birth. I feel an attachment because I grew up there, was educated there and worked there. I cannot give up the feeling that it is home.”<sup>79</sup>*

*“I feel an attachment to the people. I look out for my own kind. I was brought up with my own people.”<sup>80</sup>*

In addition to the feeling of attachment others pointed to the feeling of sharing the same way of life with other Malaysians;

*“I come from Malaysia. I was born there and I was brought up the Malaysian way. I have the Malaysian way of life and food.”<sup>81</sup>*

*“Malaysia is my country. I feel Malaysia is home. I have a similar lifestyle with other Malaysians.”<sup>82</sup>*

---

<sup>77</sup> Respondent No.1, Group D, identified as Chinese weakly in Malaysia and in New Zealand.

<sup>78</sup> Respondent No.12, Group C, identified as Chinese sometimes strongly, sometimes none at all in Malaysia, and strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>79</sup> Respondent No 9, Group A, identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and in New Zealand. From notes translated from a mixture of Foochow, Hokkien and English.

<sup>80</sup> Respondent No.13, Group B, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified strongly in New Zealand.

<sup>81</sup> Respondent No.11 Group C, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and weakly in New Zealand. From notes translated from Hokkien.

<sup>82</sup> Respondent No.6, Group D, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified weakly in New Zealand. From notes translated from a mixture of Hokkien and English.

The feeling of belonging to the place and sharing similar qualities with the people gave other respondents a strong sense of pride;

*“I am proud of being Malaysian. Malaysians are fine people to be with. They are more relaxed, easy going and hardworking. They have an amazing cultural background multicultural, and the food. Their language - Malaysian English - how they talk and joke with each other.”*<sup>83</sup>

*“I am proud of being Malaysian. Malaysia is home, everybody accepts you. I can speak a number of languages and dialects.”*<sup>84</sup>

*“It has a lot to do with being proud of the atmosphere, the Malaysian culture. The experience of school life, growing up with all kinds of culture, the feeling that it is home.”*<sup>85</sup>

The above responses reveal the sense of belonging and group identity respondents felt combined with an affection for the place and people. For some other respondents, the sense of belonging to the group was not an emotional association, but was based on the feeling of sharing some *similarities* with others in the group. One respondent had this to say;

*“Malaysian in mannerism. The way we talk, we are direct and frank with Malaysians because Malaysians understand each other better. I have to be more careful with others.”*<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Respondent No.10, Group B, identified as Chinese weakly in Malaysia but none at all in New Zealand.

<sup>84</sup> Respondent No.9, Group D, did not identify as Chinese at all.

<sup>85</sup> Respondent No.11, Group D, identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and in New Zealand.

<sup>86</sup> Respondent No.14, Group A, did not identify as Chinese in Malaysia but identified weakly in New Zealand.

Another explained that;

*“It is more a bonding than a preference. A bond which leads to curiosity.”<sup>87</sup>*

*With Malaysians there are common things to talk about, things like politics, news. If it were someone from Pakistan I would not know what to say.”<sup>88</sup>*

In comparison with the reasons given for the Chinese identity which were highly descent based, the reasons for Malaysian identity were largely based on historical experience. For respondents who identified positively in both ways, the simultaneous existence of the two identities arose from differing factors which were of significance and relevance to each identity. One respondent explained it in the following way;

*“I feel an attachment to motherland. I was born there and my roots are there.*

*When you compare this with the feeling of being Chinese, it is not a feeling of being from China.”<sup>89</sup>*

The Malaysian identity springs from familiarity with the place and people, the feeling of sharing common experiences. The “Malaysian culture” referred to is an acquired culture. One which is the product of exposure through living side by side with others. The

<sup>87</sup> By “curiosity” the respondent meant the inclination to converse.

<sup>88</sup> Respondent No.2, Group C, identified as Chinese weakly in Malaysia and moderately in New Zealand.

<sup>89</sup> Respondent No.12, Group A, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia and in New Zealand.

Chinese identity on the other hand is taken as a fact of birth. The Chinese culture is inherited and enforced through socialization within the home and community.

## Conclusion

This chapter focused on the *situational* quality of ethnic identification. It examined empirical evidence in relation to the first hypothesis which postulated that individuals identify according to shared qualities which stand in *contrast* to other shared qualities. Consequently, people may employ different criteria for identifying in a particular way in different *contexts*. They may also identify in a different way within different *contexts*. The data analysed produced four findings which provided strong evidence to validate the hypothesis.

The first major finding was that ethnic identification is highly individual in nature. It can be seen, throughout the analysis carried out in this chapter, that the factors which were considered important and significant in establishing any identity were dependent on the individual. This is manifested most clearly by the varied nature of the answers given by the interviewees in terms of intensity as well as criteria for identification. The highly individual nature of ethnic identification gives it its *situational* quality. This observation explains the underlying basis for the next three findings which are more directly related to the hypothesis.



The second finding confirms the importance of *similarities* and *contrasts* on identification. There was considerable evidence that identification was founded on what were recognized and accepted as shared similar qualities which created *boundaries* when in *contrast* to other shared qualities. This is discernible from the responses to all three questions on identification. It can be broadly generalized that identification as Chinese was mainly based on shared qualities inherited by descent and strengthened through socialization. Identification as Malaysian, on the other hand, was based on qualities acquired through historical experiences. Even though the respondents placed differing emphasis and gave differing combinations of factors, the crucial point is that these factors gave rise to *boundaries*. When there were no *contrasts*, there were no *boundaries* and the need to identify in a particular way did not ensue. This leads to the third and fourth findings which assess the relationship between *contexts*, *contrasts* and identification.

The third finding concerns the *situational* nature of ethnic identification and the role of *context* in determining the criteria for identification. A comparison of the answers to the questions on identification as Chinese in Malaysia and in New Zealand showed that a majority indicated some variation in or an entirely different criteria for identification within the two *contexts*. Factors which were not significant, or were less significant in Malaysia became more important in New Zealand and vice versa. There was also evidence, although not conclusive, which suggested that there was a shift towards a more *subjective* manner of identification in New Zealand. Overall, even though it cannot be claimed to have general application, there is sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion

that, for most people, different *contexts* gave rise to different *contrasts*. Consequently, the factors which were significant for an identity depended on *context*.

Because *context* is crucial in establishing significant *contrasts*, it is also of primary importance in shaping how people identify. The fourth finding, to a large extent, validates this point. A comparison of identification as Chinese in Malaysia and identification as Chinese in New Zealand showed that 35 (61.4%) interviewees indicated a change in the intensity of their identification between the two *contexts*.<sup>90</sup> There was a shift towards stronger identification as Chinese in New Zealand. The importance of *context* in influencing how people identify was most clearly exemplified by the 17 respondents who either identified positively or negatively in one *context* but the reverse in the other *context*.<sup>91</sup> That *context* is crucial in determining how people identify is given further support by 6 interviewees who said they did not identify as Chinese in New Zealand because they felt an alternative identity.<sup>92</sup> For them, the different *context* gave significance to qualities which called for a different identification.

From the findings in this chapter it can be concluded that the first hypothesis is valid for the majority of people. For most people, “*ethnic identification is situational and flexible. Individuals identify according to what shared qualities stand in contrast to other shared qualities within different contexts*”. This results in the use of different

---

<sup>90</sup> See Table 3.1

<sup>91</sup> Eleven identified negatively in Malaysia but positively in New Zealand and 6 identified positively in Malaysia but negatively in New Zealand.

<sup>92</sup> Two said they felt Malaysian Chinese, one said Malaysian, two said Asian and one said non-white.

criteria for identification in different *contexts* and in people identifying differently in different *contexts*. The findings in this chapter have a further implication with respect to the ethnic identification phenomenon in that people can simultaneously have multiple identities which are not mutually exclusive. This facet of ethnic identification is the focus of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### Multiple Ethnic Identities

The previous chapter concluded with the observation that people can have more than one ethnic identity. For most individuals, ethnic identification was based on sets of significant factors that became the markers for each relevant identity. The identities were not mutually exclusive and people can switch between alternative identities with ease. This chapter explores further the phenomenon of multiple ethnic identities in two ways. The first part of the chapter analyses data in terms of the second hypothesis. The second part examines data in relation to three variables: gender, age and education.

#### Nesting Identities

The goal here is to delineate the phenomenon of multiple ethnic identities by examining the data in terms of the second hypothesis, which is, that:

*“Ethnic identification is a set of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.”*

Based on the hypothesis, it is postulated that ethnic identification is predicated on sets of significant factors which emanate at varying distance from the individual. At any point, significant *contrasts* in relation to others create the *boundary* for an identity. This occurs as a *set of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness*, which manifests

as *nesting identities*. The constituents of these sets of significant factors expand and contract in inverse relation to the degree of *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness* of membership within alternative identities. At the most inclusive level are those factors which are used as markers for the identity with the broadest membership. Membership progressively narrows as the numbers of markers expand, decreasing *inclusiveness*, and by the same token increasing *exclusiveness*.

### **Nature of Data**

For the purpose of evaluating the validity of the second hypothesis, interviewees were asked questions on identification with the purpose of eliciting two kinds of data. First the questions sought to find out if people had multiple *nesting identities*, and second, they sought to examine what factors determined each identification. More specifically, in relation to the hypothesis, the first *objective* was directed towards establishing broad patterns on *nesting* identification in terms of numbers. The second *objective* was to infer, from the information given, *nesting inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*.

For the benefit of clarity, only one set of *nesting identities*, within the context of New Zealand, was considered. The focus was solely on the differing order of Chinese identities, starting from identification such as Chinese at the most inclusive level to other levels of identity based on nationality, region, state, town, dialect and clan. The questions used for this purpose commenced with the question on identification as Chinese in New

Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Following this, respondents were asked if they identified as Malaysian Chinese when they were among Chinese, and following that, if they identified with the region (East or West Malaysia) they came from when they were among Malaysian Chinese, and so on. Here data is analysed, and presented as broad patterns in terms of numbers and categories.

### **Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness: Nesting Identities**

Only two respondents said they did not identify positively in any of the ways posed in the questions.<sup>2</sup> Of the rest, 46 identified as Chinese, 43 as Malaysian Chinese, 10 identified with region, 32 with state, 10 with town and 16 with dialect. None identified with clan. A more detailed breakdown of intensity within each category is shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.2 shows the various combinations of *nesting* identities. Fifty of the 55 interviewees who identified positively in some way, had two or more *nesting identities*. Broadly summarized, among these, 17 (34%) had 2 *nesting identities*, 18 (36%) had 3, 12 (24%) had 4, and 3 (6%) had 5. Respondents varied in the combination of *nesting identities* they possess. A large majority, numbering 37, identified as both Chinese and

---

<sup>1</sup> Data on identification as Chinese used here is the same as that used in the previous chapter.

<sup>2</sup> One of them, Group A, respondent No.7, gave a negative answer to all questions on identification in the interview schedule. The other, Group B, respondent No. 9, identified as Chinese moderately in Malaysia.

Malaysian Chinese, making the two groups the broadest *nesting identities*. Identification with state, totaling 30, also comprised quite a large *nesting* group.

**TABLE 4.1**

**INTENSITY OF IDENTIFICATION**

Identity	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Total
<i>Chinese</i>	7	13	26	<b>46</b>
<i>Malaysian Chinese</i>	3	8	32	<b>43</b>
<i>Region</i>	3	2	5	<b>10</b>
<i>State</i>	4	2	26	<b>32</b>
<i>Town</i>	2	2	6	<b>10</b>
<i>Dialect</i>	4	4	8	<b>16</b>

**Identification as Chinese**

In comparison to the other identities considered in this study, the number who identified positively as Chinese in New Zealand, totaling 46, constituted the highest figure.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See table 4.1.

TABLE 4.2

NESTING IDENTITIES

Chinese	Malaysian Chinese	Region	State	Town	Dialect	
X	X	X	X	X		2
X	X	X	X			2
X	X	X		X		1
X	X	X				3
X	X		X	X		1
X	X		X	X	X	1
X	X		X		X	6
X	X				X	3
X	X		X			7
X	X			X		1
X	X					10
X			X	X	X	1
X			X		X	1
X			X			3
X					X	2
	X	X	X	X		1
	X	X	X			1
	X		X	X		1
	X		X		X	1
	X		X			1
			X	X	X	1
						50
<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	

This confirmed it as the most inclusive identity in terms of numbers. Identification was mainly attributed to factors<sup>4</sup> such as, language (37%), birth (28%), physical features (26%), and culture (22%). Other factors included, thinking and values (13%), categorization (13%), feeling of kinship (11%), upbringing (9%), food (9%), lifestyle

<sup>4</sup> These factors were described in chapter 3.



(9%), and character (4%). In addition to their identity as Chinese, 44 of the 46 also had one or more other *nesting identities*.

### **Identification as Malaysian Chinese**

The question on identification as Malaysian Chinese expressly asked interviewees if they identified as Malaysian Chinese when they were among Chinese in general in New Zealand. Forty-three respondents gave positive answers: all but one of the 43 also had one or more other *nesting identities*. A majority (65%), mentioned speech as one of the reasons for their identification. Other factors given included attitude and behaviour (40%), local acculturation (33%), attachment to place and people (33%), ideas and world view (23%), dress (23%), and feeling of kinship (12%).

Speech *differences* between Malaysian Chinese and the Chinese from other places took three forms. First, in comparison to other Chinese, the Malaysian Chinese considered themselves to be multilingual in that they could speak English and Bahasa Malaysia as well as Chinese. Secondly, the Malaysian Chinese could speak a number of dialects whereas Chinese from other places mostly spoke only one dialect. For example, those from China and Taiwan spoke Mandarin, those from Hong Kong spoke Cantonese and those from Thailand spoke Teochew. Thirdly, for those Malaysian Chinese who spoke Mandarin and Cantonese, there were *differences* with other speakers of the two dialects due to accent and the *inclusion* of local terms.

The belief that the Malaysian Chinese were culturally different from other Chinese was quite strong among some interviewees. As a consequence of the multi-cultural environment it was generally felt that the Chinese culture had been “Malaysianized”<sup>5</sup> into a mixed culture, and the Malaysian Chinese were no longer “pure” Chinese. For example, one respondent<sup>6</sup> said she did not feel she qualified as “100% Chinese”, and another<sup>7</sup> said she felt “a mix of people”. The influence of local environment extended to world view and ideas. Malaysian Chinese were thought to be strongly influenced by English education, were more tolerant of other races, and had different political ideas from other Chinese. Having come from a developing country, the Malaysian Chinese saw themselves as more friendly and humble, while those from Taiwan and Hong Kong were seen as cliquish and said to have an attitude of superiority. Among the interviewees who were students, it was felt that, compared to the Malaysian Chinese who were usually dressed in casual and practical clothes, the Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan dressed smartly in the latest trend and brand names.

### **Identification based on region of origin**

The interview sample included 44 people from East Malaysia and 13 people from West Malaysia. Five (11%) of those who came from East Malaysia identified as East Malaysian

---

<sup>5</sup> The term was used by 3 respondents.

<sup>6</sup> Respondent No.5 Group A.

<sup>7</sup> Respondent No.5 Group B.

and 5 (38%) of those from West Malaysia identified as West Malaysian. Almost all the respondents who indicated positive identification based on their region of origin, attributed it solely to attitude. East Malaysians appeared to think that those from the East were more conservative, relaxed, humble and better people to do business with. The West Malaysians were thought to have a superior, “big city” attitude, to think highly of themselves and to have a low opinion of those from the East. West Malaysians on the other hand were of the opinion that the East Malaysians were cliquish. One respondent, however, attributed his identification to the different economic policies the Malaysian government undertook in each region.

### **Identification based on state of origin**

The Malaysian Chinese who took part in the interview came from five states, namely, Sarawak (39) and Sabah (5) in East Malaysia, and Pinang (6), Perak (4) and Selangor (3) in West Malaysia.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-two interviewees - 25 from Sarawak, 2 from Sabah and 5 from Pinang - indicated having an identification based on the states they came from. A majority (63%) attributed their identification to an attachment to the place, people and local culture<sup>9</sup> which produced a sense of kinship. A large number from Sarawak pointed to the fact that the state was less developed and modernized, and had a more peaceful and

---

<sup>8</sup> This disproportionality is reflective of the composition of the Malaysian Chinese community in Christchurch. Compared with the other states, those who came from Sarawak make up the largest number.

<sup>9</sup> Pinang’s “baba” heritage is particularly distinct as a creolized culture - a blending of Malay and Chinese culture.

harmonious environment. It was this perception of disparity between the states in East Malaysia and the states in West Malaysia which led to a perception of *differences* in character and outlook pointed out by 11 respondents. Those from Sarawak appeared to think that the people from Sarawak are more friendly, sincere and hardworking while those from the West Malaysian states were more outgoing, outspoken, less friendly, snobbish and superior. Their perception may not be unfounded judging from the response of one interviewee from Pinang who admitted, “we think we are smarter”.<sup>10</sup> The belief that the Malaysian government had not been fair, as pointed out by two interviewees, accentuated the demarcation. One respondent from Sabah said that the “suppression” and “unequal treatment” accorded to the state made the feeling of unity among the people very strong.<sup>11</sup> The other, from Sarawak, remarked that she felt Sarawak was “a second class state”.<sup>12</sup>

Not all factors highlighted were of a confrontational nature. Some interviewees attributed identification to sharing common experiences and knowledge of things local which enabled better communication and understanding. Others mentioned speech and were generally of the opinion that those from Sabah and Sarawak spoke more Mandarin and dialects, while those from the states in West Malaysia spoke more English and Bahasa Malaysia.

---

<sup>10</sup> Respondent No.12, Group B.

<sup>11</sup> Respondent No.8, Group A.

<sup>12</sup> Respondent No.9, Group A.

### **Identification based on town of origin**

Eleven towns were represented in the interview sample.<sup>13</sup> Ten of the interviewees - 4 from Kuching, 4 from Sibü, 1 from Tawau and 1 from Pinang - indicated having an identity based on the town they came from. Almost all said it was due to their attachment to the place where they were born and bred and to their feeling of kinship with the people.

### **Identification based on dialect**

The 57 respondents came from 7 dialect groups. There were 23 Foochows, 11 Hokkiens, 10 Cantonese, 6 Hakkas, 3 Henghuas, 2 Teochews and 2 Hainanese. Sixteen professed positive identification based on dialect. Of these, 10 were Foochows, 4 were Cantonese and 2 were Hokkiens. All attributed their identification to the feeling of kinship they had towards speakers of their respective dialects. In comparison to Mandarin, which was the medium for Chinese education, dialects were less formal and spoken by both Chinese and non-Chinese educated. Moreover, apart from the fact that speaking the same dialect facilitated understanding and easier communication, each dialect also had its own customs and traditions. All these created a bond with members of the same dialect group.

---

<sup>13</sup> There were 18 from Sibü, 15 from Kuching, 6 from Pinang, 5 from Miri, 3 from Kuala Lumpur, 2 from Ipoh, 2 from Sandakan, 2 from Kota Kinabalu, 1 from Tawau, 1 from Batu Gajah, 1 from Sitiawan and 1 from Bintulu.

### Multiple Nesting Ethnic Identities

The analysis of responses to the questions on *nesting identities* shows that more people identified in some groups and substantially lesser in other groups. From the available data<sup>14</sup> it can be concluded that in terms of numbers, there was considerable evidence of multiple *nesting identification* in relation to identification as Chinese, identification as Malaysian Chinese and identification based on state. There was evidence of identities based on region, town and dialect, but numbers (ranging from 17% to 28% of sample) were too low to be conclusive. There was no evidence of identification based on clan among the respondents.

Although data is not conclusive, there is strong evidence which suggests that the identities which are based on place of origin of progressively differing orders such as nation, region, state and town, involved corresponding differing orders of attachment to place and people. Over each positive identification, interviewees came up with additional factors which would justify *dichotomization* from the immediate wider identity. Those who identified positively in the various ways revealed increasingly parochial attachment which generated from familiarity with place, and with people who shared similar qualities acquired by undergoing similar local socialization processes. In social interaction particularly, there was an inclination towards seeking security and comfort with the familiar. In most cases, identification was derived from stereotyping or preference for

---

<sup>14</sup> See Table 4.1

ingroup, or both. From this observation it can be concluded that, in the case of identities based on differing orders of place of origin, at each level of progressively smaller or narrower (and consequently more exclusive) geographical identity, people employed additional markers for their identification.

From the finding which established that individuals came up with additional demarcating factors at each level of progressively more exclusive *dichotomization*, it can be concluded that, for identities which nest within each other in a progressively more exclusive or more inclusive direction, identity markers increased or decreased in inverse relation to *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*. Identification became more exclusive in an inward direction but at the same time more inclusive when the direction was outward. At each level of *dichotomization*, individuals, by highlighting markers such as *similarities* and *differences* effectuated *inclusion* and *exclusion* of others. Chapter 5 analyses how this takes place. The next part of this chapter focuses on multiple *nesting* ethnic identification by examining data in relation to gender, age and education.

### **Multiple Nesting Ethnic Identities: Gender, Age and Education**

Chapter 3 concluded with the findings which largely validated the theoretical proposition that ethnic identification is *situational* and *flexible*, and that most people have multiple identities. Chapter 4 has thus far examined the way multiple identities nest. The rest of this chapter focuses on examining data for further evidence of the individual nature of

ethnic identification. The *objective* is to examine data in relation to gender, age and education, in order to explore first, whether people of different ages, different genders and people who were differently educated all have multiple *nesting* identities, and second, whether any relationship exists between these variables and the nature of multiple identities. Different gender, age and education involve going through different processes of socialization which influence people's mindset differently. These variables are widely believed to have a strong bearing on the way people think, and consequently would influence the way people identify. In terms of the present *objective*, the rationale is: as ethnic identification is *flexible, situational* and individual in nature, these variables should not have a significant effect on people's multiple identities. In other words, in terms of multiple identities, there would be no consistent variation between, for example, men and women.

### **Nature of Data**

The analysis of data on multiple identities was based on responses to three identities: Chinese, Malaysian and Malaysian Chinese. These three identities comprised the broadest membership. The assessment of relationships between gender and age on one hand, and multiple identification on the other, was based on a comparison between the multiple identification patterns of the different gender and age groups. Any significant variation between the age or gender groups indicates the existence of a relationship. As regards the evaluation of education as a variable, analysis is conducted more specifically in terms of



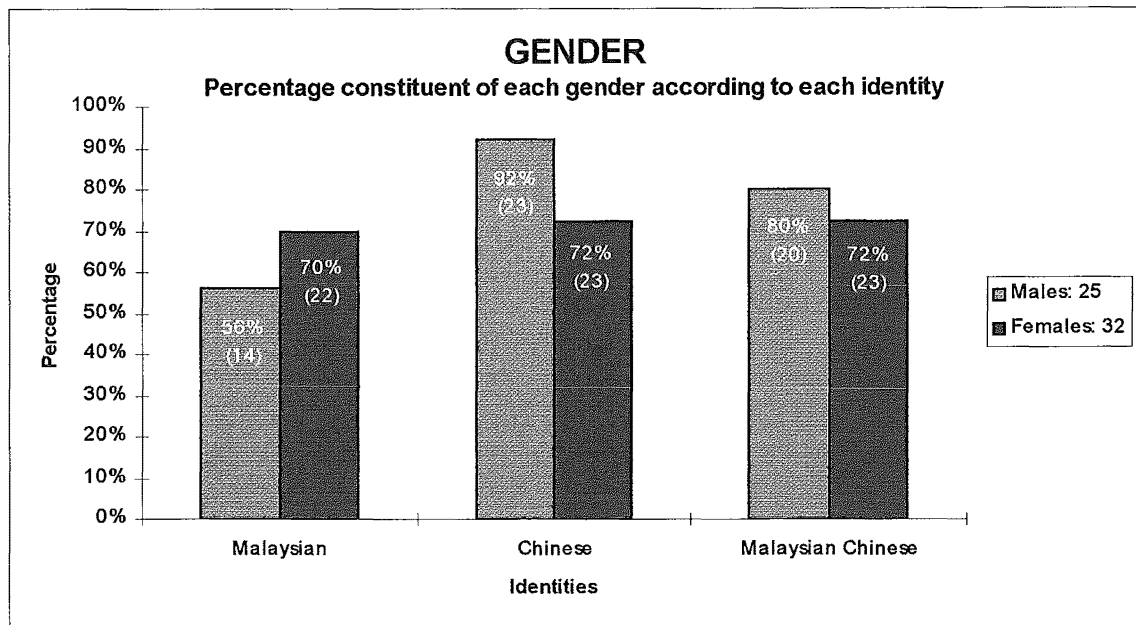
the relationship between Chinese education and multiple identification. Data is presented in the form of graphs, and comparisons are made in terms of percentages. The sample, however, was skewed in that the number of people within each category were, first, small, and second, differed between categories. This may have had consequences on the data.

### **Multiple Ethnic Identities: Gender**

For the majority of people in most societies, men and women assume different roles in society. One common division of roles places men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. Due to different role expectations, each gender undergoes different socialization processes. The possibility that gender may have an effect on the way people identify is conceivable.

The sample of 57 interviewees comprised 32 males and 25 females. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage (and number) of each gender who identified with the three identities: Malaysian, Chinese and Malaysian Chinese. In terms of multiple identities, there were no variation between the genders. High percentages of both genders identified with the three identities. However, there appears to be a variation between the genders in terms of identification as Chinese. The number of males (92%) who identified as Chinese was 20% higher than females (72%).

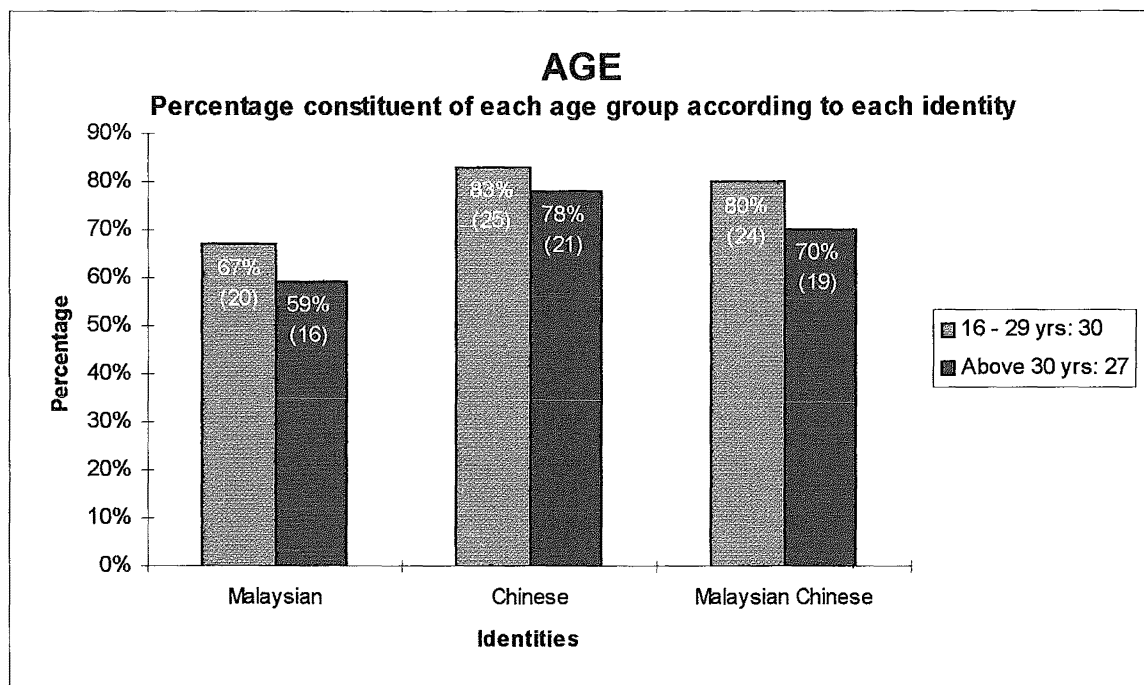
Figure 4.1



### Multiple Ethnic Identities: Age

Age like gender is a factor which can potentially have an influence on the way people identify. Socialization for different age groups differ particularly in terms of historical experiences. Older people would have experienced political and social conditions which would be different from those experienced by younger people. For example, in the case of the Malaysian Chinese, the older interviewees would have experienced colonization by the British, and the younger interviewees would have been born after the formation of Malaysia.

Figure 4.2

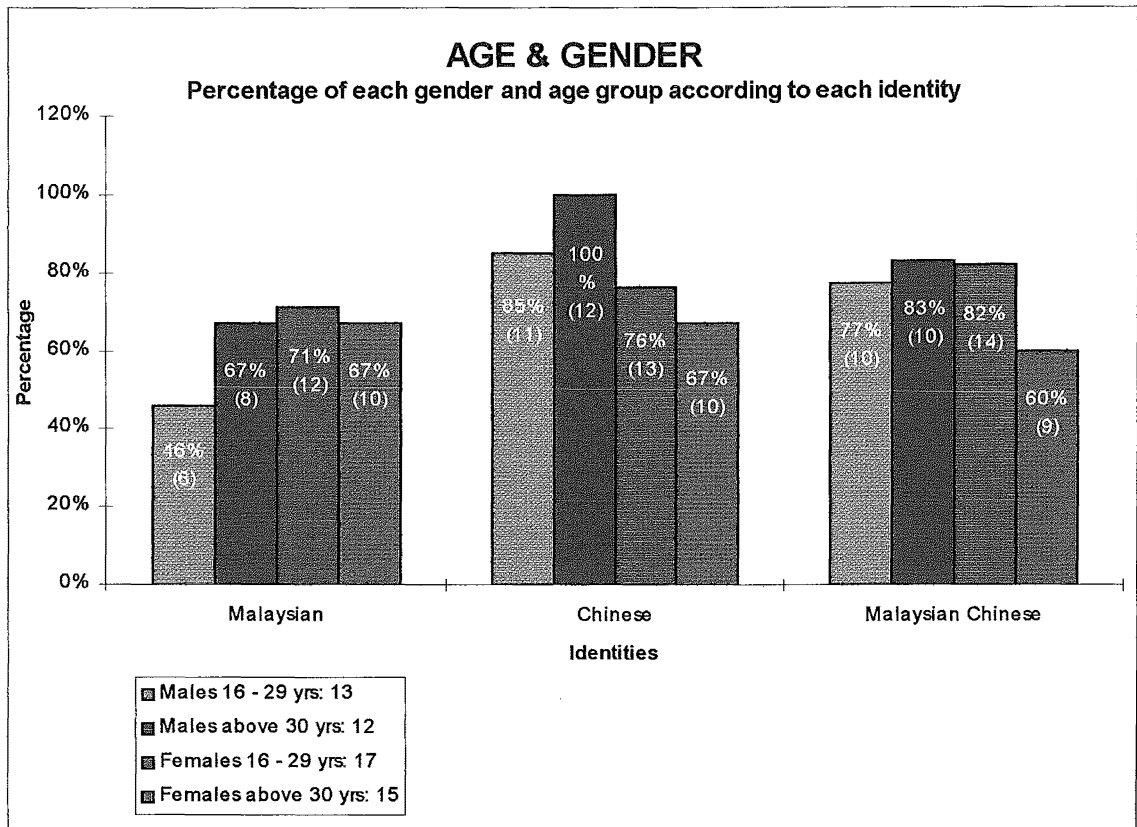


The sample of 57 was divided into two age groups. One group was made up of 30 interviewees who were between 16 to 29 years old. The other was made up of 27 interviewees who were above 30 years old. Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of each age group according to each identity. As can be seen from the graph, there is no significant *difference* in the multiple identities of the two age groups.

### **Multiple Ethnic Identities: Age and Gender**

In this section, the multiple identities of different gender and age groups were examined. Figure 4.3 combines gender and age and shows the percentage of each gender and age group according to each identity. The sample was divided into four groups: male, 16 to 29 years old (13); male, above 30 years old (12); female, 16 to 29 years old (17) and females, above 30 years old (15). This breakdown manifested data which was slightly different from what had been observed so far. All four groups exhibited the propensity for multiple identities, but most conspicuous was the very high percentage (100%) of males who identified as Chinese. Also noticeable were the fewer numbers of males (46%) of the 16 to 29 age group who identified as Malaysian compared to the rest of the sample (67% to 71%). Eighty-five percent of this group identified as Chinese. The higher number of males from both age groups who identified as Chinese may be an outcome of socialization. The Chinese concept of filial piety and the need for the male to carry on the family name are strongly emphasized in most Chinese families. This responsibility would require retaining and maintaining their Chinese identity. That fewer males (16 to 29 age group) identified as Malaysian could also have been an outcome of this. On the whole, the variations were not significantly wide and the data was not conclusive.

Figure 4.3

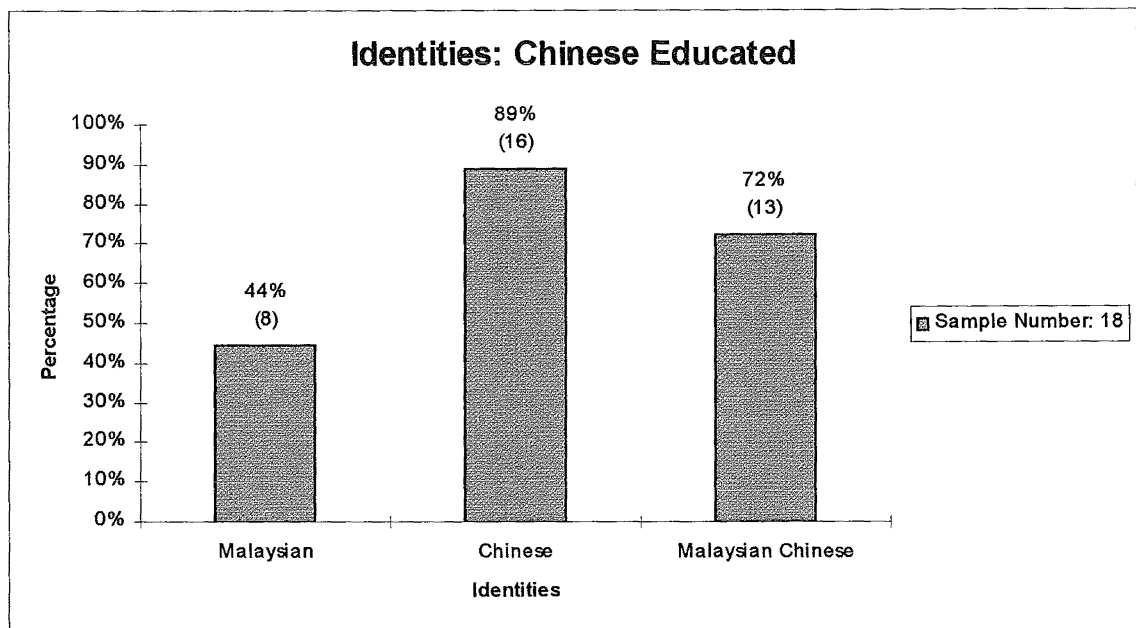


**Multiple Ethnic Identities: Education**

Education dominates a large part of a person’s socialization within society. People’s thinking, ideas and world view are all shaped by their education. It follows that a person’s education will have a strong bearing on the way that person identifies. Education as a variable is here analysed in terms of Chinese education. Chinese education is highly

oriented towards Chinese culture and values. As such, the possibility exists that it would exert influence over the way those who were Chinese-educated identified.

**Figure 4.4**



The examination of education as a variable is limited to 18 interviewees who were solely educated in Chinese or mainly educated in Chinese. Figure 4.4 shows the percentage of those who were Chinese-educated according to each identity. Sixteen (88%) identified as Chinese, 13 (72%) identified as Malaysian Chinese, and 8 (44%) identified as Malaysian. These percentages were roughly similar to the percentages manifested in the other comparisons made so far. Although the number of cases was

small, the data appeared to suggest that there was no relationship between people's education and their multiple identities.

### **Gender, Age and Education**

The examination of data on identification as Malaysian, Chinese and Malaysian Chinese did not show evidence of any significant relationship between gender, age and education, and multiple identities. People of each gender group and age group, and those educated in Chinese did not manifest variation in their number of identities. The absence of a relationship between each variable and multiple identities suggest the *situational* and *flexible* nature of multiple ethnic identification for all these types of individuals.. Different socialization due to gender, age and educational *differences* did not appear to have influenced the existence multiple identities. There was some evidence of the influence of socialization in the type of identity. Among the Malaysian Chinese, more males identified as Chinese. These findings, however, are not conclusive. Data may have been an effect of the nature of the sample.

### **Conclusion**

The first goal of this chapter was to evaluate the validity of the second hypothesis which postulated that ethnic identification was a series of *nesting dichotomizations* of

*inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*. This means that ethnic identification is founded on sets of significant factors at varying distance from the individual. At any point, significant *similarities* and *contrasts* in relation to others create the *boundary* for an identity. The constituents of these sets of significant factors expand and contract in inverse relation to the degree of *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness* of membership within alternative identities. These alternative identities manifest as *nesting identities*.

The first finding concerned *nesting* identities. In term of numbers, there was considerable evidence of multiple *nesting* identification in relation to identification as Chinese, Malaysian Chinese and identification based on state.<sup>15</sup> Numbers on identities based on region, town and dialect were too low to be conclusive. This finding further confirmed that people can have multiple *nesting* identities.

The second finding concerned the postulation that identification markers increase and decrease in inverse relation to the degree of *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*. Although data was not conclusive, there was evidence which suggested that identification based on place of origin of differing order such as nation, region, state and town, involved the use of markers which denoted corresponding differing orders of attachment to place and people. On identifying positively with each identity, respondents came up with additional factors which would justify *dichotomization* from the immediate wider identity. From this finding that individuals came up with additional demarcating markers at each level of progressively more exclusive *dichotomization*, it can be concluded that

---

<sup>15</sup> See Table 4.1



for identities which nest within each other in a progressively more exclusive or more inclusive direction, identity markers increased or decreased in inverse relation to *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*.

The second part of this chapter examined data to explore first, whether people of different gender, age and education all had multiple identities, and second, whether any relationship existed between these three variables and the nature of multiple identities. From the available data, there did not appear to be any evidence of a relationship between each variable and multiple identification. All gender, age and education groups examined similarly had multiple identities. The nature of identities between the groups were also similar except for some indication that more males identified as Chinese. The margin of difference, however was too small to be conclusive. These two findings suggest that, in terms of multiple ethnic identification, socialization was not the only major determining factor in people's propensity for multiple ethnic identification. This finding, although not conclusive, is also suggestive of the *situational*, *flexible*, and individual nature of ethnic identification.

## CHAPTER V

### Inclusion and Exclusion

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 dealt with the first and second hypotheses which postulate first, that ethnic identification is based on qualities which stand in *contrast* in different *context*, and second, that ethnic identification is a *nesting dichotomization* of *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness*. These two dimensions of ethnic identification, which give it its *flexible* and *situational* quality, are responsible for multiple ethnic identities. This chapter expands on the previous two chapters by examining *inclusion* in, and *exclusion* from, membership in each identity. Individuals include or exclude other individuals from membership in an identity by highlighting sets of markers which signify *similarities* or *differences*. By their nature, the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* are inseparable. By the act of *exclusion*, the act of *inclusion* is simultaneously being exercised. For example, members of a certain identity who exclude people who are “different” from membership in that identity are, by the same token, including people who are “not different” within that identity. The goal here is to analyse data in order to map out how individuals, at each level of *dichotomization*, include and exclude others.

#### Nature of Data

The analysis of *inclusion* and *exclusion* is based two sets of data. One set comprised responses on *nesting* identification. This data was used earlier in chapter 4 in the analysis

of *nesting identities*. The other set comprised responses to questions which were aimed at collecting information on *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Interviewees were asked questions on their participation in formal associations, their cultural attachment, their preferences in relation to marriage and socializing, and their linguistic preferences. Information on these issues was used in conjunction with the responses on identification.

Analysis and presentation of data take two forms. First, a brief summary of the additional information gathered for the purpose of analysing *inclusion* and *exclusion* is provided. This covers interviewees' cultural attachment, their linguistic preferences, their preferences in relation to marriage and socializing, and their participation in formal associations. The brief overview is aimed at providing a broader picture of the significance of these issues in the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. More detailed individual responses are incorporated in the individual cases which follow. These issues warrant attention as some characteristics exhibited in relation to them encompass *inclusion* and *exclusion*. For the purpose of analysing *inclusion* and *exclusion*, they are useful in themselves; they are also useful in understanding how individuals include and exclude other individuals in their responses on the various identities.

The second procedure comprises 7 case studies of individual interviewees. These 7 interviewees comprised all those who had 4 or more, moderate to strong multiple identities. This particular group was chosen based on the assumption that those who manifested stronger identities would indicate *inclusion* and *exclusion* more clearly. The 7 cases were not intended to be representative or illustrative, but comprehensive. The

*objective* was to look for natural patterns and variations. For each case, there are two kinds of data. One set of data is on *inclusion* and *exclusion* as inferred from the attitudes and behaviour of each interviewee on the above issues. The other set of data is on *inclusion* and *exclusion* as inferred from statements by each interviewee in relation to specific identification. This allows a more indepth examination of *inclusion* and *exclusion*.

### **Cultural Attachment**

Generally speaking, in discourses on ethnicity, culture is the most common marker for ethnic identities. Cultural *differences* are usually more visible and they demarcate groups distinctively. Including and excluding people from groups based on cultural *similarities* or *differences* is a very common practice. Apart from this, is the fact that the culture and values of a group predominate the socialization of members of the group, thus exerting strong influence on their thinking and behaviour. Peoples' cultural attachment is, consequently, of high importance in the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion*.

Information on the cultural attachment of the Malaysian Chinese was gathered by asking questions on their observation of Chinese customs and traditions, attachment to Chinese culture and values, perpetuation of Chinese stories and fables, and food preferences. On the first three issues, unmarried interviewees who were below 30 years of age were first asked their opinion on their parents' stance on the issues, followed by their own.

Only a few interviewees believed strongly that the observation of Chinese customs and traditions was vital for the perpetuation of culture and identity. The Chinese tradition of respecting and caring for elders, mentioned by 19 respondents, was most frequently referred to as a custom that was important to retain. The observation of customs and traditions in relation to, for example, festivals, weddings, funerals and birthdays,<sup>1</sup> were, to a large extent, still practised but not strictly.<sup>2</sup> Only 5 older interviewees (out of 27) said they observed strictly, and 5 younger interviewees (out of 30) said they would adhere strongly in future when they had their own families. A number of customs which were considered as important, for example, the tea ceremony<sup>3</sup> during a wedding, the correct procedure during a funeral, and mourning dead parents, were related to the concept of respect for elders and filial piety. Overall, most respondents appeared to think that the observation of customs and traditions was not really important but was practised out of habit. Quite a number said they observed them to please their elders. For some, however, it was due to superstition - the fear of bad luck, or that something untoward would happen if things were not done the “proper” way.<sup>4</sup>

Although the majority of the people interviewed did not think the observation of customs and traditions was vital, they nonetheless, generally professed a strong

---

<sup>1</sup> These events were used as examples in the questions because they are the most common occasions when customs and traditions are observed.

<sup>2</sup> The word “strictly” is used loosely based on the interviewees’ own assessment of the strength of their adherence.

<sup>3</sup> The tea ceremony, which is part of the wedding ceremony, is when the newlyweds serve tea and pay their respect to their elders either by bowing or kneeling.

<sup>4</sup> This is especially true during funerals where care is taken to observe the correct procedure for the good of the dead and the good of the living descendants.

preference for their own culture and values. This was most conspicuous among the older age group<sup>5</sup>, of whom 74%<sup>6</sup> said they preferred Chinese culture and values, compared to sixty-three percent<sup>7</sup> from the younger age group. This was not necessarily because they thought Chinese culture and values were better, but mainly because they were more used to them. Overall, 67% said they were “open” (ie. did not have strong views) about other cultures and values but would prefer their own.

For a number of interviewees, one of the ways Chinese culture and values could be passed on to future generation was through Chinese stories and fables. Seventeen (63%) of those from the older age group said they told their children Chinese stories and fables<sup>8</sup>, while 24 (80%) from the younger age group said they would continue the practice with their own families in the future. Mainly on festivals, and historical and legendary characters, these stories were thought to be useful in teaching good moral values and virtues

This overview of the attachment to the Chinese culture on the part of the Malaysian Chinese shows a highly liberal attitude towards adherence to Chinese culture and values. The majority continued to observe some cultural practices, but very few adhered strictly. A high degree of open mindedness was also indicated with regard to non-Chinese cultures. In spite of this, however, a majority admitted to having a strong

---

<sup>5</sup> Aged 30 years and above.

<sup>6</sup> This was 20 (16 strongly, 1 moderately and 3 weakly) out of 27.

<sup>7</sup> This was 19 (9 strongly, 5 moderately, 5 weakly) out of 30.

<sup>8</sup> Of these, 8 did it frequently and 9 sometimes.

preference for Chinese culture and values. A majority also indicated a desire to maintain and perpetuate Chinese culture and values. These two characteristics clearly demonstrated the importance of Chinese culture and values in the Malaysian Chinese conformation of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Their strong attachment to Chinese culture and values set the criteria for *inclusion* of those who shared this culture and values, and the *exclusion* of those who did not, within a broad Chinese identity. Upon this same culture and values rest the various Chinese identities of differing orders.

### **Languages and Dialects**

Speech forms, like culture, are often referred to as one of the most common markers of ethnic identity. In an attempt to learn more about their linguistic background and the significance of their speech habits, interviewees were asked what languages and dialects they spoke,<sup>9</sup> which speech form they preferred and the reasons for their preference. Responses revealed clearly the peculiar multi-lingual characteristic of the Malaysian Chinese. All the respondents could speak at least one Chinese dialect, usually their own dialect. Fifty-two could speak more than one Chinese dialect. Fifty-three could speak English, 48 - Bahasa Malaysia and 46 - Mandarin. Those who could speak both English and Mandarin numbered 41, and those who could speak English and Mandarin, as well as Bahasa Malaysia numbered 36. Concerning their preferred speech form, 23 preferred English (2 equally with a dialect), 16 preferred Mandarin (4 equally with another dialect),

---

<sup>9</sup> Their ability to speak a language or dialect was based purely on their own assessment. Competency would vary if measured against a standard.

17 preferred a dialect (6 equally with either English or Mandarin) and one had no preference.

The reasons for preferring a language or dialect were explained in varied ways. English was spoken by 93% and was the preferred speech of 40% of the sample. It was mainly preferred by those who were educated in English, or the children of parents who were educated in English.<sup>10</sup> Most of these explained that they felt they could express themselves better in English. On the whole, English was regarded as a language of education and knowledge which was beneficial and useful. Some parents who wanted their children to know English, spoke English with their children because they felt it was no longer adequately taught at school. The wide use of English was boosted by the fact that it was the common medium of communication between the Chinese, Malays, Indians and other indigenous groups which made up the Malaysian population. The English language as spoken by the Malaysian Chinese had a distinct Malaysian quality. Most conspicuous were the accent and the use of local colloquial expressions. Usually referred to (sometimes affectionately by its users) as Malaysian English, it was distinctively a Malaysian variety, and clearly set the Malaysians off from other users of English.

Mandarin was spoken by a high percentage (81%) of the sample, and was the preferred speech form of 28%. Preferred mainly by those who were educated in Chinese, it was considered a language of knowledge and education which was used widely by most

---

<sup>10</sup> Under British administration prior to the formation of Malaysia in 1963, English was the main medium of instruction in government schools.



Chinese. Like English, due to localization, Mandarin as spoken by the Malaysian Chinese was different from that of other Mandarin speakers.

Although only 30% of the interviewees stated a dialect as their preferred language, dialects were the most commonly used speech form. Even among those who preferred English or Mandarin, dialects were mostly used at home with their families or with friends. Ninety-one percent of the sample could speak more than one dialect, but the majority of these said they mainly spoke their own dialects. This was because they were most comfortable with their own dialects which they had spoken all their lives.

This survey of the linguistic background of the interviewees demonstrates how the various languages and dialects provided bases for differing orders of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Mandarin, which is accepted by many Chinese all over the world as the common Chinese language, was a marker for a Chinese identity. At the same time, Mandarin, as spoken by the Malaysian Chinese distinguished them from other Chinese speakers of Mandarin. In the same way, Malaysian English which distinguished Malaysians from other users of English, provided a basis for a Malaysian identity. In the case of dialects, the extensive use of dialects and the preference for one's own dialect served as bases for the various dialect identities. The important role of speech in the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* can also be seen in the next section which looks at the socializing habits of those interviewed.

## Social Interaction

This section looks at the significance of social interaction in the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. People's behaviour, and the ordering and structuring of their relationships when they interact socially, are conceivably the most observable manifestations of the act of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. The aim here was to find out if the people involved in the interviews exhibited a preference in the kind of people they socialize with, particularly in relation to ethnicity. Interviewees were asked what kind of people they usually interact with socially, and why. In addition, the older age group were asked if they had any preferences concerning their children's friends, and the younger age group were asked if their parents had any preferences in their choice of friends.

Among the older age group, almost all said they would like their children to have friends with good character.<sup>11</sup> Nineteen (70%) said they did not mind what ethnic group their children's friends belonged to, 2 objected to Muslims,<sup>12</sup> 2 preferred Christians, 1 preferred Chinese, and 3 said it did not really matter, but "deep down" they preferred Chinese. Among the younger age group, 27 (90%) said their parents did not mind their choice of friends. Of the other 3 parents, 1 preferred Christians, another preferred orientals, and the last objected to Muslims.

---

<sup>11</sup> Among the virtues were studiousness, good behaviour and good family background.

<sup>12</sup> The objection to children having Muslim friends applied mainly to the opposite sex. Parents were afraid that friendship might end in marriage and the compulsory conversion of their children to the Islamic faith.

This picture of open-mindedness as regards social interaction blurred when interviewees spoke about their own socializing habits. Only 8 (14%) said they could socialize with ease with everyone. All of the rest indicated an inclination to socialize within an ingroup. Among the latter, 27 socialize mostly with Chinese in general, 8 with Malaysian Chinese, 3 with Malaysian, 4 with people from the same state, 1 from the same town, 3 with people of the same dialect, and 3 with Asians. Only 6 respondents said socializing within an ingroup was due to circumstances beyond their control, such as language barrier, and the fact that members of the ingroup were the only people they knew. The other 43 respondents, acknowledged feeling more comfortable with, and having a preference for members of an ingroup. Thirty-seven attributed this to sharing things in common, with others of the ingroup, such as, thinking, way of life, and upbringing. All these contributed to easier communication, empathy and security. Language, mentioned by 17 respondents, was also an important reason. This was because, apart from the obvious fact that sharing a common language allowed easier communication, people also felt a sense of kinship with those who shared the same speech form.

From this survey of the socializing habits of the interviewees, it can be concluded that within the realm of social interaction the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* clearly came into play. Seventy-five percent of the sample exercised *inclusion* and *exclusion* through their preference for socializing with members of an ingroup of a particular identity. The examination of the significance of preferences for ingroup is continued in the next section where interviewees gave their views on marriage.

## Marriage Partners

As a further attempt to find out more about preference for ingroup, interviewees from the older age group were asked their preferences as regards their children's choice of marriage partners, and the younger age group were asked if they had any preferences concerning the person they marry. Less than half (43%) of the people interviewed took a liberal stand, declaring that it did not matter to them. Of these, 10 (out of 27) were from the older group and 15 (out of 30) were from the younger group. For the others, to whom it did matter, preferences ranged from being Chinese (22), to Chinese from the same place of origin (4), to Chinese of the same dialect (1). Six stated religion as the most important criterion in the choice of marriage partners.

Preference for an ingroup were mainly attributed to the importance of sharing the same way of life and thinking with one's spouse.<sup>13</sup> Having the same language was also considered important by a number of respondents. However, language *differences* were not seen as a problem between the spouses, but as a problem between one's spouse and one's family. Preferences for the same religion were mainly expressed by six interviewees who were Catholics. There was also strong objection on their part to marriage to Muslims.

---

<sup>13</sup> Four interviewees expressed their concern that problems associated with mixed marriages often led to marriage breakup. Another two were of the opinion that the Chinese were more traditional and conservative, and would take marriage more seriously. Westerners on the other hand, were thought to be too liberal on the concept of marriage.

The aim of this section was to elicit the views and opinions of those interviewed on the subject of marriage in order to find out more about the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Although 43% of the respondents said it did not matter, the responses of the other 57% provided strong evidence of *inclusion* and *exclusion* being exercised through their strong preferences for the ingroup in marriage.

### **Participation in Ethnic Related Formal Organizations**

In this section an attempt was made at finding out more about the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* by asking interviewees about their participation in formal organisations. Formal organisations such as Chinese associations, dialect and clan associations are a common feature of Chinese communities overseas. They are the organizational structures which formally demarcate and enforce the Chinese identity, and the identities of the various groupings among the Chinese. Capable of commanding strong loyalties as symbols of group solidarity, these associations are a prominent feature of Chinese society.

Only a few respondents were actively involved in ethnic related formal organizations in Malaysia and in New Zealand. In Malaysia 12 (9 actively) were members of associations such as Chinese, dialect and clan association. All were from the older age group. Four of the 12 said they became involved in Malaysia for business reasons, and six said they did not think these associations were important in New Zealand. Only 10 respondents were members of ethnic based organizations in New Zealand - 8 from the

younger age group who were members of the Canterbury Malaysian Students Association, and 2 from the older age group who were members of a dialect association<sup>14</sup>. The low participation was in part due to the fact that most respondents had no knowledge of the existence of such ethnic based organisations, or that they were never approached or invited to join. Twelve said they might become involved if asked, but the majority did not indicate interest. Overall, among both those interested and those not interested, 24 were of the opinion that the Chinese Association and the Malaysian Association were important because they were more broadly based and thus would be useful as an organizational base for unifying and gathering members together. In other words, a bigger organisation would be more representative and would be more effective in achieving its goals. Most were of the opinion that, in terms of numbers, dialect and clan associations would be too small to serve any useful purpose. Moreover, they would divide the community more than they would unite.

There was clearly a lack of interest in participating in formal organizations which were ethnic in nature. Very few people participated actively or indicated a wish to participate. However, in spite of an overall lack of interest, 42% expressed the opinion that the Chinese and the Malaysian Associations were important as a means of gathering people of each group together. From this observation, it can be concluded that the lack of interest in participating in formal associations indicates an absence of the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* in these associations. However, even though people were not involved, their perception that some of the associations were important, provided some evidence that they were exercising *inclusion* and *exclusion*.

---

<sup>14</sup> This was the newly formed Foochow Association.

### **Nesting Identities: Individual Cases**

In the previous sections, an attempt was made at gaining an insight into the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* through a review of the cultural attachment, speech preferences, socializing and marriage preferences, and participation in formal organizations on the part of the people interviewed. The interviewees exhibited varied characteristics in relation to these issues. From these characteristics, it was possible to infer considerable evidence of the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* being exercised at different levels of *dichotomization*. These acts of *inclusion* and *exclusion* did not necessarily reflect the respondents' stated identities, but were linked to the way they identified. This linkage was discernible in the individual case studies. The analysis of the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* is continued in this part of the chapter by looking at some individual interviewees. Data consist of responses to questions on the above issues and responses to questions on specific identification. Every identification marker employed for each specific identity is assessed as an exercise of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. The 7 interviewees who were examined had 4 or more moderate and strong *nesting* identities.

#### **Four nesting identities: Case 1**

Case 1<sup>15</sup> was a female (20-24 age group) who belonged to the Teochew dialect group and came from the town of Kuching in Sarawak. Born into a Buddhist family, she later

---

<sup>15</sup> Respondent No.1 Group B had been in New Zealand 4 years, and was a university student at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in English and Hokkien.

converted to Christianity. The early part of her education in Malaysia<sup>16</sup> was mainly in Chinese. She spoke Teochew at home but she preferred Mandarin over the other languages and dialects that she knew<sup>17</sup>. Case 1 exhibited strong attachment to Chinese culture. She preferred Chinese food and she came from a home environment where customs and traditions were observed quite strictly. Her parents preferred Chinese culture and values, and she was brought up to believe that children should stay at home and look after their parents.<sup>18</sup> In future with her own family, she would try to follow what she had been taught in order to prevent culture and family values from fading away. She would also tell her children Chinese stories she learned from her parents and from school because they contained good lessons on determination and the spirit of striving, which were all part of the Chinese thinking that one should work hard.

Case 1 was not a member of any ingroup<sup>19</sup> formal organisations either in Malaysia or in New Zealand, nor did she think that they were important. She socialized mainly with Asians of Chinese origin. This was because their background was similar to hers. On the other hand, due to *differences* in background, she found she did not have much to talk about with Kiwis<sup>20</sup>. Her parents did not mind who she socialized with, but would prefer

---

<sup>16</sup> At the time of the interview she was a university student in Christchurch.

<sup>17</sup> She could speak Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin, Teochew and Hokkien.

<sup>18</sup> This was said with reference to the common western practice of children leaving home.

<sup>19</sup> This refers to ingroups which were ethnic in nature.

<sup>20</sup> This primarily referred to New Zealanders of European origin



she married a Chinese.<sup>21</sup> On her part, however, she did not mind whom she married as long as it was someone with a similar, not necessarily the same, culture. Case 1 identified as Chinese (moderately), Malaysian Chinese (strongly), East Malaysian (strongly) and Sarawakian (moderately).<sup>22</sup>

*Identification as Chinese (moderate):* Identification as Chinese (described as “7 out of 10”) was attributed to sharing similar interests, thinking, conversation topics, and food, with other Chinese.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* Two reasons were given for her strong identification as Malaysian Chinese. One was her different accent when she spoke Mandarin with speakers of Mandarin from other places. The other reason was the different interactive behaviour between Malaysian Chinese and Chinese from other places. Her opinion was that the Malaysian Chinese “associate” better with others while the Chinese from Hong Kong were “more straight forward and less gentle”, those from Indonesia were “less accepting”, and those from Singapore were “more ambitious”.

*Identification as East Malaysian (strong):* Although Case 1 identified strongly as Malaysian Chinese, when she was among them, she identified quite strongly as East

---

<sup>21</sup> This was primarily due to language. They would not mind a non-Chinese if there was no problem on language, but they would probably not like a westerner because westerners were too casual about marriage. They had seen many examples of divorces among children of friends who married westerners.

<sup>22</sup> Respondent No.1 Group B also identified as Chinese (strongly) in Malaysia and Malaysian (moderately) in New Zealand.

Malaysian. This was because, compared to people from Kuala Lumpur,<sup>23</sup> people from the east were more conservative, more relaxed and did not show a city lifestyle. West Malaysians were “stuck up”, and “bad, for example, in business”.

*Identification as Sarawakian (moderate)*: Case 1 identified as Sarawakian because she was born in Sarawak and she felt attachment to the place. This identity, however, was not as strong as the east-west division.

*Inclusion and Exclusion*: Case 1 exhibited several characteristics which were significant in relation to *inclusion* and *exclusion*. First and foremost she had strong attachment to Chinese culture and values. Second, she preferred to speak Mandarin. And third she had a predilection to socialize mainly with Chinese. Each characteristic encompassed *inclusion* and *exclusion*. In relation to identification, these were characteristics which would provide the basis for a Chinese identity.

In relation to her various identities, Case 1 used both *subjective* and *objective* factors to exercise *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Including and excluding people from the Chinese identity was exercised by stressing *similarities* with other Chinese. She spoke of sharing the same thinking, food, interests and conversation topic with other Chinese. In *contrast*, her identification as a Malaysian Chinese stressed *differences*. A comparison was made with non-Malaysian Chinese. She pointed to her different accent when she spoke Mandarin and the difference in interactive behaviour between the Malaysian

---

<sup>23</sup> Kuala Lumpur is the federal capital of Malaysia which is in the state of Selangor in West Malaysia.

Chinese and other Chinese. As regards her identification as East Malaysian, *differences* were again emphasized based on a comparison. She felt east Malaysians were nicer people than West Malaysians. Identification as Sarawakian on the other hand did not consist of any explicit references to *similarities* or *differences*. She felt an attachment to Sarawak.

Case 1 clearly demonstrated the use of different criteria for including and excluding people in relation to each identity. At each point of *dichotomization* she emphasized different kinds markers. In addition to this, at each point of *dichotomization*, she came up with additional markers which would demarcate from the immediate wider identity. For example, to the markers used to identify as Chinese, Case 1 added the fact that her accent was different from other Chinese when she identified as Malaysian Chinese.

## Case 2

Case 2<sup>24</sup> was a male (45-49 age group) of the Henghua dialect who came from Bintulu in Sarawak. He was educated in Chinese, could speak Mandarin and three other dialects beside his own fluently.<sup>25</sup> His preferred dialect was Foochow<sup>26</sup> and not Henghua because

---

<sup>24</sup> Respondent No.8 Group C had been in New Zealand 4 years at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in Foochow and Hokkien.

<sup>25</sup> He could also speak some English and some Bahasa Malaysia.

<sup>26</sup> This was his wife's dialect.

there were more Foochows in his town, and consequently he had to socialize and conduct his business in Foochow. He was, on the other hand, an ex-president of the Henghua association, and was also actively involved in leadership roles in the local Chinese Association and Chinese Chamber of Commerce in his town. His active participation in these associations in Malaysia, however, was mainly for business reasons. In Christchurch he was not interested in joining, nor did he think such organizations were important.

Case 2 exhibited weak attachment to, and had no preference for Chinese culture and values. He observed customs and traditions in Malaysia but not in New Zealand because he did not think they were necessary. In the same vein, he did not mind whom his children socialized with, or married, as long as they were happy. As to his own socializing, he mixed mainly - "80%" - with Chinese. This was purely for language reasons - he could only speak Mandarin and Chinese dialects well. Case 2 identified moderately as Chinese, but strongly as Malaysian Chinese, East Malaysian and Sarawakian.<sup>27</sup>

*Identification as Chinese (moderate):* Identification as Chinese was due to language and physical appearance. Dwelling on the physical, he used the example of a rose which would always be a rose no matter where it was grown to illustrate an inescapable fact of birth.

---

<sup>27</sup> He identified moderately as Chinese in Malaysia and none as Malaysian.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* The strong identification as Malaysian Chinese was due to the feeling that Malaysia, the place where he was born, was home. He did not feel different from Chinese from other places.

*Identification as East Malaysian (strong):* Among the Malaysian Chinese, he felt East Malaysian quite strongly because he did not mix with, or know any West Malaysians.

*Identification as Sarawakian (strong):* His strong identification as Sarawakian sprang from his familiarity with the people. He felt people from Sarawak understood each other better.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* Compared to Case 1, it was more difficult to infer the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* on the issues of culture and values, language preferences, social interaction and participation in formal organization. Case 2 said he did not have any attachment to Chinese culture and values, nor any preference for his own dialect. Although he was active in leadership roles in his local dialect and Chinese associations in Malaysia, he participated for business reasons. They were not important otherwise. He did not mind whom his children marry. He socialized mainly with Chinese because he could only speak Mandarin and Chinese dialects. On this last point, there was evidence of *inclusion* and *exclusion* which arose from an unavoidable fact - a language barrier.

The above characteristics partly explained the markers Case 2 employed in relation to identification. His identification as Chinese showed his lack of attachment to

Chinese culture and values. He attributed this identity to language and physical appearance. *Similarities* with other Chinese emphasized facts of birth. Case 2 did not indicate an identification based on an affinity with other Chinese. In the same way, identification as Malaysian Chinese was because he was born in Malaysia. In comparison, his identification as East Malaysian and Sarawakian were derived from a sense of affinity with the people from these places.

Case 2 based his identification as Chinese and Malaysian Chinese on *objective* factors, whereas identification as East Malaysian and Sarawakian were based on *subjective* factors. He was less clear on *similarities* and *differences* as the criteria for *inclusion* and *exclusion*. He did not explicitly emphasize them as *similarities* or *differences*. In his identification as Chinese and Malaysian Chinese, East Malaysian and Sarawakian, the *similarities* he shared with others within those identities were implicit rather than explicit.

### Case 3

Case 3<sup>28</sup> was a female (20-24 age group) from Sibu in Sarawak. She was mainly educated in Bahasa Malaysia with some Chinese and English up to high school in Malaysia. Case 3 socialized mostly with Chinese. This was because having the same language made it

---

<sup>28</sup> Respondent No.6, Group B had been in New Zealand more than 4 years, and was a university student in Christchurch at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in Hokkien and English.

easier for her to talk to them. She preferred to speak Hokkien her own dialect,<sup>29</sup> but mainly spoke Mandarin when socializing because her friends were of different dialects. After moving to New Zealand her parents had become more open-minded about Chinese customs, traditions and values. The more liberal environment in New Zealand was very different from Malaysia where it mattered what other people thought, and her parents had to adhere more strictly. Case 3 herself favoured the more liberal attitude towards the observation of Chinese culture and values. Case 4 did not have a preference to marry a Chinese. Declaring that “Religion is most important”, she would like to marry a Catholic or one willing to become a Catholic. She would definitely not marry a Muslim. She was not involved in any formal associations which were ethnic in nature. She did not think they were important. She was, however, a very active member of the University of Canterbury Catholic Church Prayer Group. Case 3 identified moderately as Chinese, strongly as Malaysian Chinese, strongly as Sarawakian, and moderately as Hokkien.<sup>30</sup>

*Identification as Chinese (moderate):* Identification as Chinese stemmed from the feeling of difference from others in appearance (including skin and dress), character and culture.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* The stronger Malaysian Chinese identity was attributed to the speech accent, behaviour and the “mixed” culture of the Malaysian Chinese. Behaviour wise, the Hong Kong Chinese were more fashionable, and the Taiwanese were more gentle and suave than the Malaysian Chinese. Culture wise, the

---

<sup>29</sup> She could also speak Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and English.

<sup>30</sup> She identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and as Malaysian moderately.

multi-cultural environment in Malaysia had resulted in a mixed and no longer pure Chinese culture.

*Identification as Sarawakian (strong):* Although Case 3 identified strongly as Malaysian Chinese, she also identified as Sarawakian strongly because she felt people from states in West Malaysia were not friendly.

*Identification as Hokkien (moderate):* Her moderate identification as Hokkien, Case 3 explained, came from her feeling of contentment that she was a Hokkien and not for example, an uncouth and brash Foochow.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* For Case 3, *inclusion* and *exclusion* appeared to be related more strongly to religion. She had a preference for her own dialect which would account for her dialect identity. Apart from having a preference for Chinese food, she indicated a weak attachment to Chinese culture and values.

In all her responses on identification, Case 3 tended to exercise *inclusion* and *exclusion* by highlighting *differences*. All of her four identities were explained by her feeling of difference from people who were not members of each identity. Identification as Chinese was attributed to *objective* factors such as having a different appearance, character and culture from people who were not Chinese. In her identification as Malaysian Chinese, she referred to sharing *objective similarities* such as speech accent, behaviour, and local culture with other Malaysians, but this was more for the purpose of



highlighting *differences*. *Differences* were emphasized by comparing Malaysian Chinese with non-Malaysian Chinese. In relation to her identification as Sarawakian and Hokkien, she compared the behaviour of members of each of these identities with non-members in order to illustrate the *differences* she felt.

#### Case 4

Case 4 was a Foochow female (20-24 age group) from the town of Sarikei in Sarawak.<sup>31</sup> She was mainly educated in Bahasa Malaysia, with some English and Chinese up to high school. She socialized mostly with Chinese as she felt more comfortable with them. Her opinion was that there was more empathy and understanding between Chinese. She had a strong preference for speaking in Foochow<sup>32</sup> and acknowledged feeling closer to those who were Foochows among her friends. Her parents on the other hand, encouraged her to socialize more with Kiwis in order to improve her English. On the question of marriage, they would prefer she married a Chinese. Case 4 agreed with her parents on the latter point because she had seen a number of failed mixed marriages.

On the issue of culture and values, Case 4 came from a home environment which was moderate in the observation of Chinese customs and traditions, and adherence to Chinese values, but she placed importance on the perpetuation of culture and identity.

---

<sup>31</sup> Respondent No.11, Group B had been in New Zealand more than 3 years, and was a university student at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in Foochow and English.

<sup>32</sup> She could also speak Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin.

She would like her children to be proud of being Chinese. As regards ethnic related formal organisations, she was not interested in being involved in them, although she was of the opinion that they were important, especially the Chinese Association. Case 4 identified strongly as Chinese, Malaysian Chinese, Sarawakian and Foochow.<sup>33</sup>

*Identification as Chinese (strong):* Due to the way she was brought up, Case 4 said she would always think of herself as Chinese. She spoke Chinese and she was proud to be Chinese.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* Case 4 also identified strongly as a Malaysian Chinese because she spoke Foochow and Bahasa Malaysia which made her different from other Chinese. Apart from this, she felt a deep attachment to Malaysia, the place where she was brought up. She liked the environment there, and she felt the Malaysian Chinese were different because they did not look down on people, in comparison with, for example, the Singaporean Chinese.

*Identification as Sarawakian (strong):* Among the Malaysian Chinese, she identified as Sarawakian because she felt Sarawak was more Chinese whereas the other states were more dominated by Malays.

*Identification as Foochow (strong):* Finally, her feeling of kinship with speakers of Foochow gave her a strong Foochow identity.

---

<sup>33</sup> She identified strongly as Chinese in Malaysia, and strongly as Malaysian in New Zealand.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* Case 4 exhibited characteristics which presented clearer examples of the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Her strong attachment to Chinese culture, her preference for a Chinese spouse, her feelings of affinity with people who were Chinese and the importance she attached to Chinese associations, were all evidence of *inclusion* and *exclusion* in terms of a Chinese identity. This was confirmed by her strong identification as Chinese. Her preference for Foochow, her own dialect, and her feeling of kinship with other Foochows explained her strong identification as Foochow.

Case 4 employed different ways of including and excluding people in relation to her various identities. Identification as Chinese was due to the possession of qualities which were instilled in her through her upbringing. Identification as Malaysian Chinese stressed *differences*. She felt different from other Chinese because she could speak Foochow and Bahasa Malaysia. She also believed Malaysian Chinese were different because they were nicer people. To illustrate this, a comparison was made with Chinese from Singapore. Identification as Sarawakian also emphasized *differences*. She believed Sarawak was more influenced by Chinese, whereas the other states in Malaysia were more influenced by Malays. Identification as Foochow on the other hand was based on *similarities*. She felt a sense of kinship with other Foochows which derived from speaking the same dialect.

## Case 5

Case 5<sup>34</sup> was a Chinese educated male (45-49 age group) from Sibü in Sarawak. He could speak a number of dialects but preferred Foochow his own dialect.<sup>35</sup> This was partly responsible for the fact that he socialized more with Foochows. Besides sharing the same Foochow customs and dialect with them, he also found Foochows more friendly. Case 5 preferred Chinese food and had a strong attachment to Chinese culture and values. He believed Chinese ways and values were better, and always emphasized customs and traditions at home because it was important as Chinese to know them. He was not particular about his children's choice of friends but he would like them to have Chinese spouses. In Sibü he was an active member of his clan association, the Foochow Association and the Chinese Association. In Christchurch, however, he was not interested in participating in any similar organisations, nor did he think they were useful<sup>36</sup>. Case 5 identified strongly as Chinese, Malaysian Chinese, Sarawakian and Foochow.<sup>37</sup>

*Identification as Chinese (strong):* Identification as Chinese stemmed from possessing different skin and culture from those who were not Chinese.

---

<sup>34</sup> Respondent No.3, Group C had been in New Zealand two and half years at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in Foochow.

<sup>35</sup> Other dialects include Mandarin, Hokkien and Cantonese.

<sup>36</sup> This was said with Christchurch in mind.

<sup>37</sup> He identified as Chinese strongly in Malaysia and none as Malaysian.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* Identification as Malaysian Chinese was due to dressing style which was different from other Chinese and the use of dialects which was not common with other Chinese.

*Identification as Sarawakian (strong):* Identification as Sarawakian came from a feeling of familiarity and a sense of belonging as a group with others from Sarawak.

*Identification as Foochow (strong):* Identification as Foochow derived from a strong attachment to the dialect and the feeling of kinship with other Foochows.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* Of the five cases examined so far, Case 5 provided the clearest examples of *inclusion* and *exclusion* through his attitudes and behaviour. He had a very strong attachment to, and preference for, Chinese culture and values. He would like his children to have Chinese spouses. Case 5 also had a preference for speaking Foochow, and for socializing with Foochows. *Inclusion* and *exclusion* along these lines were further evidenced by his active membership in his local Chinese Association and Foochow Association in Malaysia. He was also active in his clan association. These characteristics were closely linked to his various identities.

In identifying as Chinese and Malaysian Chinese, Case 5 carried out *inclusion* and *exclusion* by stressing *differences*. *Objective* factors (skin and culture for the Chinese identity, and dress style and dialects for the Malaysian Chinese identity) were used to differentiate Chinese from non-Chinese, and Malaysian Chinese from other Chinese.

Identification as Sarawakian and Foochow, were based on *subjective* factors. *Inclusion* and *exclusion* were due to a sense of belonging with the members of each identity.

### Case 6

Case 6 was a Cantonese female (20-24 age group), who came from Georgetown in Pulau Pinang, West Malaysia.<sup>38</sup> She was educated in English and Bahasa Malaysia up to high school in Malaysia and she preferred speaking English.<sup>39</sup> She socialized and mixed easily with all kinds of people, but her circle of friends were mostly Chinese. This was mainly due to circumstances rather than preferences. She came from a home environment which practised moderately Chinese customs, traditions and values. Her parents, who were open and *flexible*, adhered primarily out of respect for their elders. In *contrast*, Case 6 would like to preserve all that she had been taught and pass it on to her children because she felt proud she was a Chinese. Although she exhibited quite a strong cultural attachment, she had no preference for someone Chinese as a marriage partner. She did not participate in, nor think ethnic related organizations were important.

---

<sup>38</sup> Respondent No.2 Group B had been in New Zealand more than four years and was a university student in Christchurch at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted mainly in English and some Hokkien.

<sup>39</sup> She could not speak Cantonese, her own dialect, but spoke Hokkien and Bahasa Malaysia besides English.

Case 6 did not identify positively as Chinese. She identified strongly as Malaysian Chinese, moderately as West Malaysian, strongly as one from Pinang, and moderately as one from Georgetown.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* Her identification as Malaysian Chinese was largely due to the distinct Malaysian Chinese identity she felt when, on representing Malaysia as a national sportsperson, she saw other Chinese as Singaporean or Taiwanese and not as Chinese. Moreover, she could not speak Mandarin, which differentiated her from other Chinese.

*Identification as West Malaysian (moderate):* Moderate identification as West Malaysian surfaced only when she was among people from Sarawak who were more numerous in Christchurch. She felt she was an outsider when she was with them.

*Identification with Pinang (strong):* Her attachment to the people, and the unique “baba” cultures of her home state were responsible for her strong identification as someone from Pinang.

*Identification with Georgetown (moderate):* Identification as someone from Georgetown was due to sharing, in common with others from the same town, ideas, experience and local knowledge.

*Inclusion and Exclusion*: As shown by the attitude and behaviour contained in her responses, Case 6 exercised fewer instances of *inclusion* and *exclusion* than Case 5. The only clear manifestation of *inclusion* and *exclusion* was her attachment to Chinese culture which she wished to perpetuate. Unlike the previous cases where an attachment to Chinese culture was the basis for a Chinese identity as well as the basis for other orders of Chinese identity,<sup>40</sup> in this case, at its broadest level of *inclusion* and *exclusion*, it was the basis for a Malaysian Chinese identity because Case 6 did not identify positively as Chinese. In this case, Chinese culture and values meant the *exclusion* of all non-Chinese, but it did not mean the *inclusion* of all Chinese. In conjunction with other factors, it was used for including Malaysian Chinese within the Malaysian Chinese identity and the *exclusion* of all who were not Malaysian Chinese. The other factors, which were her nationality as Malaysian and the fact that she did not speak Mandarin, were *objective* factors which emphasized *differences*.

On her identification as West Malaysian, Case 6 manifested a different method of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. It was based on a sense of not belonging to the group made up of Sarawakians. She appeared to be excluding herself from the group. *Inclusion* and *exclusion* in relation to her identity were based on her state of origin, and identity based on town of origin were based on sharing, with other members of each identity, local knowledge and experiences

## 5 Nesting Identities: Case 7

---

<sup>40</sup> Case 1, 3, 4, and 5.



Case 7<sup>41</sup> was a female (20-24 age group) from Sibü in Sarawak. She was educated in Bahasa Malaysia with some English up to high school in Malaysia and studied Chinese privately. Case 7 came from a family that adhered moderately to Chinese culture and values, but she exhibited a strong attachment to Chinese culture and values. Describing herself as the traditional type, she would like to have a Chinese spouse and expressed a wish to preserve what she had been taught when she had her own family in future.

Case 7 was a member of the Canterbury University Malaysian Students Association. She did not participate, nor wish to participate in other ethnic related organizations. Nevertheless, she was of the opinion that these organizations were important because they provided the venue for members of each group to get together. Case 7 socialized solely with Chinese because she found them more similar to her in character and behaviour. She also indicated a strong preference for Foochow, her own dialect.<sup>42</sup> Concerning identification, she identified strongly as Chinese, Malaysian Chinese, Sarawakian, Foochow and as someone from the town of Sibü.

*Identification as Chinese (strong):* Identification as Chinese was due, firstly, to language. Case 1 found it hard to converse with people who did not speak Chinese<sup>43</sup>. Secondly, it was due to the feeling that her behaviour was different from people who were not

---

<sup>41</sup> Respondent No 7, Group B had been in New Zealand 3 years, and was a university student at the time of the interview. The interview was conducted in Foochow and English.

<sup>42</sup> She could also speak Mandarin, Hokkien, Bahasa Malaysia and English.

<sup>43</sup> This usually referred to Mandarin or Chinese dialects.

Chinese. She found it hard to live with people who were not Chinese because of their different way of life, which made it difficult to communicate with them. With other Chinese, the same way of life made it easier to get along with them.

*Identification as Malaysian Chinese (strong):* Case 7 attributed her identification as Malaysian Chinese firstly, to *differences* from other Chinese. She pointed out that although Malaysian Chinese were Chinese like all other Chinese, they spoke Mandarin with a different accent. The languages used by the Malaysian Chinese were also different from, for example, the Indonesian Chinese who spoke Indonesian. She also felt that there was a difference in behaviour and attitude. She pointed to the Chinese from Singapore who were seen as arrogant and conceited. Secondly, identification as Malaysian Chinese was attributed to feeling a sense of belonging with people from the same place. She had more things to talk about with the Malaysian Chinese.

*Identification as Sarawakian (strong):* Identification as Sarawakian was due to the fact that Case 7 was born in Sarawak and was proud of the place.

*Identification as someone from Sibü (strong):* This identity came from a feeling of kinship with the people in Sibü who were mostly Foochows like herself.

*Identification as Foochow (strong):* Identification as Foochow derived from a strong feeling of kinship with people who were Foochows. She felt very close to them because,

firstly, it was easier to communicate with them, and secondly, she shared the same way of life with them.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* Case 7, like Case 5, provided clear examples of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. The exercise of *inclusion* and *exclusion* was evident in all the responses she gave on the questions of cultural attachment, preferences, socialization and participation in formal organizations. Her attitudes and behaviour indicated clearly *inclusion* and *exclusion* which support a Chinese identity and a Foochow identity. This was confirmed by her identification pattern. Although she had a strong attachment to Chinese culture and values, it was not used as a criterion for *inclusion* and *exclusion* in her identification as Chinese. She highlighted, first, *differences* between herself and non-Chinese based on language and behaviour. Second, she pointed to *similarities* between herself and other Chinese based on sharing a similar way of life.

On her identification as Malaysian Chinese, Case 7 pointed, first, to a number of *differences* between Malaysian Chinese and other Chinese which formed the basis for *inclusion*. Different *objective contrasts* were used to illustrate *differences* from different groups. A different accent when speaking Mandarin differentiated Malaysian Chinese from other Chinese. A different language differentiated the Chinese from Indonesia, and different behaviour and attitude differentiated the Chinese from Singapore. Identification as Malaysian Chinese was also attributed to a feeling of belonging with other Malaysian Chinese. Identification as Sarawakian, Foochow, and as someone from Sibu did not stress

*differences* and *similarities*. They were based on attachment to place and the feeling of kinship with others within the group.

## **Conclusion**

The attempt to map out significant characteristics in relation to the two processes was not free from difficulties. First, as pointed out earlier, the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* are, by their nature, inseparable. An act of *inclusion* is simultaneously an act of *exclusion*. This fact made the analysis of the two processes more complex and difficult. Second, because the questions used were open-ended, responses from interviewees varied in depth and clarity. Some answers were more elaborate and some answers were more ambiguous.

The difficulties encountered did not prevent the observation of some significant features from which a number of findings were drawn. The responses contained in the seven individual cases contained substantial evidence of the exercise of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. All cases demonstrated the employment of varied factors in carrying out *inclusion* and *exclusion* at different points of *dichotomization*. The exercise of *inclusion* and *exclusion* was inferred from two kinds of sources. First, *inclusion* and *exclusion* was inferred from attitudes and behaviour. This was a less conscious act of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. Second, *inclusion* and *exclusion* was inferred from the factors interviewees

used specifically as the criteria for each identity. This was a conscious act of *inclusion* and *exclusion*.

The first finding concerned *inclusion* and *exclusion* as inferred from the attitudes and behaviour as stated and described in the responses on the issues of attachment to Chinese culture and values, linguistic preferences, preferences in relation to marriage and socializing, and participation in formal associations. Each characteristic exhibited in relation to these issues encompassed *inclusion* and *exclusion* even when this was not explicitly expressed. For example, the observation of customs and traditions was not an explicitly expressed act of *inclusion* and *exclusion*, but the act of adhering to group practices imply *inclusion* in that group. In some cases (Cases 1, 2, 4 and 5) these characteristics were linked to the respondents' various identities. One observation in relation to this was that certain characteristics exhibited were strongly linked to how people identified. For example, Cases 4, 5 and 7 who indicated strong identification as Chinese were all strongly attached to Chinese culture and values, strongly preferred socializing with Chinese and would prefer (in the case of Case 5, his children) to have Chinese spouses. All three also emphasized group solidarity through the importance they placed on the need for Chinese associations. Another example was the link between speech preferences and identities. Cases 3, 4, 5 and 7 who professed strong preference for their own dialects, had positive dialect identities.

Another observation in relation to the link between attitudes and behaviour, and the way respondents identified was that, the attitudes and behaviour provided an insight

into the choice of markers the respondents used for their identities. For example, Case 1 who had strong attachment to Chinese culture and values attributed her identification as Chinese to sharing similar interests, thinking, conversation topics, with other Chinese. These were factors which derived from sharing common culture and values. Case 1 typified the strong influence of ingroup socialization on identification. Case 2, on the other hand, did not indicate an attachment to Chinese culture and values. He attributed his Chinese identity to language and physical appearance. Both factors were inescapable facts of birth and reflected his lack of concern for Chinese culture and values. In *contrast* to Case 1, Case 2 exemplified a case where ingroup socialization was not the main factor in determining identification.

The second finding concerned *inclusion* and *exclusion* in relation to the responses on identification. The seven cases supported the finding made earlier in the chapter that at each point of *dichotomization* people made use of markers which would demarcate from the immediate wider identity. In their conscious exercise of *inclusion* and *exclusion*, all the seven cases provided evidence which illustrated more clearly that *ethnic identification is a nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness*.

In each of the cases, for each identity, the interviewee would point out markers which would form the *boundary* between that identity and the immediate wider identity. The seven cases illustrated more clearly and further confirmed the findings on the second hypothesis which were made in the first part of this chapter. It was evident in each case that ethnic identification was a *nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness*.

The third finding concerns the individual nature of the act of *inclusion* and *exclusion*. The varied nature and lack of consistency in the method employed when exercising *inclusion* and *exclusion* provided considerable evidence of the individual nature of these two processes. This manifested in two ways. First, *inclusion* and *exclusion* in terms of broad categories such as *similarities* and *differences* and *subjective* and *objectives*, were widely used and clearly discernible but there were no consistent patterns. Varied emphasis were placed on each at different times. Consequently, for each identity, the emphasis on *similarities* or *differences* was different for each person, and between persons. This was further complicated by the fact that *similarities* could be used to illustrate *differences*. For example, Case 3, on her identification as Malaysian Chinese pointed to the similar behaviour among Malaysian Chinese which was different from that of the Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese. Furthermore, as a means of exercising *inclusion* and *exclusion*, particular *differences* in specific relation to each of a number of reference groups could also be made. For example, Case 1, on her identification as Malaysian Chinese, highlighted specific *differences* in relation to Chinese from Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore. Further examples of this could be seen in Cases 3 and 7.

Second, in most cases, respondents exercised *inclusion* and *exclusion* by using markers which were peculiar to each respondent. Firstly, in most cases, *similarities* and *differences* were based on a very narrow perception of the reference groups in question. It was not clear whether this was the outcome of stereotyping or personal perception. Secondly, the factors used were by no means the only ways *inclusion* and *exclusion* were

exercised. But the fact that they were specifically expressed meant that they were foremost in peoples' mind and were of more prominence to them.

The findings on the individual nature of the act of *inclusion* and *exclusion* led to the fourth and final finding. There was evidence that the particularity individuals exhibited were linked to their interactive experience. For example, the emphasis on *similarities* and *differences* which highlighted such factors as empathy, affinity, behaviour and attitudes were the outcome of interactive experiences. Further evidence of this was the use of specific reference groups to illustrate a point. This meant that interactive experiences could be a primary determinant of ethnic identification. This observation is significant in that it draws attention to the fact that, for some people, the influence of interactive experiences on the way people identify can supercede the influence of ingroup socialization. This challenges the widely held view that ingroup socialization is of primary importance in determining identities. Within multi-ethnic environment where different groups are in frequent close contact, interactive experiences, for some people, can be of more relevance to the process of identification than ingroup socialization.



## CONCLUSION

The writing of this thesis was initially inspired by the perception that most academic studies on the ethnic phenomenon have not been adequate in their treatment of the subject. This is most apparent in two ways. First, most mainstream academic researchers have tended to adopt a narrow paradigmatic focus on the ethnic phenomenon. In most works in this field of study, ethnic groups are taken to mean those groups which are at the fringes of a society, or those groups who are in competition for resources. In other words, the ethnic phenomenon is mainly studied within environments which are conflictual or unequal. This downplays the pervasiveness of ethnicity in human society.

Second, most studies on the ethnic phenomenon have not adequately taken into account the changed nature of societies within the contemporary world. There are two aspects of present-day society which have impacted on the ethnic phenomenon. One is the vast increase in cross border communication and interaction which have made societies less isolated. The other is the increase in internal as well as transnational migration which have resulted in societies becoming more multiethnic. The consequences of these developments were, first, in many societies members of various ethnic groups have come into close contact and are constantly interacting with members of other ethnic groups. Second, within multiethnic societies, the phenomenon of multiple ethnic identities has grown. These developments require a shift in the way the ethnic phenomenon should be studied. Ethnic groups can no longer be treated as isolated entities. Studies on the ethnic phenomenon or ethnicity need to take into consideration current realities in order

to formulate a more adequate explanatory model which would allow a greater appreciation of the complexities involved. This thesis approached ethnicity as an interactive phenomenon and undertook a synchronic study of the phenomenon, a necessary foundation towards the development of a more applicable model.

Ethnicity is a fluid attribute and there is a need to investigate the fundamental dynamics which underlie the phenomenon in order to understand the forces which structure human relationships, especially those which are employed to include or exclude people from ethnic groupings. This is the primary goal of this thesis. In this respect, a number of findings were made which would challenge some currently held views and assumptions on ethnicity. It was also clear throughout the thesis that analysing ethnicity as an interactive phenomenon was more useful in providing an insight into the phenomenon, particularly within non-conflictual situations in contemporary multiethnic societies.

Research for this thesis was conducted at two levels. The first level was concerned with formulating a theoretical framework for studying ethnicity. This drew on the works of several theorists, particularly Barth's (1969) ideas on *boundaries*, and Cohen's (1978) ideas on *nesting dichotomization*. In chapter 1, it was established on theoretical grounds that, first, within contemporary usage, ethnicity is an interactive phenomenon and must be analysed within an interactive context. It is within these interactive situations that ethnicity becomes more salient and *boundaries* and *contents* become significant and meaningful. Second, ethnicity is a set of *objective* and *subjective*

qualities possessed by a collectivity which stand in *contrast* to other sets of similarly defined qualities possessed by other collectivities. These sets of *objective* and *subjective* qualities (or *similarities*) expand and contract in inverse relation to the degree of *inclusiveness* and *exclusiveness* of membership. Third, ethnicity is situational in nature. Individuals use what is relevant and significant to effectively differentiate between themselves and others. At any given time, these shared qualities become temporarily the primary marker of ethnic identification. Fourth, due to the situational nature of ethnicity and ethnic identification, people can have multiple ethnic identities.

The second level of research was an empirical test of these theoretical propositions. This was undertaken by assessing the validity of two hypotheses on ethnic identification which were derived from the theoretical propositions. The first hypothesis postulated that ethnic identification is flexible and situational because individuals identify according to what shared qualities stand in contrast to other shared qualities in different contexts. Data was analysed to find out what constituted ethnicity, and how people identified within different contexts. It was found that ethnic identification was highly individual in nature. There was considerable evidence that people identified according to sets of qualities which stood in contrast to other shared qualities. Different contexts gave rise to different contrasts. This had several implications. First, people identified differently in different contexts. Second, some people used a different criteria for the same identity within different contexts. Finally, based on the findings, it was concluded that ethnic identification is flexible and situational, and people could simultaneously have more than one identity which were not mutually exclusive.

The phenomenon of people having multiple ethnic identities which were not mutually exclusive was further explored by analysing data in terms of the second hypothesis. It was postulated that ethnic identification is a set of nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness which manifested as nesting identities. In relation to this hypothesis, there was considerable evidence that most people have multiple nesting ethnic identities. There was also some evidence, although not conclusive, that in the case of some nesting identities, people use additional markers to demarcate between one identity and the next wider identity.

An examination of data on multiple nesting identities in relation to gender, age and education did not manifest any significant relationship between the three variables and people's multiple identities. The different socialization processes each gender, age and educational group underwent did not appear to have influenced the propensity for multiple identities among the individuals within each group. This was suggestive of the flexible and situational nature of ethnic identification. This finding, however, is not conclusive because of the nature of the data. The sample for each category analysed was skewed in that the number of people in each group were small, and differed between groups.

The themes contained in the two hypotheses, which were the focus of chapters 3 and 4, were expanded in chapter 5 by examining more closely the processes of *inclusion* in, and *exclusion* from each nesting identity. From the indepth analysis of the processes of

inclusion and exclusion on the part of the 7 interviewees with 4 or more identities, a number of findings on ethnic identification were made. First, there was evidence that people's attitudes and behaviour on such issues as culture and values, linguistic preferences, socialization and marriage preferences, and group solidarity, were linked to their various identities and their choice of markers for each identity. Second, for all 7 interviewees, the exercise of inclusion and exclusion from each identity exhibited more clearly nesting inclusiveness and exclusiveness. This was in accordance with the earlier findings on the second hypothesis. Third, the 7 cases provided considerable evidence of the individual nature of ethnic identification. There were no consistent patterns in the way inclusion and exclusion were carried out. The method employed in the exercise of inclusion and exclusion was particular to each individual. This last point led to the fourth finding, that the particularity individuals exhibited in exercising inclusion and exclusion appeared to be linked to their interactive experiences.

The four tasks carried out in chapters 3, 4 and 5 largely validated the hypotheses on ethnic identification and empirically verified the theoretical propositions on ethnicity established in chapter 1. It is necessary to point out that the importance and usefulness of the findings in this thesis should not be overstated. There are some limitations which would affect their general applicability and usefulness. First, in terms of scope, the thesis is based on a case study of the Malaysian Chinese in Christchurch. This may limit the applicability of the study to groups of similar make up within similar environment.

The second limitation concerns methodology. Due to the nature of the subject, there is the possibility that the context in which the interviews were carried out would have influenced interviewee responses. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with only the interviewer and interviewee present. It is possible that interviewee responses would have been different if others had been present. Another methodological point is that most of the data were statements based on recall. This may have reduced the accuracy of the data.

Despite these limitations, some of the findings in this thesis warrant attention as they highlight certain aspects of ethnicity which may be of general significance and importance. This study revealed quite clearly the complex dynamics of ethnic identification and confirmed the need to conceptualize ethnicity as an interactive phenomenon. Ethnic identification is an intricate process, and is certainly not a matter of merely possessing some attributes related to an identity. One aspect of the process of identification which manifested in the study is the importance of context. Different contexts have an effect on the way people identify and the criteria they use to identify. Closely related to context is the individualism which is exhibited in the way people identify and the means they use. These two facets of ethnicity are largely responsible for multiple nesting ethnic identification, a phenomenon which will be of increasing relevance within present society.

A significant theme which surfaced throughout the thesis is the flexible, situational and individual nature of ethnic identification. In terms of contribution to theory, the most

significant finding is that for some people ethnic identification could primarily be a function of their interactive experiences. Although it would be more applicable in situations where various groups interact closely, such a finding nevertheless challenges the widely held view that ethnic identification is mainly a function of ingroup socialization. This is not to deny the importance of socialization. The question is: to what extent is ethnic identification influenced by socialization and to what extent by interactive experiences? This study has drawn attention to an aspect of ethnicity which may be crucial to the understanding of ethnicity within contemporary society.

In terms of broader issues, this thesis highlights certain aspects of ethnicity which may have policy implication. It was confirmed throughout the course of this thesis that ethnic identification was flexible, situational and individual in nature. The findings on multiple nesting ethnic identification raise the question of whether there is any need to be concerned with the problem of integration or assimilation of new or minor groups into the wider community. Data on multiple ethnic identification show the natural tendency for individuals to form identities around attachment to place and people. The feeling of affinity and attachment to place and people have strong holds on people's sentiments and group solidarity is easily formed based on these factors. Policy makers should be more concerned with harmony and acceptance which would foster voluntary acculturation, as a more effective means of blending these groups into society, than with overt attempts at integration through specific policies. There also need not be too much concern that these groups preserve other identities alongside new ones.

A final concluding point is the prevalence of ethnicity in people's life which was manifested in the study. Each interviewee, through his or her responses, demonstrated the vital presence of ethnicity. Ethnicity exerts influence over the way people perceive others, the way they organize their lives and their relationships. Interest in the phenomenon should not be limited to conflictual or competitive contexts. Ethnicity needs to be recognized as an important aspect of human existence which is pervasive in all societies.



## **Appendix A**

### **Methodology**

The case study on the Malaysian Chinese was based on interviews conducted from July 1995 to August 1996. The complexity of the subject, and the concern with the emotional rather than the logical, made informal interviews more suitable than a survey methodology. The aim was to elicit data which would represent as close as possible the thoughts and feelings of the interviewees.

#### **Sample**

The sample size was 57 composed of males and females above 16 years who had not been in New Zealand more than 7 years. The age limit was necessary based on the assumption that those below 16 years old would be less able to understand what was being asked of them. The breakdown was: 15 females above 30 years old; 17 females aged 16 to 29; 12 males above 30 years old; 13 males aged 16 to 29. The decision to make 7 years residence as the cut off point was because it was during this period that New Zealand immigration policy allowed an influx of Chinese from Malaysia. All who arrived during this time would be in the similar situation of facing a new environment. It was also assumed that their behaviour patterns would have been less subjected to local influence during that short period of time.

Apart from these two conditions on age and period of residence, there were no other strict criteria for selection, although an attempt was made to have as wide a

representation as possible in terms of place of origin in Malaysia, dialect and education. The sample was drawn from various sectors of the Malaysian Chinese community through a process of informal introductions. The place of origin, dialect and educational background of each interviewee is provided in Appendix C.

### **Data collection**

The interviews were based on an interview schedule which consisted of “open ended” questions. This allowed further discussion of initial responses, and gave the interviewees the opportunity to provide their own account of how they perceived things. The questions for the interviews were constructed with the aim of obtaining data on biographical information, attitudes and behaviour of the respondents and how they identified. Questions on attitudes and behaviour dealt with the issues of cultural attachment, linguistic preferences, socializing and marriage preferences, and participation in formal associations. Those on identification queried respondents on identities. They were asked whether they identified positively with each identity, why they did or did not do so, and the intensity of their identification. There were two sets of standardized questions; one for those who were above 30 years old and one for those below. This was necessary because questions on cultural attachment and marriage preferences had to be formulated such that they were appropriate for the older interviewees who were parents on one hand, and younger unmarried interviewees on the other. At the same time, both sets had to elicit the required data. All questions were covered in every interview. This

was to ensure that answers could be categorized and compared. The two sets of interview schedules are provided in Appendix B

The interviews were held either at the interviewees' home or an office in the Political Science department at the University of Canterbury. Each lasted approximately an hour and was conducted either in English or one of two Chinese dialects; Hokkien or Foochow. Quite a number were conducted in a mix of English and one of the dialects. Detailed notes were handwritten in English as each interview proceeded. This method was preferred over tape recording for two reasons. Firstly, interviewees would be less relaxed if they knew they were being recorded on tape. Secondly, some interviewees might have objected to being recorded on tape.

### **Limitations**

There was no statistics on the profile of the Malaysian Chinese population in Christchurch, therefore, a "representative" sample could only be estimated. The sample was heavily weighted towards interviewees from Sarawak in East Malaysia. They made up 68% of the sample. There were also more interviewees from the Foochow dialect group (40%) compared with other dialect groups. This imbalance was due to the composition of the Malaysian Chinese community in Christchurch. There were more immigrants from Sarawak, and they were mostly Foochows. Although for the purpose of some specific analyses a balanced representation in terms of place of origin and dialect group was desirable, the interview sample was representative of the population.

**Confidentiality**

The anonymity of all respondents was assured. Neither first nor clan names (surnames) were recorded when interviewees were questioned on the issue of clan. In general, the Malaysian Chinese as an emigrant group, are generally careful of what they say and how they behave. This was to avoid, first, giving a bad impression, and second, offending or antagonising others of the wider community. As is typical in most social science survey methodology, confidentiality was necessary in order to respect the wishes of those who preferred to remain anonymous, and it allowed interviewees to be less guarded and restrained in what they said.

## Appendix B

### Interview Schedule

#### Interview Schedule A: 16 to 29 years old

Gender:

Age:

Place of birth:

Father's dialect:

Mother's dialect:

Marital status:

Spouse's dialect:

Place of residence prior to migration to New Zealand:

Period of residence in New Zealand:

Religion:

Education:

In Malaysia: Level:

Medium:

In New Zealand: Level:

#### Languages and dialects

How many languages and dialects do you speak?

What is your preferred language or dialect? Why?

#### Socializing

Do your parents have any preference on your choice of friends? Why?

With whom do you tend to, or prefer to socialize? Why?

#### Marriage

Do your parents have any preference on whom you marry? Why?

Do you have any preference on whom you marry? Why?

### Culture

Do your parents have strong views on other culture and values?

Do your parents prefer their own culture and values?

Do you have strong views on other culture and values?

Do you prefer your own culture and values? Why?

Do your parents emphasize customs and traditions (eg. birthdays, weddings, funeral and festivals) at home?

-Do you agree with your parents? Why?

-Will you emphasize these things when you have your own family? Why?

Do your parents tell you Chinese stories and fables?

-Will you tell your own children Chinese stories and fables? Why?

What kind of food do you prefer?

### Formal Associations

Were you a member of any formal associations such as clan, dialect or Chinese association in Malaysia?

Are you a member of any of these associations in New Zealand?

Do you think these associations are important? Which would be more important?

### Identification

When among the various ethnic groups in Malaysia, do you identify as Chinese? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among people from various nations, do you identify as Malaysian? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among people from various ethnic groups, do you identify as Chinese? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among Chinese from various nations, do you identify as Malaysian Chinese? How strongly? Why?

When among Malaysian Chinese, do you:

- identify as East/West Malaysian? How strongly? Why?

- identify according to your state of origin? How strongly? Why?
- identify according to your town of origin? How strongly? Why?
- identify according to your dialect? How strongly? Why?

Which is your strongest identity?

### **Interview Schedule B: Above 30 years old**

Gender:

Age:

Place of birth:

Father's dialect:

Mother's dialect:

Marital status:

Spouse's dialect:

Place of residence prior to migration to New Zealand:

Period of residence in New Zealand:

Religion:

Education:

In Malaysia: Level:

Medium:

In New Zealand: Level:

#### **Languages and dialects**

How many languages and dialects do you speak?

What is your preferred language or dialect? Why?

#### **Socializing**

Do you have any preference on your children's choice of friends? Why?

With whom do you tend to, or prefer to socialize? Why?

#### Marriage

Do you have any preference on who your children marry? Why?

#### Culture

Do you have strong views on other cultures and values?

Do you prefer your own culture and values? Why?

Do you emphasize customs and traditions (eg. birthdays, weddings, funerals and festivals) at home? Why?

Do you tell your children Chinese stories and fables? Why?

What kind of food do you prefer?

#### Formal Associations

Were you a member of any formal associations such as clan, dialect or Chinese association in Malaysia?

Are you a member of any of these associations in New Zealand?

Do you think these associations are important? Which would be more important?

#### Identification

When among the various ethnic groups in Malaysia, do you identify as Chinese? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among people from various nations, do you identify as Malaysian? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among people from various ethnic groups, do you identify as Chinese? How strongly? Why?

In New Zealand, when you are among Chinese from various nations, do you identify as Malaysian Chinese? How strongly? Why?

When among Malaysian Chinese, do you:

- identify as East/West Malaysian? How strongly? Why?
- identify according to your state of origin? How strongly? Why?
- identify according to your town of origin? How strongly? Why?
- identify according to your dialect? How strongly? Why?

Which is your strongest identity?



## Appendix C

### List of Interviewees

#### GROUP A: FEMALES ABOVE 30 YEARS OLD

No	State	Town	Dialect	Education	Interview Language
1	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	English	English & Hokkien
2	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Hokkien	English	English & Hokkien
3	Sabah (E. Mal.)	Sandakan	Hakka	Mainly Chinese & English	English
4	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Foochow
5	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	English	English & Hokkien
6	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Cantonese	Mainly English & Chinese	English & Hokkien
7	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Hokkien	English	English
8	Sabah (E. Mal.)	K. Kinabalu	Cantonese	Mainly English & Chinese	English
9	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Foochow, English & Hokkien
10	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Heng Hua	Mainly Chinese & English	Hokkien
11	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Cantonese	English	English & Hokkien

12	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Teochew	Mainly Chinese & English	English
13	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Foochow
14	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Cantonese	English	English
15	Perak (W. Mal.)	K. Lumpur	Hakka	Mainly Chinese & English	English

**GROUP B: FEMALES 16 - 29 YEARS OLD**

No	State	Town	Dialect	Education	Interview Language
1	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Teochew	Mainly Chinese & English & Bahasa Malaysia	English & Hokkien
2	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Cantonese	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English & Hokkien
3	Selangor (W. Mal.)	K. Lumpur	Cantonese	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
4	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Hokkien	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English & Hokkien
5	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Miri	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
6	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Hokkien	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English & Hokkien
7	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	Foochow & English
8	Sabah (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Hakka	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English

9	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English
10	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
11	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	Foochow & English
12	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Hokkien	Mainly Chinese & English & Bahasa Malaysia	English
13	Perak (W. Mal.)	Ipoh	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
14	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Hokkien	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
15	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Cantonese	Mainly English & Chinese	English
16	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English & Hokkien
17	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Heng Hua	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English

**GROUP C: MALES ABOVE 30 YEARS OLD**

No	State	Town	Dialect	Education	Interview Language
1	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	English	English
2	Perak (W. Mal.)	Ipoh	Hokkien	English	English
3	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Hokkien	Chinese	Foochow

4	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Cantonese	English	English & Hokkien
5	P. Pinang (W. Mal.)	Pinang	Hokkien	English	English & Hokkien
6	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Foochow	Mainly English & Chinese	English
7	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Foochow
8	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Bintulu	Heng Hua	Chinese	Foochow & Hokkien
9	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Hokkien
10	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Miri	Foochow	Mainly Chinese & English	Foochow & Hokkien
11	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Miri	Hakka	Mainly Chinese & English	Hokkien
12	Selangor (E. Mal.)	Kedak	Hokkien	English	English

**GROUP D: MALES 16 - 29 YEARS OLD**

No	State	Town	Dialect	Education	Interview Language
1	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English & Hokkien
2	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	Foochow
3	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Miri	Hakka	Mainly Chinese & English & Bahasa Malaysia	English & Hokkien

4	Sabah (E. Mal.)	Tawau	Cantonese	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English
5	Sabah (E. Mal.)	Sandakan	Hainanese	Mainly English & Chinese	English
6	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Hokkien	Mainly Bahasa Malaysian & English	English & Hokkien
7	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysian & English	English & Hokkien
8	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Hokkien	Mainly Chinese & English & Bahasa Malaysia	English & Hokkien
9	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Miri	Hainanese	Mainly Chinese & English & Bahasa Malaysia	English
10	Perak (W. Mal.)	Batu Gajah	Cantonese	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	English
11	Perak (W. Mal.)	Siriawan	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English
12	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Kuching	Foochow	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English & Chinese	Foochow & English
13	Sarawak (E. Mal.)	Sibu	Hakka	Mainly Bahasa Malaysia & English	English & Hokkien

## Bibliography

- AHMAD, Z. H. Malaysian: Quasi Democracy in a Divided Society. In Diamond, L., Linz, J.T. and Lipset, S.M. Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia Vol III. London, Adamantine Press Ltd, 1989.
- BANTON, M. Racial Theories. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- BANTON, M. and MANSOR, M. N. The Study of Ethnic Alignment: A New Technique and an application in Malaysia, Ethnic and Racial Studies. Vol. 15, No. 4, 1992.
- BARTH, F. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1969.
- BARTH, F. Problems in Conceptualizing Cultural Pluralism with Illustration from Sohar, Oman. In Maybury-Lewis, D. The Prospects for Plural Societies. Washington, The American Ethnological Society, 1984.
- BELL, D. Ethnicity and Social Change. In Glazer, N. and Moynihan, D. Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975.
- BENTLY, G. C. Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Bibliographic Guide. Seattle & London, University of Washington Press, 1981.
- BERGHE, P. L, van den The Ethnic Phenomenon. New York, Elsevier North Holland Inc., 1981.
- BRASS, P. R. Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia. In Taylor, D. and Yapp, M. Political Identity in South Asia. London, Curzon Press Ltd, 1979.
- COHEN, A. Custom and Politics in Urban Africa. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969.

- COHEN, A. Introductions: The Lesson of Ethnicity. In Cohen, A. Urban Ethnicity. London, Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1974.
- COHEN, R. Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology, Annual Review of Anthropology. Vol. 7, 1978. p379-403
- CUSHMAN, J. and GUNGWU, W. Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II. Singapore, Hong Kong University Press, 1988.
- EDWARDS, J. R. Language, Society and Identity. Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985.
- EPSTEIN, A. L. Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity. London, Travistock Publications Ltd, 1978.
- ESMAN, M. J. Ethnic Politics and Economic Power, Comparative Politics. July ed., 1987. p396-417
- ESMAN, M. J. Economic Performance and Ethnic Conflict. In Montville, J.V. Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies. Toronto, Lixington Book, 1990
- FISHMAN, J. A. Language and Ethnicity. In Giles, H. Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations. London, Academic Press, 1977.
- FREEDMAN, M. The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1979.
- FUNSTON, J. Malay Politics in Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur, Heineman Educational Books (Asia), 1980.
- GEERTZ, C. The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in New States. In Geertz, C. Old Societies and New States. New York, The Free Press, 1963.
- GILES, H. Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations. London, Academic Press, 1977.

- GLASER, D. Dynamics of Ethnic Identification, American Sociological Review. Vol. 23, No. 1, 1958. p31-40
- GLAZER, N. and MOYNIHAN, D. P. Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975.
- GORDON, M. M. Assimilation in American Life. New York, Oxford University Press, 1964.
- GRODZINS, M. The Loyal and The Disloyal: Social Boundaries of Patriotism and Treason. Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- GUNGWU, W. Community and Nation: China Southeast Asia and Australia. St Leonards, Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1992.
- HAMILTON, G. G. Ethnicity and Regionalism: Some Factors Influencing Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia, Ethnicity 4., 1977. p337-351
- HANDLEMAN, D. The Organization of Ethnicity. Ethnic Groups Vol. 1, 1977. p187-200
- HARRELL, S. "Why do the Chinese Work So Hard?" - Reflections on an Entrepreneurial Ethic, Modern China. Vol. 3, No. 2, 1987. p203-226
- HECHTER, M. The Political Economy of Ethnic Charge. American Journal of Sociology. Vol. 79, No. 5, 1974.
- HOROWITZ, D. L. Three Dimensions of Ethnic Politics. World Politics. Vol. 23, No. 2, 1971. p232-244
- HOROWITZ, D. L. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkley, University of California Press, 1985.



- HSIEN, R. The Synthesizing Mind in Chinese Cultural Adjustment. In Vos, G. de and Romanucci-Ross, L. Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change. California, Mayfield Publishing, 1975.
- IP, M. Chinese New Zealanders : Old Settlers and New Immigrants. In Grief, S. W. Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand. Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press Ltd, 1995.
- ISAJIW, W. W. Definitions of Ethnicity. In Bienvenue, R. M. and Goldstein, J. E. Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Canada. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto, Butterworth and Co, 1985.
- JACKSON, R. H. Ethnicity. In Sartori, G. Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis. Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1984.
- JENKINS, R. Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization and power, Ethnic and Racial Studies. Vol. 17, No. 2, 1994. p197-223
- JESUDASON, J. V. Ethnicity and the Economy: The State, Chinese Business and Multinationals in Malaya. Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- KELLAS, J. G. The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity. Hampshire, Macmillan Education Ltd, 1991.
- KEYES, C. F. Towards a New Formulation of the Concept of Ethnic Group, Ethnicity. Vol. 3, 1976. p202-213
- KEYES, C. F. The Dialectics of Ethnic Change. In Keyes, C.F. Ethnic Change. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1981.
- KOTKIN, J. Tribes. New York, Random House, 1993.
- LIM M. H. Affirmative action, ethnicity and integration: The case of Malaysia, Ethnic and Racial Studies. Vol. 8, No. 2, 1985.

- MacDOUGALL, S. F. C. Ethnicity and Nationalism in Singapore. Michigan, University Microfilm International, 1982.
- MASON, D. T. Ethnicity and Politics. In Hawkesworth, M. and Kogan, M. Encyclopaedia of Government & Politics. 1, London, Routledge, 1992.
- McKAY, J. An exploratory synthesis of primordial and mobilizationist approaches to ethnic phenomena, Ethnic and Racial Societies. Vol. 5, No. 4, 1982. p395-420
- NAGATA, J. A. What is a Malay? Situational Selection of Ethnic Identity in a Plural Society, American Ethnologist. Vol. 1, 1974. p331-350
- NAGATA, J. In Defense of Ethnic Boundaries: The Changing Myths and Charters of Malay Identity. In Keyes, C.F. Ethnic Change. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1981.
- NAGEL, J. and OLZAK, S. Ethnic Mobilization in New and Old States: An Extension of the Competitive model, Social Problems. Vol. 30, No. 2, 1982. p127-145
- NAROLL, R. On Ethnic Unit Classification, Current Anthropology. Vol. 5, No. 4, 1964. p283-312
- NIELSON, F. Toward a Theory of Ethnic Solidarity in Modern Societies. American Sociological Review. Vol. 50, 1985. p133-149
- OLZAK, S. Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization, Annual Review of Sociology. Vol. 9, 1983. p355-374
- PAN, L. (1990) Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora. Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1990.
- REDDING, S. G. The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism. Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1990.
- RUDNER, M. Malaysian Development: A Retrospective. Ottawa, Carlton University Press, 1994.

- SAFRAN, W. Ethnicity and Pluralism: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives, Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism. Vol. 15, No. 1,2, 1991. p1-12
- SAUSSURE, F. D. Course in General Linguistics. New York, McGraw - Hill, 1966.
- SHIBUTANI, T. and KWAN, K. M. Ethnic Stratification. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1965.
- SHILS, E. Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties. British Journal of Sociology Vol. 8, 1957. p130-145
- SKINNER, W. J. Chinese Society in Thailand. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1957.
- SMITH, A. D. The Ethnic Origins of Nations. Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986.
- SMITH, A. D. National Identity. London, Penguin Group, 1991.
- SMITH, A. H. Chinese Characteristics. Edinburgh, Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1900.
- SNODGRASS, D. R. Immigration and Economic Development in Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1980.
- STRAUCH, J. Multiple Ethnicities in Malaysia: The Shifting Relevance of Alternative Chinese Categories, Modern Asian Studies. Vol. 15, No. 2, 1981. p235-260
- SURYADINATRA, L. Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects, Journals of International Affairs. Vol. 41, No. 1, 1987.
- SURYADINATRA, L. The Ethnic Chinese in the Asean States: Bibliographical Essays. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1989.
- TAN, T. T. Your Chinese Roots: The Overseas Chines Story. Singapore, Times Books International, 1986.

TAYLOR, D. and YAPP, M. Political Identity in South Asia. London, Curzon Press Ltd, 1979.

VASIL, Raj. K. Politics in Bi-Racial Societies: The Third World Experience. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1984.

VINCENT, J. The Structuring of Ethnicity, Human Organisation. Vol. 33, No. 4, 1974. p375-379

WEBER, M. Economy and Society. Ed. Roth, G. and Wittich, C., New York, Bedminister Press, 1968.

WICKBERG, E. Chinese Organisation and Ethnicity in Southeast Asia and North America since 1945: A Comparative analysis. In Cushman, J. and Gungwu Wang Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II. Singapore, Hong Kong University Press, 1988.

WOLF, K. Ethnic Nationalism: An Analysis and a Defence, Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism. Vol. 13, No. 1, 1986. p99-109